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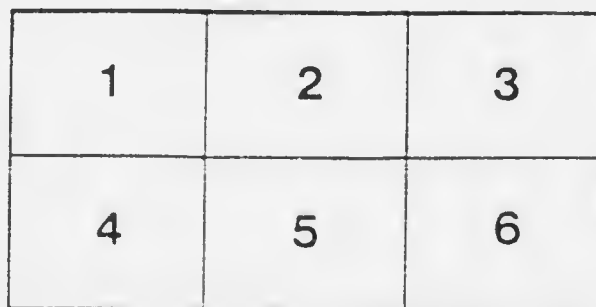
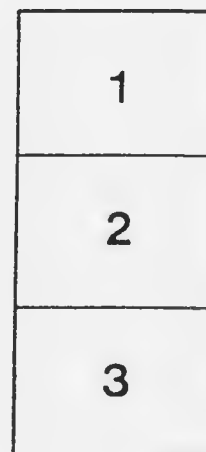
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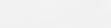
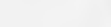
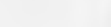
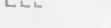
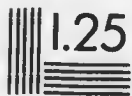
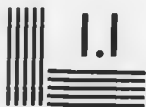
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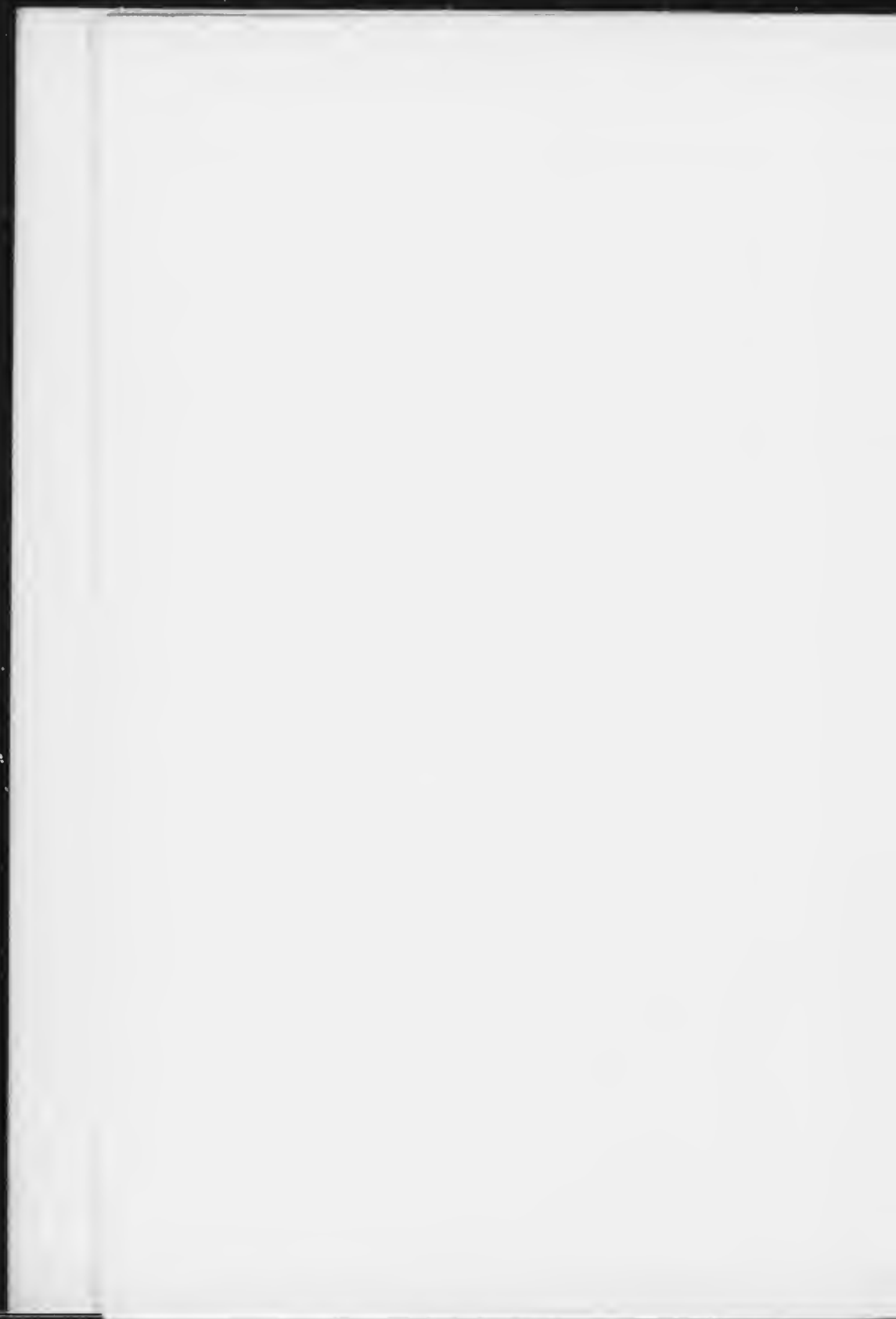
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# THE WAY OF THE HEART

LETTERS OF DIRECTION

BY

MGR. D'HULST

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

MGR. A. BAUDRILLART

RECTOR OF THE CATHOLIC INSTITUTE, PARIS

TRANSLATED BY

W. H. MITCHELL, M.A.

"Truth has found its way to your soul by the heart."—Letter 87

"When mind and heart are in conflict it is the heart that is  
right."—Letter 94

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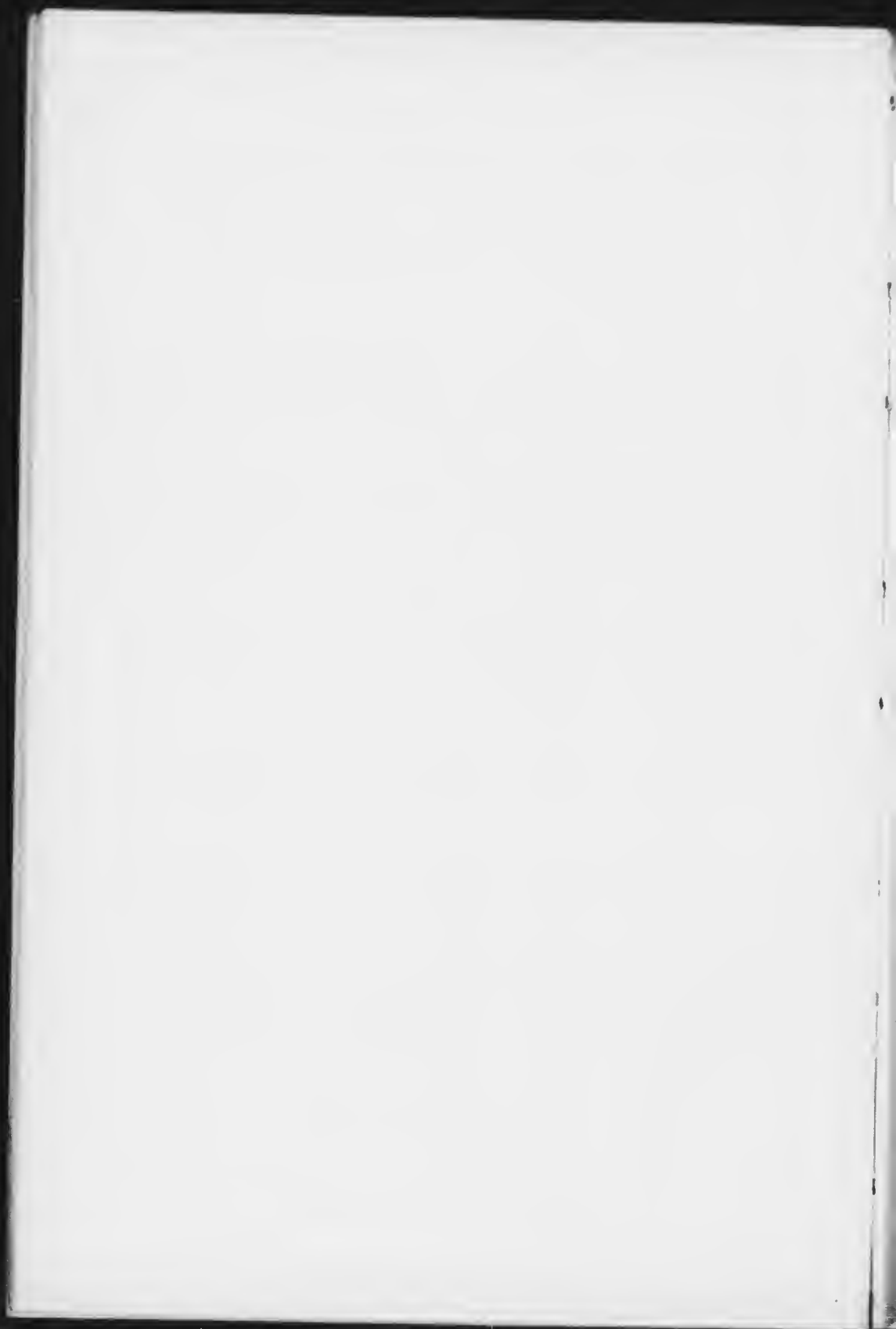
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## PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

SUPPOSED revelations—often of prejudice and credulity all compact—concerning the inner working of Catholic institutions sometimes find a wide circulation amongst non-Catholics. Should any reader of such “exposures” light upon this book, he would find in it not only a striking contrast, but a wholesome corrective. Here a private correspondence, never meant for publication, unexpectedly lifts a corner of the veil which ordinarily shrouds the confidential communications between director and penitent. Thus are discovered a few of the gems which lie so deeply hid in the unfathomable ocean of Catholic spiritual life.

The English translator submitted to the Church over ten years ago, and was by temperament, like Mgr. d’Hulst’s correspondent, a doubter. When matters reached a climax, he was so tortured for a time by mental and other dilemmas that he despaired of retaining enough sanity to be accepted as a convert, enough stability to react against any recurring wave of Agnosticism; but, from the day of his reception, unlike the correspondent, he has never once been troubled, amidst many and heavy troubles,

## Preface

with the shadow of a doubt. How variously provided for is individuality in the Church! No two crosses are alike. Though everyone has to bear some kind of cross, and to each is assigned just the type best calculated to put to death what most requires crucifying if he is to ascend to the higher life, yet none need be deterred from entering the fold through fear of being called upon to shoulder a burden too heavy to be borne.

Mgr. A. Baudrillart, by whose kind permission the translation has been made, has said by way of Introduction all that can be usefully said to Catholics. Therefore it is enough to add that the translation follows the French all through, except for the omission of a few passages of topical or transitory interest, not easily intelligible to English people, and of one or two repetitions of what had been better put elsewhere. The Index at the end will, it is hoped, facilitate the use of the book for the seasons of the Church's year, and for pursuing particular subjects in which the reader may be specially interested.

W. H. M.

*Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 1912.*

## INTRODUCTION

"WHEN a priest can do any good to a soul," Mgr. d'Hulst used to say " he must make that his first business."

This maxim was his own rule of conduct. " To him," writes M. Octave Larcher, the most shrewd and subtle of his first biographers, " the saving of a soul seemed to possess far more importance than the making of a speech, however eloquent and grand."<sup>1</sup> The direction of souls was, in his eyes, *the work par excellence*: he himself regarded it as the indispensable ransom of his external and beneficent, but manifold and overwhelming, occupations: it was the really priestly part, the corner held in reserve, of a life devoted to the rush of business. Moreover, he was ready to sacrifice *all the rest* to it, whenever *all the rest* came into conflict with a soul's need. Often and often did he say this, as this correspondence shows; and he acted as he spoke. If anyone was dying or dangerously ill, he left everything to go to him, even if it meant

<sup>1</sup> *Recueil de souvenirs sur Mgr. d'Hulst*, pp. 141-143. Cardinal Richard, in his letter to the Paris clergy, November 10, 1896, gives the same testimony. Cf. M. Delaage, *ibid.*, p. 216.



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travelling three hundred miles. He spent whole days and nights waiting for the providential moment when his priestly action might be brought to bear upon one hitherto hostile, and now about to appear before the Supreme Judge. But to stir his zeal, there was no need of imminent physical danger; moral distress was enough. One day I showed him a letter from a girl of keen intelligence who was losing her faith, and who, through me, was sending him an appeal almost in despair.

I hardly dared to hand him the letter, knowing how overwhelmed he was; still I got him to read it. With tears in his eyes he simply said: "Such an appeal is never to be rejected." He accepted the new penitent, retained her always, and, after many a struggle, made a capital Christian of her.

If one of "his souls" wanted what he called "winding up," he could always find time for a visit, sometimes even for a journey, to bring help in case of need.

The same thing made him scrupulous, perhaps to excess, in answering the letters, however numerous, of those whom he directed, though their main virtue was rarely that of discretion.

Correspondence certainly added greatly to the overloading of his life; he dreaded the postman's knock; but when he found in his budget a letter from one of the spiritual *élite*, or from one in special distress, he "smiled on the pariah." Whenever he was at an hotel, waiting at a railway-station between two trains, at the Archbishop's council, at the House of Deputies, he found time to write, letting no outward circumstance deprive him of a clear view of the soul

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with whom, withdrawing himself from all else, he entered into intercourse. For one such he outlined a short explanation of Christian perfection, from which his correspondent afterwards drew excellent lessons. His "good time," as he was fond of calling it, was that which he spent at Louville, because there alone he had calm and silence and leisure to deal with the great interests of those who were entrusted to his care.

When he was at home in Paris, his heart and arms were wide open to welcome his penitents: "When will you understand that you never disturb me?" he wrote to one of them; ". . . you are a flash of light in my sky." And again: "I am fairly staggered with work, but I always have a nook in my brain for thinking about you and the whole of my heart to love you." He received youths and men regularly on Saturday nights after hearing confessions in the afternoon at Stanislaus College, and on Sunday mornings, as well as on the eves of feasts; but at any time of day or at any period of the year, if anyone wanted him, he was ready; he would wait for the poor apprentice kept late at work and coming from a distance; and at dawn his door was open for the pupil of the Polytechnic who wanted to cleanse his conscience before receiving his God.

Was he not often heard to say that he would forgive a hundred people for wasting his time with useless calls, because he heard the confession of the hundred and first? To administer the sacrament of penance was a necessity laid upon him; many Bishops had given him faculties in their dioceses; for

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more than one person he appointed a rendezvous in some church on his road when he was on a journey. And all this went on until the end of his life. "After celebrating his last Mass on All Souls' Day," says Mgr. Touchet, "everything in him began to give way. He was rapidly breaking up. A young man wished to come to confession. The prelate rose with difficulty, took a few steps forward, and, as if he could go no farther, fell into a chair at the corner of the altar. The young man made his confession kneeling on the flags, and then the sick man leaned forward; he spoke, and was seen to make a great sign of the Cross on the fair head of the young penitent. It was his last absolution: three days later he was dying." The fifth of November, the day before his death, he wrote to one of his spiritual children, an old student of the Polytechnic.<sup>1</sup>

The secret of this persevering assiduity and uninterrupted zeal was his love of souls: "In reality," he wrote, "I am neither hard nor dry, nor even as cold as I seem. I have an ardent love of souls, a tender affection for hearts, and I have promised God to draw the line there."<sup>2</sup> . . . "Yes, my dear child, I want to be your friend and brother, as well as your father; I have no greater joy than seeing your soul expand in hope, and your heart in affection."<sup>3</sup> . . . "I love you well indeed, dear Edward, and if I make you suffer, it will be very clumsy, but never unfaithful, on my part."<sup>4</sup> This supernatural affection, as his pen shows—and as the following corre-

<sup>1</sup> *Recueil de Souvenirs*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> To Mlle. V., March 30, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> To M. E. R., March 10, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, August 24, 1875.

## Introduction

spondence will prove—could find expression in terms of tenderness, but it remained supernatural ; Mgr. d'Hulst loved souls as souls ; he would not let, to use his own words, " God's business become man's business, nor a love all *his own business* " ; and one person who, in a simple casual remark, apparently had forgotten this, was reminded of it with astonishing severity : he was the Master's workman, nothing more : " Your soul," he wrote, " is a pearl I want to extract from where it lies, to set it in the crown of the Sovereign King, and when the work is done, I certainly mean the jeweller to disappear."<sup>1</sup>

He even distrusted any intervention of natural sympathy : " When one sees some obtainable good across or through natural repugnances, a decision can easily be taken : one can only go straight ahead. When, on the other hand, one's sympathies are involved, then is the time to put on one's spectacles. . . . You quite see that it is a happy thing to give one's heart up to God alone, and to wish to come into contact with the hearts of others only to give them to Him, and that this does not mean dryness, selfishness, and insensibility. And this is why I rely on your confidence."<sup>2</sup>

He made a barrier of his outward coldness, and sometimes acknowledged this in a rather humorous way : " We are what we are. If I am cold at the outset, so much the worse for those who are chilled ; there are always quite enough who get through the ice ; and, if I had to begin my priestly career over

<sup>1</sup> To Mlle. V., November 10, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, April 27, 1890.

## The Way of the Heart

again, I believe I should let still fewer get through it. I have often been sorry for being too confiding. After twenty-five years' experience, which has made me feel thus sorry, I am not ready for conversion in the matter of outward coldness. And then, what difference can it make to those who know what is within? But women like one to tell them what they know already. If one has proved one's affection and devotion by deeds, one has again to repeat *in words* that one likes them. I never could see any use in all that."<sup>1</sup> At any rate, it was a pleasure he would not lay himself out to give them; nor would he seek the subtle joy of letting himself be led by those he had to guide. Not that he would not receive from them "opinions and impressions as to his own personality or spiritual life"<sup>2</sup>; but he would never allow the rôles to be changed, and this he sometimes made known in terms which were not without a certain amount of harshness. He distrusted the morbid devotion which is a compound of illusions in some women: "Look at these hysterical devotees," he said, "they are nothing but frailty or wickedness. Well indeed do I know them! and well could I depict them! Egoism, jealousy, sensualism, pride, often an entirely earthly passion for some priest, that is about their net balance! Bad fruit of a bad tree!"<sup>3</sup>

What he thus did *con amore*, Mgr. d'Hulst knew how to do, and, needless to say, he did it well.

He was as convinced as anybody that if the direction of souls demands, as its primary conditions in

<sup>1</sup> To Mlle. V., July 31, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> See Letter 144.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 87.

## Introduction

him who has to exercise it, sound judgement and tact, it is also a *science*: "There is a science in this," he wrote, "as in everything else; it is, too, a science of observation. God acts, the soul co-operates; one lets it be, and the *guide* observes the operations, and notes whether things are going on *as they should do*—that is to say, as they did in souls that bore the right mark."<sup>1</sup>

Of this science Mgr. d'Hulst was a master: his direction was eminently theological; those who read the following letters will easily take account of it. He had a method, that of St. Ignatius; he had read and made the *Exercises* over and over again: one may say that he *possessed* them after the manner of the most expert of the members of the Society of Jesus; the rules for the *Discernment of Spirits*, of *the Election*, and the rest, were without secrets for him. With St. Ignatius their master, he gladly took Rodriguez, and Fathers Surin and Lallemand as his guides. These, along with St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Sales, and going farther back, St. Bernard, he used to call *the true masters*.<sup>2</sup> He is known to have had only a moderate liking for the spiritual teaching of the Oratory and St. Sulpice in the seventeenth century, for the school of Bérulle and Olier and Condren. In the nineteenth century, *the master*, in his opinion, was Mgr. Gay.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Mgr. d'Hulst had a deep personal knowledge of the *interior ways*. The Life of Mère Marie-Thérèse, which he had published before he was thirty, already indicated this, as well as the ad-

<sup>1</sup> Letter 35.

<sup>2</sup> *La France Chrétienne dans l'Histoire*, 12mo. ed., p. 632.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 623.

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mirable correspondence which he maintained, when quite a young priest, with his eldest sister, Marie-Catherine. Later on, he carried it so far that the Prioress of the Carmelite Convent of rue Denfert thought it impossible,—so well did he understand all the states of the soul and how to dispel all its darkness with a word,—“for him not to have been favoured himself at times with the extraordinary graces received by St. Teresa, if not with sensible graces, at least with graces of illumination, which enabled him to enter very deeply into the knowledge of God and of souls.”<sup>1</sup>

And just because he had such a knowledge of souls, Mgr. d'Hulst took care not to apply the same treatment, the same procedure, the same demands, to all of them. “His practice,” as it was called, was as various as it could possibly be; he was confessor to laymen and priests, nuns, princes and princesses, society people, men and women, young folks, and even schoolboys and humble servants. He asked of each soul what it could give, and himself brought to it what it was able to receive.

One of his young friends has drawn a fine and accurate sketch of what Mgr. d'Hulst was to himself and his companions in the meetings he reserved for them on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings: “I was acquainted,” he says, “with many who never failed at these rendezvous, to which they often came cast down with that spiritual depression which has no apparent cause, and from which they went away consoled and happy. In fact, Mgr. d'Hulst was a

<sup>1</sup> The words of the Prioress, spoken to me, October 13, 1898.

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remarkable physician of souls : he did not take long to diagnose them ; the disease once detected, he quickly found out remedies, and the particular way in which they were to be applied. Each of us was treated according to his own nature ; with some, he would enter into the smallest details of their moral life ; with others, he only said what was strictly necessary, and was satisfied with general advice. With regard to one, whom an easy-going disposition put at the mercy of all sorts of influences, he showed himself to be authoritative, almost exacting ; with regard to another, he took pains to develop his moral initiative, and allowed him to go forward in his own way, looking after him without appearing to do so, always at hand to keep him from going astray. The latter was his favourite method when the former was not indispensable. Thus he gave the soul breathing-space, and it expanded according to its nature ; thoughts and feelings became our own, and he trained us to discover the path of the True and the Good for ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

How he encouraged those young Christians who came to Paris and its perils to serve their first apprenticeship in freedom, and who, amidst it all, continued really to care for their souls and goodness ! He inspired them with something of his own valiance and ardour. How tenderly he dressed their wounds and armed them afresh for the fray ! What gladness he showed in preventing defeat or in insuring victory ! “ We shall never forget,” writes one of the professors of the Catholic Institute, “ the moving and touching warmth with which he

<sup>1</sup> *Recueil de Souvenirs*, p. 116.



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one day spoke to us with tears in his eyes of the ineffable joys with which God visibly rewarded his devotion to the service of these young people, and the ministry he exercised among them. To receive one of these confidences, to listen to one of these intimate outpourings, was enough to enable one to enter into the depths of his great soul beneath the wrappings which clothed and largely concealed it, and to admire therein the most beautiful spectacle the world affords, the soul of a true and holy priest!"<sup>1</sup>

To those who were involved in earthly ties and drawn towards earthly attractions, but who still were charmed by the noble beauties of nature, of art, and of the works of the mind, he proposed a higher and more beautiful ideal, and did his best to make them love it. "When shall I see you share with me another and a higher love, which has as its object the invisible Beauty, instinctively foreseen and praised by Plato amidst his sublime abstractions, but only realized by our great and living God?"<sup>2</sup> To help them to ascend, he relied on their troubles and trials, and on all the happenings of their lives. "It is a great grace to be used as an instrument of God for the good of a soul. I firmly hope that in your case it will be the beginning of a spiritual new birth. The sad crisis you are now passing through may well be the first symptom of it. Besides, it rather depends upon you for it to be so. For that, you have only to turn your grief into prayer, I mean a heartfelt prayer, the groaning of an isolated and desolate soul crying out to heaven, crying out

<sup>1</sup> O. Larcher, in the *Recueil de Souvenirs*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> To X, September 6, 1890.

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to the Unknown Friend who can deliver it from its wilderness. The deeper you enter into the world's corruption, and into its hidden inmost spiritual wretchedness, the more you must understand that the divine within us, though indestructible, needs help from on high, if it is to emerge. Ask for this assistance with all the ardour you possess; this is doing all you can and all you need just now.<sup>1</sup> And again, the following touching appeal: "May the divine Goodness visit you in your trial, and cause faith, hope, and supernatural love to return to your soul through this gaping wound! You know this is all my desire. Hitherto, human happiness seemed to be within your reach; it is you who used to disdain it, not finding it up to your level; now it flees you; I know well you will not run after it. But are you going to remain in the void? Oh, permit me to hope otherwise! Let me believe you will turn your tears into prayers and supplications, into cries of distress which will also be or become cries of confidence! I shall not cease a single day from wearying heaven with this request."<sup>2</sup> "Your heart, being greater than the pleasures and even than the loves of earth, would leap at a bound to the Sovereign Good, if chilly doubt did not confine your impulse to being a weak or barren aspiration or regret. You must react against this inner contradiction, which makes what is necessary seem to be impossible, and what is indispensable, inaccessible."<sup>3</sup>

He endeavoured to raise up in their own eyes, to open, to expand, and to comfort the souls of the timid,

<sup>1</sup> To X, December 14, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, March 8, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, April 28, 1891

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the reticent, the reserved, and the suffering; he showed them that religion was the goal of their secret aspirations, the relief of their ills, the mighty lever to uplift them above the difficulties of life. He was broad-minded, encouraging, expansive, and, above all, kindly. When he was appointed a preacher at Notre-Dame, he had to cut down the time he had hitherto assigned to direction, and souls in sorrow then received a privileged position. I know one poor widow, of very lowly station, whom he never gave up, merely because she was in distress.

When dealing with society people, men or women, who are sometimes too inclined to believe that the outward practices of religion are all-sufficient, and that they can dispense with any reformation of conduct, he insisted on a really serious religion, founded on conscience, honour, work, duty, and the strict observance of the Gospel precepts. He passed a severe judgment on worldly devotees. "I propose," said he, speaking of a certain retreat he was going to preach, "to make all these smart dames, intoxicated with vanity and all sorts of passions, who cheerfully arrange for the funeral of domestic morality and of the social virtues, listen to the truth. Still, I mean to speak to them with charity, and to tell them of the Master."<sup>1</sup>

"Formerly," he wrote, "downright Christians used to keep away from the sacraments: to-day, I would be far from saying that many have too frequent recourse to them—it is impossible to frequent the sources of divine life to excess—but people recur to them while misunderstanding the true character of

<sup>1</sup> To X, March 8, 1885.

## Introduction

these institutions, which are a means, not an end, an auxiliary, not an equivalent, of virtue. To be a Christian, one must make use of confession and communion, just in the same way as we say : to live, one must eat ; but eating is not the same thing as living. Christianity is a life : the life of the mind by faith, the life of the will by work, the life of the heart by love. The sacraments, so far as this life is concerned, are food and medicine. Whoever abstains from them perishes, but whoever approaches them is also bound to turn them into faith, obedience, and love. But, excepting a select few, if we consider the mass of the faithful, especially in the higher classes among whom the Church of France rightly congratulates herself on having won back a number of recruits from indifference, what do we see ? A religion taken up with outward observances—that is to say, with means ; a religion which neglects the end—that is to say, virtue. People think they are Christians because they keep in touch with the institutions of salvation. They count upon their last hour to establish in goodness a feeble will which has run away from trial up to the very moment when trial is about to end. Even if such presumptuous reckoning does not miscarry, it means a religion which at best helps one to die a good death ; true Christianity helps people to lead a good life. What ought to have been sought in the sacraments was courage in action : on the other hand, what has been sought is a dispensation from effort, which facility in obtaining forgiveness is supposed to make superfluous. The result is fatal to the cause of faith ; for, in times when everything is measured

## The Way of the Heart

by utility, what will the world think of teaching which offers the conscience of mankind the help of a power supposed to be divine, but fails to elevate those whom it claims to feed upon God above the average level—that is to say, above man's average frailty?"<sup>1</sup> Further, he constantly reminded those whom he directed of the fundamental principles of Christian morality, from which he would never swerve on any pretext whatsoever. "There cannot be any opposition," he said, "or disagreement, between the laws of honour and those of conscience; the duties of the one are also necessarily the duties of the other." He could not understand those who, when face to face with certain temptations, look out for all sorts of diversions, while they have within their reach the greatest and worthiest of all, work: "Do not forget," he wrote, "that work is the penance of sinners and the redemption of the children of God." And again: "Yes, indeed, my dear child, you must set to work *all the same*, and this work undertaken in obedience, far from wanting God's blessing, will bring it upon your soul and on your whole life." In his view, the life of a Christian, even in the world, implied a certain amount of austerity. "Affluence," he said to one of the noblest of those whom he had to guide, "does not deserve the little good you have to say of it. . . . Instead of freeing souls from shabby cares and common relationships, it usually subjects them to caprice and effeminacy, and lessens them by inducing habits of selfishness and frivolity."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *La France Chrétienne dans l'Histoire*, pp. 644, 645.

<sup>2</sup> To E.R., August 24, 1875.

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The personal experience of the writer may be cited in proof of the care with which Mgr. d'Hulst trained souls who were called by God to His service. The reader will perhaps forgive him for venturing to put on record here a few intimate recollections, which are amongst the most cherished of his life. His only object is to testify to the boundless zeal and luminous insight into the things of God of the priest whom he had the happiness of having as his director for thirteen years.

The first two years, this direction seemed to him rather cold ; Mgr. d'Hulst was confining himself to the study of his penitent, and to giving him very simple and clear rules of conduct, following up the work of grace step by step, and never anticipating it. In the Easter holidays of 1885, he was good enough to suggest the writer should make a retreat at Louville, under his guidance, in which the writer might examine at his leisure what he believed to be the call of God. Unhappily, this retreat only lasted one day Mgr. d'Hulst being summoned to Paris by a serious illness of Cardinal Guibert. Yet it was on that day that the director revealed himself to him whom he was directing in all the breadth of his mind and in all the kindness of his heart. On the subject of vocation he set forth—as I still remember—principles which were so wise and moderate and sure, that it became easy for me to read within myself ; he spoke of the office of the priest in our unhealthy society in a manner so deep and high, that I was lost in admiration ; finally, I caught a glimpse of the mystical side of his nature, which until then had been hidden from me. From that moment, he put much more

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*soul* into his direction, and did not hesitate to speak to me of the love of God as the principle of all spiritual life in such simple and eloquent words that one could not but be moved by exhortations so full of faith and clarity.

During the longer holidays, I made a retreat at the Seminary of Issy: "I feel," wrote Mgr. d'Hulst to me, "the tightening of heart, the apprehension, the inevitable anguish you must experience in going into it. This agony is what inevitably precedes any sort of generous enterprise undertaken for God. Our Saviour's agony in the Garden is the pattern of it. Light comes out of this darkness, peace from this agitation, strength from this weakness." And a few days afterwards: "Oh! my friend, do not regret that I am not with you during this time of hard work, which is yet so full and fruitful! I should have done no better than, nor even as well as, your guide, and your dear father would have been less reassured. Shall I confess it? Of all the signs of your vocation, none strikes me so much, nor sets me so much at ease, as the wonderful welcome accorded by your father to what you have told him. There you have certainly an answer from God, and it has reached you—in the way one often sees during a retreat as to one's election—apart from the circumstances in which you were looking for it, in an unexpected form, but in one that gives better assurances than those you were directly asking for. . . . I long to see and embrace you again."

Grave reasons, however, interfered with the resolution already taken; and in order to prepare for the future, Mgr. d'Hulst was so wonderfully considerate

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as himself to direct the preliminary studies of his penitent ; every Sunday, after confession, he explained to the latter the difficulties he might meet with in the manual of Zigliara's philosophy, or in St. Thomas. Would many directors, even if less busy than Mgr. d'Hulst was then, be capable of making such a sacrifice of time ?

A fresh retreat, which I had this time the inestimable advantage of making with him, enabled me to get to know his whole soul. He minutely directed *my exercises* ; he carefully read my impressions, reflections, and the notes I communicated to him, and answered everything *viva voce*, or in writing. Towards the end of the day, he liked to walk in the park of Louville, and spoke in thrilling accents of the beautiful souls into whose intimacy he had been privileged to enter. I was the witness of some of his most admirable flights of piety ; and I cannot think unmoved of some of the prayers he recited with me in his room or in the little village church, especially of his tone of profound conviction when, in the presence of the Most Holy Sacrament, he repeated the act of total oblation of the *Exercises* of St. Ignatius : *Suscipe, Domine, omnem meam libertatem.*

When he had brought into the harbour—*i.e.*, the Oratory—him whose vocation he had thus guided, he did not let him go. From the beginning he forewarned him against illusions and fortified him against trial by a most beautiful and soul-stirring commentary on the Psalm, *Dominus regit me.* Soon, with a few very sober and clear decisions, he settled off-hand certain of the problems that arise in a devout



## The Way of the Heart

soul in the fervour of the noviciate. Did not Mgr. d'Hulst's sovereign skill enable him to enshrine a vast deal of doctrine and wisdom in a very concise phrase containing spiritual sustenance for many and many a month? A single word of his would often illumine a point which troublesome and frequent meditations had only left in obscurity.

The very solemn time of the sacred vows of the subdiaconate was not allowed to pass without words of encouragement from him: "My dearest friend," he wrote, "the news in your letter really touched me to the heart. I am not surprised at the slightly sad tone which to some extent tempers its note of joy. To give oneself with enthusiasm, one must give oneself quite young—this is as true of marriage as of consecration to God—when the soul has not lost the freshness of its impressions and the frankness of its enthusiasm through contact with the experiences of life. But, in the self-offering that comes later and which is less radiant with joy, there may be as much, or even more, love, and that is the only thing God looks for. In your case, there is this in particular, that the delay which your vocation had to encounter gave time for your secular destiny to develop and gain in richness, and that you had to say good-bye to the hopes of this world just when their fairest promises began to take shape for you. God thus showed you that He wanted you to make a conscious and keenly felt sacrifice. And since then, it seems to me that your impressions of the present are just such as correspond with the leadings of Providence, and that they should bring you great peace. As for myself, I knew the honeymoon of a

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vocation without any hindrance or delay, and since then I have had many waste tracks to go through ; and towards the evening of my life, I esteem myself happy to find in this peaceful retreat of Louville, as in the furnace of Paris, the same austere and vigorous feeling as I think I find in you, and which makes me say with less emotion, but with still more conviction, if possible, than twenty-nine years ago : *Funes ceciderunt mihi in præclaris : hæreditas mea præclara est mihi.*<sup>1</sup> Thank you for your confidence and affection. I am longing for you to be a priest, so as to look upon you altogether as a brother."

And when he had helped " this brother " to say his first Mass, he soon afterwards wrote : " What you say of the joy of your first Mass carries me back twenty years, and I recall the same impressions. More even than the subdiaconate, the freshness of the priesthood makes one enjoy the *nuptial union* of the soul with God, which the Holy Scriptures are so full of. No *honeymoon* can have such sweetness, and so fill the heart. Our Lord gives those who have to bear His Cross all their lives the inebriating beverage that used to be given to the condemned to death, and which He denied to Himself. Later on, sweetness grows rarer, but strength remains, and it is always true that *the priest lives of the altar*. My arms and my heart are wide open to welcome you as son, and brother, and friend."

The direction of priests was in the eyes of Mgr. d'Hulst the most honourable, the holiest, and also the most awe-inspiring of labours : " To-day," he

<sup>1</sup> " The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places : for my inheritance is goodly to me." Ps. xv. 6.

## The Way of the Heart

wrote on November 20, 1892, "I had a consolation." A priest who had lost his director had asked the prelate to replace him. It filled him with joy.<sup>1</sup>—It stirred his heart to its depths when he had to conduct a retreat for priests.<sup>2</sup>—With what deep joy did he pass from "the strongest of reproaches" which it was unfortunately necessary to address to some, to considerations of the most elevating and sublime spirituality, which was the attraction and need of the best. "One must always increase in holiness not to decrease," said he; "there is no mid-way, routine never ceasing to lessen and chill us, if an ardent search after perfection do not uplift and enliven us."<sup>3</sup> He would have all priests to be convinced of this.

Nor is it to be wondered at that he preached to souls consecrated to God, either in the cloister by religious profession, or in the world by some special vocation, with singular insistence on the doctrine of *reparation*, a doctrine from which he frequently recruited his powers as from a fountain by intercourse with his sister who was at the convent of *reparatory Adoration*, a doctrine which he said was "at the root of all real spiritual life."<sup>4</sup>—"Yes, my daughter," he writes in a letter given in this collection, "in the world, and beneath a surface that neither *startles* nor *perplexes* anyone, we need souls who love and suffer, and thus make reparation. Our

<sup>1</sup> See Letter 191.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 38. Other references quoted by Mgr. Baudrillart will be found in the Index, under *Direction* (of priests).

<sup>3</sup> To A. B., September 11, 1891.

<sup>4</sup> Letter 42.

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Lord awaits compensation from those who have not abused certain choice graces."<sup>1</sup>

Again: "How grievous are these scandals! Only *the thought of reparation* can temper their bitterness. To take expiation on oneself is to be like Him of whom it is said: *Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit*. If this thought had thoroughly taken possession of us, without running after great penances, should we not give a very different reception from what we usually do to sufferings, vexations, and the dulness and bitterness of our poor lives?"<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, he was far from excluding the *great penances*. Even those who were living in the world, and who aspired to perfection, he called upon to practise the humiliating and painful penances that are approved by the Church, and that are spontaneously sought for by everyone who is eager to make reparation for himself or for others. With regard to such souls, his direction was, one may say, extremely strict. He would not permit the least fancifulness or the least capriciousness on their part, even in what was good, for fancy and caprice are always a way of taking oneself back after having given oneself up. He demanded of them a quasi-religious obedience, and rebuked their shortcomings without leniency: "I knew well," he once wrote, "that my letter would give you a cold douche. I thought it necessary, and am not sorry that I wrote it."<sup>3</sup> If his heart was pained with the trials that fell upon

<sup>1</sup> See Letter 24.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 78. For other references to *Reparation*, see Index.

<sup>3</sup> To X, September 5, 1889.

## The Way of the Heart

souls dear to him, he was brave enough not to pray for them to be cut short.<sup>1</sup> He thus gives his reasons : " When a soul has been chosen for this hard mission (for reparation) it must be brave enough to recognize therein a special grace, a privilege of the great love, of which eternity will be long enough to relish the sweetness, and of which time must not seem too long to taste the bitterness."<sup>2</sup> . . . " I will not remove the chalice from your lips, but in taking it from my hand I think you will be still more certain that it is offered you by the hand of God."<sup>3</sup>

Learned, theological, lucid, varied, firm, supernatural, and austere. Mgr. d'Hulst's direction was also sincere. I mean he was ever anxious to practise himself what he counselled others to do. This anxiety comes out in the shape of aspirations, regrets, and resolutions in a large number of his letters.

All we know of Mgr. d'Hulst's life proves that he did not stop short at desires and words: his actions were in accordance with his teaching.

Now a word about the following letters. They are addressed to a penitent whom Mgr. d'Hulst directed without interruption for twenty-one years, from 1875 to 1896. She lived in the country, and only came to Paris for brief visits, a circumstance which, together with the great interior trials, of which the traces may be seen in the letters, accounts for their considerable numbers. There were more than five hundred, besides a few notes on special questions; about two or three letters a month on the average.

<sup>1</sup> Letter 253.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 233.  
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<sup>3</sup> Letter 187.

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I do not publish the correspondence in its entirety ; many of the letters touch mainly or in part on family matters, or on subjects of too intimate a character. Hence, in agreement with the person concerned, and whom I thank for her confidence, I have chosen a certain number of letters, or portions of letters, which seemed to us to be such as might interest the Christian public, without compromising anyone's private affairs. The text is published faithfully according to the original ; there is no patching together, nor juxtaposition, nor blending of similar letters ; only that has been omitted which it was thought right to omit ; but the pages contain nothing that is not Mgr. d'Hulst's.

This correspondence seemed to us such as might be helpful to many souls, and that is the sole reason that has led its recipient to decide not to keep the benefit of it entirely to herself, despite a certain sense of repugnance which it is easy to understand.

To begin with, it often treats of general questions possessing a permanent interest for all Christians. In it will be found admirable reflections on all the great feasts of the Church's year, and dogmatic expositions of high importance as to the faith, the salvation of souls outside the ordinary channels, true and false mysticism, illusions in the spiritual life, Indulgences and the Jubilee, Purgatory, and Holy Scripture.

But above all do these letters answer to that state of mind which is so often met with to-day amongst what are called the more enlightened classes. How many are there, who feel they are Christians at heart and also in conduct, and who cannot avoid a certain

## The Way of the Heart

uneasiness of mind, when they are called upon to meet so many negations, controversies, criticisms, and historical, scientific, and philosophic systems, opposed to Christian dogma! But, such is just the disposition—as will be noted in reading these letters—of Mgr. d'Hulst's correspondent. Brought up in highly refined and educated surroundings, under the lofty guidance of a father endued with all the moral virtues, but a disciple of Jouffroy, Cousin, Simon, and the like, satisfied after all with their spiritual teaching and with natural religion in the sense in which they understood it, she, too, had a rationalistic mind; and yet Jesus Christ took her in hand, and, without ever quite liberating her intelligence from its clouds, won her heart and made Himself the Master of her life to such an extent as to pledge her to the highest ways of renunciation and charity. How this possession of one's whole being by divine Love is a substantial proof of the reality of the divine, how such action demonstrates that there is an agent, this is what Mgr. d'Hulst sets himself to make good, and, guided as he is by the sanest and soundest of theology, he never falls into the errors of illuminism or personal eccentricity.

This particular point of view must be borne in mind in order to understand here and there a phrase in Mgr. d'Hulst's letters, which skilful and refined malevolence, or unhappy tendencies in search of support, might try to exploit. Let the reader bear in mind the definite evil, the actual suffering, for which he had to provide a remedy, and he will acknowledge that never, on a single point, did this correspondence, which overflows with the *spirit of faith*, sacrifice the

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*faith.* Thus, indeed, is to be explained the avowal—which Mgr. d'Hulst does not shrink from making, and which I do not shrink from reproducing—*of the difficulties of believing*, which, in our days, sometimes occur to the mind of the priest himself, when he spends his life amidst men of intelligence, and has to deal with the great problems that are discussed among them. Let those who are in such circumstances learn from Mgr. d'Hulst how to triumph over such difficulties, and how to turn them to the profit of the divine life, either in the soul of the priest, or in that of a true and simple Christian.

The Spiritual Letters of Bossuet and of Fénelon are assuredly for all times, and there will always be those who will find sustenance in the use of them; but each age has its own requirements, and many people need some echo of their own days in what they read. This is the *raison d'être* of this undertaking, the fruits of which we implore God to bless.

ALFRED BAUDRILLART.





# THE WAY OF THE HEART

## 1

MY DEAREST CHILD,

June 7, 1875.

Your very daughterly letter gave me true joy. Our Lord is taking your heart by degrees. He is kindling in it that thirst for the divine which He alone can satisfy. Nor is this His work only of to-day. When you thought you were far from Him, it was He whom your heart was seeking all unconsciously, and it was this irresistible need of Him that led you in spite of yourself to His feet. I only want to make you a *Sepolta viva*,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, to inter your natural and earthly life in the divine and life-giving love of our Redeemer; but to effect this, there is no need for you to quit the world; beneath the silk, as well as the hair cloth and the drugget, a heart may beat for the One only amiable; and this love communicated by God to man is of such a nature as to expel or exclude no other, provided it be lawful and pure: the love of the beautiful, the love of the true, the love of child, wife, and mother, all that thrills us with any noble feeling finds its place in the heart beside the love of Jesus, under the shadow of His protection, under the hallowing influ-

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the Convent at Rome in which the nuns are commonly known as *Sepolte vive*, "the Buried Alive."

## The Way of the Heart

ence of His divine nearness. Sometimes, no doubt. His love grows jealous and desires the soul to whom He gives Himself to forget everything and to change the sweet name of daughter for the name of spouse ; but when that is His desire. He can make it known so plainly that it cannot be ignored. *There is only one thing needful*, to love God above all things. But this unique knowledge has been acquired by holy women as well as virgins, and perfection in the case of both consisted in corresponding with God's designs as to themselves. Such, too, is your wish ; utter it to God with all confidence. Ask for the light you need not to miss your way, and above all for generous fidelity in following such illumination as is given. It will be enough, in spite of the dimness which will not fail to hide it at times.

Write to me as soon as you get back. I bless you with all my heart.

### 2

MY DEAR CHILD.

July 21, 1875.

You did not promise to write, but I hoped you would do so all the same. As I am spending the day at Lourdes, I feel the memcry of those whom God has given me weighing upon me. Your name and needs occur to me as I pray. I was anxious to tell you this, and to beg you also not to close your heart to God, because God wants to fill it, and it wants to be filled with God.

## Letters 3 and 4

### 3

DEAR CHILD,

September (?), 1875

Would that your delicacy and reserve and discretion were more common! Thank you for what you have said, and for the simplicity with which you have said it. I am entirely of your way of thinking as to the danger of being too much taken up with oneself, and of troubling others too much about oneself. Only I think your nature keeps you too far from any peril of the kind for you to need to fear it. I should rather dread that you might be disposed to be excessively shy, and thus led to recoil upon yourself through not daring to come out of yourself. My imperious tone was only meant to calm your scruples. Indeed, I want you to write to me in a fortnight's time.

### 4

October 29, 1875.

Before seeing you to-morrow, I wish to thank you for your letter. I understand that you have long had the desire and the will to open your mind to me; but this is the first time you have succeeded in doing it. Thank God for it! I do not despair of seeing you one day get over the *stupefying* impression confession makes upon you.

Be sure that I had plainly perceived the movement of your soul towards God, and that I was only waiting for the avowal of it from your lips. Let me trust that they will one day finish what your pen has begun.

## The Way of the Heart

Meanwhile, live from day to day. Yes! it is just this kind of childlike confidence that pleases God: "The Lord leadeth<sup>1</sup> me: and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture." Sing thus with David, and do not worry about anything else. . . . Plunge into prayer, not protracting it at great length, but entering more deeply into intercourse with God in it, and keeping more united with Him throughout the day. When your heart and will are one with His, you will be sure of not missing your way in this world.

I bless you in the name of our divine Lord.

### 5

*January 21, 1876 (Feast of St. Agnes).*

St. Agnes was only thirteen. She saw the unseen Bridegroom, then would have no other. Torments did not affright her, and death united her with her *Fiancé*. God forbid that I should be an adversary of the divine Bridegroom if He has set His choice upon you! I am dedicated to Him, not to turn souls away from Him, but to make them hearken to His call.

. . . Be gentle and kind, wait with your eyes closed, be patient with men and things, and with yourself. Say to yourself that, if nothing in the world can take God's place in your heart, on the other hand, God makes up for everything, God is all-sufficing, and, since God is everywhere, even in your family, even in the ball-room,—be satisfied with Him, and lean upon Him alone. If you were

<sup>1</sup> Approved Douai version gives "ruleth."

## Letter 6

able to go into a convent now, what else would you want than God? Then, love Him where you are that you may deserve to be taken and led by Him where you are not. If you do that, you will oblige our Lord to become responsible for your career. . . . He may, indeed, leave you for a time in the *sorrowful night* (He went through it Himself at Gethsemani), but it will be in order to purge you of all the dross of this world, to destroy all of the past that clings to your soul, to make it humble by humiliation; and when that has once been done, He will tear away every veil, beat down every barrier, and strike off every chain.

### 6

May 11, 1876.

How I thank the Lord for opening your heart to me! Now, you will let me—will you not?—keep the key you have given me. And I mean to keep you from being free to do without God. Our Lord has given me your soul, and I shall keep it. I will even keep it against yourself.

You shall have my panegyric on Joan of Arc in a few days. I had you in mind and worked for you when I introduced into it the theory of mysticism which I had promised you. Of all the souls I have known, you are the most evidently mystical. Mysticism is for you the only means of salvation. Our Lord does not want to let you see Him, but feel Him. He is your Master, and it is not for you to refuse what He offers you under the pretext of preferring what He refuses you. In heaven you will see and feel at the same time.

## The Way of the Heart

7

July 18, 1876.

No, my child, I shall not think you are too good, and I expect still to meet with a good many shortcomings. However, can you prevent me from acknowledging and blessing the visible action of the invisible Friend, when He is able to make Himself known to your soul amidst the enemy's camp? When He chose your soul, our Lord set you apart for many struggles and sufferings, and your poor lower *self* may well complain, and declare that it would much rather have the flesh-pots of Egypt than the manna that is so spiritual and so dearly won. But what of that? All this does not alter the fact that God has chosen you, and, in times of trouble, you may, strange as it may seem, well and rightly reason thus: God has taken me, therefore *He* exists. The Gospel, the Cross, the Eucharist, all the forms in which the divine Love is communicated to the heart of man, all that grips me in my own despite, therefore all that exists.

From time to time let me have a few lines from you about yourself. Throw yourself more than ever into the arms of Him who has vowed to give you no peace apart from Himself. I bless you in His name.

8

August 29, 1876.

What you tell me of your confessions was just what I expected, but what can be done? I cannot invent sins for you to avow. I beg you to consider me as a stranger when I am behind the grating.

6

## Letter 9

How can you say that you cannot think that I am there *for someone else*? Good heavens! what should I be doing there in my own name? And what would you be doing, if you were at the feet of a man who was only a man? As for myself, I own that I find nothing easier than seeing our Lord in the priest, when I am making my confession. And, although confession always costs me a great deal, I experience a real joy in abasing myself before Jesus Christ visible, and I should assuredly not have the courage to do it, by way of conversation, before my fellow-man. But repugnances are as various as attractions. Happily neither repugnance nor attraction is our guide, but the will of God. This adorable will it was that attracted you without your knowing it, that caught you in the fisherman's net, that sustains you apart from all sensible support in the hard and difficult path in which it means you to walk. . . . May this good Master strengthen and bless you, and thankful indeed should I be were He pleased to add to His strengthening grace a little consolation.

9

December 16, 1877.

Your letter finds me in retreat, and I am taking a moment of solitary leisure to reply. It was welcome after all the long waiting for it, and because of all its good things when it came. That Italy had a feast of intellect in store for you I well knew, but as our Lord continues to make you feel the need of Him, *manco male, tutto va bene!*

\* \* \* \* \*



## The Way of the Heart

I am specially touched, my child, by the maternal care with which God is dealing with you. He knows that your spiritual life is as *isolated* as can be possibly conceived. He knows this, because it is He who has thus ordained it, since He Himself has set it in surroundings so far from His divine influence. Then, too, He is holding your hand in His. He is drawing you to Himself apparently unaided. He is revealing Himself to you in the beauty of creatures, and yet He does not allow uncreated Beauty to fade from before your eyes. Give yourself up to Him unreservedly, my child, for He is all your defence. Fear not His working : it is as gentle as it is powerful, as careful as it is mighty, as patient as it is jealous, and our only dread should be that of hindering it by our resistance.

Firmly shut to the gate of the inner sanctuary wherein dwells the Guest so full of sweetness—*dulcis hospes animæ* ;<sup>1</sup> and then give yourself up to the outpouring of that earthly admiration which always has its heavenly side ; for, as Father Gratry says : " Neither heart, nor imagination, nor prayer can go too far. All is fairer than our dreams. All is greater than our thoughts."

### 10

March 10, 1878.

. . . If you could only make up your mind sometimes, and even frequently, to think aloud as you have done in this letter, you would give me an opportunity and a means of hearing your soul's true note, a key-note which I can divine, but which

<sup>1</sup> The soul's sweet Guest.

## Letter 11

your lips hardly deliver. I should then find it easier to send you back the echo of mine, which is neither deaf nor dumb so far as you are concerned.

Some day we shall both discover the use of all these delays and mists and sufferings. We shall find out how they have liberated, uplifted, and given you pliancy in God's hands; how they have transplanted you from the cold regions, in which I used to see your soul lingering on benumbed, to those illumined by the light and warmth of the sun of truth and love. Meanwhile, like some docile chrysalis, submit to temporary burial, and while away its weariness beneath the spell which Jesus casts on all those who take Him at His word, when He says : *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* We need no special claims to be of those to whom He speaks, for He says *all you*, or rather, our real claim consists in our burdens and infirmities.

Go then to Jesus with your heart, O child of grace, whose mind takes in all that is of earth, but of God nothing but His love ! What does the road matter, as long as we get to the end ? To-day Physics anticipates a speedy identification of heat with light : the identity was recognized long ago in that inner world in which God is the sun.

11

April 7, 1878.

This time the note is sad, and there is no echo of joy in it, not even of higher and spiritual joy. And does not this accord with Passion-tide ? To-day

## The Way of the Heart

the liturgy veils the statues and silences the organ : your soul is like the churches, which are draped in purple and silent. Believe me, you may take this external resemblance as an encouragement to aim at a closer conformity with Jesus suffering. If He specially loves to reveal Himself to your heart, in what way can He speak to you more plainly than by the mystery of His sorrows ? There are those who are afraid to deal with the Passion of Jesus Christ. They know not, indeed, that here alone is revealed to wretched and sinful man the sweet secret of trusting in God ! Heaven, its bliss, perfection, the ideal, all this is maddening to dwell upon, if we have to come back to self and say : All that is not for me. But when I see all that coming down to me in my prison-cell, taking upon it my covering of wretchedness, doing miracle after miracle to borrow my capacity for suffering and death, I try to find some explanation, and there is no other than love. No : not even mercy will do to explain all that. If God is pitiful only, then let Him forgive ! if He desires reparation, let Him ask for it of His Son Jesus Christ ! A single sigh of the Man-God will wipe out all the debt. But if it be a question of winning my heart, of getting it to retrace the steps by which it has wandered off into selfishness, of restoring my hope in the love I have misunderstood, then the Passion is just what is wanted : there is nothing in it that oversteps the mark, and the more the sorrows the more the declarations, the invitations, the provocations of love ; and you know how love that invites likes to repeat its invitations ; you know how love that is invited likes to hear an assur-

## Letter 12

ance that it is loved ; thank God ! here the repetition is so incessant, from the Cenacle to Calvary, taking in Gethsemani and Pilate's Hall on the way. And after all this, who can doubt that mankind has found its friend ? He alone who looks on things from the outside. But I, my child, am here to bid you look on them from within.

Well, this is a sermon : and what else can I send you ? God knows that your human happiness (not to speak of the other) is nearer my heart than I can say. But so long as it lies hid, the only thing to do is to be philosophical while waiting for it, and we must select our philosophy. I might have made use of the Stoic motto which says : *It is necessary*. I prefer to send you another and, I think, a better consolation : " It is the mysterious law of Unseen Love." Unseen it was, but the Passion has revealed it to us, and *we*, says St. John, *have known, and have believed the charity, which God hath to us*.

## 12

MY CHILD,

October 13, 1878.

You are the most gentle and indulgent, I may say almost the only indulgent one, of my innumerable creditors. Your excellent letter deserved a speedy and excellent reply. Though I did not answer, you took your revenge by a letter which was better than the first. Really, it almost dispenses me from replying, for I can never tell you what you want to hear as well as you have said it to yourself. Yet I am using the first opportunity of leisure, not

## The Way of the Heart

only because my feelings incline me that way, but because I well know that we like hearing from others the truths we know best, especially if those others have some authority to speak to us in God's name.

Let me then repeat your words and make them my own, when I bid you "to make terms with the tempests, to let God do all within you and for you, to think of God and to love Him, to trust in Him without striving, and, when faith seems to fail you, to replace it with love." All this, or pretty nearly all this, is a quotation from your letter, and it is all as true as gold in your case. Not that I think you wanting in faith, but you think you are wanting in it, and therefore you must act as if you had to replace it, and choose love as your supplement.

This is how I understand faith. We cannot see, our eyes are bandaged, but God speaks. He says: "I am here; follow Me." We take Him at His word, and walk in the direction in which He calls us, till at last we come to a place where the bandage drops off and the light is shining, where we can see God and cast ourselves into His arms.

If you reply: I don't hear God's voice, so I have no faith; but I feel Him near me and take His arm. He leads me on, sustains and guides me. Then I answer: it is all one and the same thing; for, whether you are led by His hand or His word, you will get equally well to the land of light, and even before you get there, if you hold your Father's hand, you can kiss it, and have some foretaste of His eternal embrace.

You feel a zeal for making Him known and loved. This is an indisputable proof of the presence of His

## Letter 13

love in you. Abandon yourself, my child, to this generous ambition, and offer God, who is so lovable and so little loved, the love-offering of your grief over the susceptibility, jealousy, and narrowness of those who use His service as a means of giving vent to their petty and selfish impulses. Imitate the divine gentleness of the indulgent Master who can disengage from all the alloy the little vein of good gold, for it is there. . . .

My long silence is not very encouraging to correspondence, and yet I assure you that the postman, who is my worst enemy, is transformed into a friend when he brings me a letter with a —— postmark on it. So let me have an opportunity of often giving the rascal a welcome.

13

*November 28, 1878.*

Without your knowing it, I often send you kind remembrances from Paris to —— viâ the central office which is known as the divine Heart! And I not only pray for you, I give thanks too, for there is good reason for thankfulness! What a long way you have travelled, without yourself having had much to do with it, since I first saw you and to-day! Our Lord has done all the work, and He has persisted in His own plan, which I thought I had discovered at the outset. It consists in appealing to your heart. Let us not quibble with Him as to the means: the result is good and divine, for the result of it all is that you can no longer do without Him! What a good thing! for He, indeed, wishes not to do without you. In His greatness and riches He

## The Way of the Heart

assumes an attitude of poverty : He begs, He waits, He persists—He suffers rebuffs—He is not discouraged by silence and closed doors, He goes on knocking : if He is denied bread, He begs for crumbs, and He takes no rest until He has been given a little of our hearts. As if He really had any need of them ! But, O wonder ! No sooner have we given Him our little nothings—it is we who are taken : we thought that we were doing Him a favour—we have become His property.—Is not this a lovely wife ? . . .

Do good to your girls gather together your worries and vexations—all that is good—very good. Your devotion must not be all sentiment. Love looks for works. Write me a long letter soon.

14

*June 14, 1879.*

“ Forgotten you ! ” How am I to explain to you the difference between “ neglecting ” and “ forgetting. ” and that, if I have done the former, I cannot do the latter where you are concerned ?

No, in all seriousness, even if I wished to do so, I could not forget you, that is to say, pass any considerable time, a few days in succession, without thinking of you and your soul, and of its isolation and struggles and sufferings. And if this assurance, which I give you before God, can keep you company while you are waiting for my letters, it will be a consolation to me. Why should there be any presumption in thinking that your offers have been accepted ? Does one wrong God at all by counting on His love, and on the intercourse established

## Letter 15

between Him and ourselves by that love? For my part, dear child, I doubt not but that you have there discovered the true explanation of your spiritual trials, and I thank you for telling me about it. I did not know that you had thus offered your inward peace to get light for others; but I highly approve your having done so, and henceforward I shall unite with your prayers with greater confidence. God's answer to your offer was not the one you were expecting, however . . .

### 15

*August 21, 1879.*

Your letter of July 18 showed that you were depressed with melancholy. What a fine sermon I was about to preach to you on the benefit you ought to elicit from this trial! But on reading your letter over again, I see you have done this yourself, and in a very masterly way too. . . .

. . . Yes. I let you lament, my child, and I only complain of one thing, that you don't do it more often. Why do you wait for me to reply? Why not oblige me to commence a dialogue by persisting in your monologue? . . . why do you let me be dumb for a whole month, naughty child? Happily, there are other answers than those the postman brings! Is not God the real means of communication between souls? the communion we profess to believe in in the Creed—"I believe in the Communion of Saints"?



## The Way of the Heart

16

September 4, 1879.

How right you are in thinking that your way does not lie in becoming detached from your surroundings! Or rather, does not true detachment consist in giving oneself up to others? Cannot you constantly say to God: "O supreme Good, fill my heart—and if Thou please to do so without telling me, and without allowing me to have the joy of feeling it, I will work for Thee meanwhile, I will be Thy handmaid, and in Thy name I will spread a little happiness and peace, and I will bring souls some more or less clear reflection of Thy essential goodness." That means great detachment, my child, because it means great self-forgetfulness. Do not be afraid of too much self-forgetfulness. "He who loses his life for My sake shall find it." You will have all eternity for finding yourself in Him for whom you are losing, and now *omitting*, yourself. And all the time He is thinking of you, and caring for you just so far as you are forgetting yourself for Him. . . .

17

October 23, 1879.

Thank God, you have at last broken through all the ice, and put your whole bunch of keys into my hands.

If some of my suggestions appeared to you astonishing, it is because I wanted to try every door to help you to unlock the right one. Your *avowal* did not surprise me. I have been suspecting it for some time.

16

## Letter 18

You need little fear illusion, just because you dread it so much, and are on your guard against it. Besides, illusions, so far as external penances are concerned, only spring from two things: either pride, when our little efforts puff us up, and fill us with a lofty notion of our own virtue; or else curiosity, when what we are trying to get out of them is the fascination of the unknown and the mysterious, and not a real death to self.

The first of these dangers is not to be feared in your case; on the contrary, I think it will rather help you to humble yourself, when from time to time you feel your own weakness under suffering.

The second seems to me still further removed from you. For, had you been yielding to childish curiosity, you would already have had more than enough of it, and especially you would not find the days of abstinence so long, and would be rather hindered than helped by your mortification of the senses.

Hence I do not hesitate to recognize the working of the Holy Ghost in the attractions to which you yielded at last after overcoming the violent opposition of human respect.

18

*November 3, 1879.*

You are badly overworked and need rest. Don't scruple about taking a larger dose of sleep. . . .

. . . Mortification is not synonymous with murder. Let us now talk of something else. Look at Jesus opening His school of happiness in this world, and take your place in the group of those who are sitting at the foot of the mountain to listen to His divine

## The Way of the Heart

paradoxes. Observe how, after defying reason, He always satisfies it with some good reason that owes its value to the *power* and the *love* of Him who puts it forward. "Blessed are they that mourn." To have any right to say that, He must be able to add: "for they shall be comforted." And so it is with the rest. Above all I commend to you the Beatitude of the "hungry" and the "thirsty," and the promise that accompanies it, "for they shall have their fill."

### 19

May 26, 1830.

The meditation on lukewarmness is not by St. Ignatius. It is one of the optional meditations added by the Jesuits for the sake of those who want to extend the *First Week*.

Hence the words of this meditation are of much less authority than those that are a part of the text of the *Exercises*. But if they be taken as they are, they by no means indicate that your state is one of lukewarmness. There are a host of features in the picture which show more contrast than likeness, and in the case of the rest, the likeness is only apparent. As to the fifth rule for the discernment of spirits which you quote against me, I have read it over again, and I persist in seeing in it not any reason for suspecting, but an urgent reason for welcoming with simplicity and for following with docility the influence you feel, which is divine.

Therefore, my child, do not reproach yourself with being a visionary or a fanatic, nor with being effeminate and lukewarm, but for being distrustful

## Letter 19

of Him who has done everything for you, and who, when you were far from Him, *prevented you with blessings of sweetness*, to use the words of Psalm xx.

The love of souls is one of the surest signs of His Spirit, and when you feel it you should abandon yourself to it with joy. When one feels ashamed of talking of fervour without being fervent, of humility without being humble, one experiences a shame which is well known to priests of Jesus Christ, and which is sweet and salutary indeed; one humbles oneself and goes on serving the divine Master in the hearts of others while serving Him so poorly in one's own.

Another mark of the Spirit of Jesus is having a feeling of *His importunities*. When you saw an unworthy person receiving communion, and appreciated the peculiar grievance inflicted on Jesus by those who offend Him only in little things, but by resisting great graces, you were immediately under the influence of His Spirit.

Why do you break off your story to say: *but all this means nothing, does it?* Do you still feel human respect even where I am concerned? Are you never going to be *a little child?*

I have promised to help you to get to know Mary, and to tell you what she should be, especially to you, my child. The matter is quite plain. God wants you for Himself. The essence of your religion is love; its hindrance is distrust. The hindrance will vanish, the essence will increase, when the spirit of the child has gained possession of your soul: and the spirit of the child will make you enter into the family of God as God has formed it, that is to

## The Way of the Heart

say, with Mary as its Mother. You cannot have it otherwise. Jesus was given to us by Mary, and also all goods with Him. You cannot help Jesus loving Mary above all things and being pleased at seeing her loved; you cannot help His Spirit inspiring souls with feelings like His own with regard to His Mother. All this is true of everybody. But, just because your religion is more toilsome, more contradicted and tried within you, more beaten upon by the winds of temptation to doubt from outside, you have an especial need of this gentle remedy, which softens and simplifies, dilates and restores to calmness, and imparts generosity to the soul by hope.

There is my secret, beloved child; there is no great mystery about it, but it is efficacious. Try it, and, instead of being jealous for Jesus' sake of the moments you give to Mary, take Mary as your patron, not of your outward devotion, which does for ordinary people; but take her as the patron of your interior life; have recourse to her on all occasions; give her half of all your prayers, and a share in all the events that take place in your inner kingdom: joys, sorrows, temptations, and desires; pray to her to lead you to her Son with her own hand, so that you may be sure of making no mistakes and of not getting tired in seeking Him.

20

*June 11, 1880.*

Not only is your rector right in entrusting souls to your care, and not only are you not wrong in showing yourself to them other than you feel that you are, but to do so is a real duty in your case.

20

## Letter 21

. . . When I say : *God wants you to be His daughter, until He tells you whether He wants you to be His bride*, do you think that I, indeed, have much doubt as to whether it is not *already settled* ?

. . . My child, in this life in which so many things are doubtful, there are some that are certain : and amongst these I set the twofold reality of Jesus' love for you and of your love for Him. Believe the assurance I give you in His name ; and serve Him without any mistrust either of Him or of yourself.

### 21

*August 9, 1880.*

. . . Here we have your inward trial in another shape, my child : after or accompanying the trial of faith, here is a painful sense of impotence for good, the fear of spoiling God's work by touching it, the poignant regret of not answering to His insistent, universal, and jealous appeal in all its fulness, when the Master addresses you with it incessantly. Is that the position ? If so, my daughter, I shall say : " All is well ! " — " What a strange father ! " you will say : " He is only satisfied when I am miserable. " No, no, my child, that is not so. I am very pleased when Jesus gives you consolation, and sometimes I ask Him to spoil you a little. But to speak in a more general way, I am very pleased when I can ascertain by sure signs that He is busying Himself with you, and working in your soul, and I cannot forget that one of His most powerful means of working in it is suffering. And then, I remembered asking you last year if you felt any attraction for humility. And you answered me with that kind

## The Way of the Heart

of look of a startled cat which was you went, and which you still sometimes assume when I am driving home some point or other rather directly and deeply within you: "Humility! It is one of the things I know nothing of." I could not quite make out whether you felt a baffled attraction for this fundamental virtue, or if you were still indifferent about it. I was inclined towards the former supposition. To-day I see that our Lord means to rule the latter out altogether. He will no longer let you be indifferent as to a virtue which He has so much at heart. And so, what is He doing? He is *emptying* you inwardly of all trust in self. He is giving you a sense of your own uselessness, of doing harm to the work you undertake, and of being, in your inner life, deplorably below what you ought to be. This feeling only answers very imperfectly to the reality. But the work He is carrying on within you is very hard, very effective, and very sanctifying. He is getting you ready to be, both inwardly and outwardly, a docile tool of God. And this is why, my child, I cannot be grieved as to your suffering. If I were to grieve over it, it would be a weakness of human friendship. And you would not like me to give way to such a weakness, would you? (Unfortunately, I am quite capable of doing so.)

22

September 25, 1830.

If I put off writing to you any longer, you would be here before I had done so, and I don't want that to occur. I might not be able to tell you to your

## Letter 23

face how pleased I was with your last letter. It was just what a letter ought to be, and had the precious visit no other result than to set your heart and pen aflow, it would not have been wasted. It was not only quite charming, which cannot be disputed, but it was also really beneficial, so I shall make no resolution not to repeat it.

So it is settled, you are to become more simple. . . . Yes, my child, the visit drew me very closely to your parents, in a different way to each of them, though perhaps more deeply to your dear father, whose moral nature I admire and immensely like. I only fear one thing, his excessive honesty, and the confidence it gives him, or ought to give him, in himself. He is so straightforward that, if he could bow his head under any feeling of remorse, I should think he was nearer the kingdom of God. Humility is necessary for every being who would approach the Crib or the Cross. But humility is easy to the guilty; it is terribly difficult for the just of this world. To bow the oak requires a mighty wind of grace, and to make this wind blow, imperative appeals of prayer, penance, and love. . . . Is not all this your "vocation" ?

23

*September 30, 1880.*

I feel sure that the little attack of depression which you have been passing through is mainly, perhaps solely, due to an excess of bodily fatigue. You have been leading three lives at the same time, which is one too many, and you have paid for it. Still, you could scarcely do otherwise; only it is a



## The Way of the Heart

consolation to think that bodily fatigue is almost alone the cause of the interior trial. Moreover, I will not allow you to call indolence the modest provision you have made in the way of sleep, which obedience will always oblige you to make (note this well) in any like circumstances.

Now, what is the meaning of this wish to die? It is quite permissible to ask our Lord to set an end to the time of exile. But if the wish be merely slackness, a desire to have an end of things and to get rid of them as cheaply as possible, it is only pusillanimity. There is no harm in feeling it, but one must not linger in it.

I believe you have very rarely had the *feeling* of hope, an inner thrill at the thought of eternal life. Did you experience it this time, and was that partly the cause of your envy of those who are passing away? Tell me without any sense of human respect.

What is good, and altogether good, is to understand after all that there must be no resistance of our Lord, nor bargaining with Him about the possession of your being. Therefore let Him act, and be lost in admiration at His being willing to have and to take you thus, and do not let this prevent you from giving yourself up freely too! Jesus has the right to take without leave, and He also loves to receive what is freely offered Him. *Take and receive*, such is the beginning of St. Ignatius' fine offering in his contemplation of divine love.

## Letter 24

24

November 19, 1880.

You are right, my daughter, to blame yourself for *fantasia* in the arrangement of your life. Naturally legitimate, and very pleasant ; but I am seriously inclined to think your vocation is to something better ; you are *given*, and so caprice, even in what is good, is a way of getting yourself back again. To ignore all measure on the days when, either from being displeased with self or from being sensibly borne along by grace, one is strongly drawn towards penance, is far less profitable and meritorious than to conquer self with measure on the day fixed, when one always has a desire to do nothing. You feel the need of a strict rule, and I also feel that you need it. The difficult thing is to adapt it to the demands of your family and health and circumstances. And these difficulties are what prevent me from bringing the details of your plan of life under the promise of obedience. But while maintaining a fitting latitude, subject to the judgment of your good sense, I wish the observance of your rule to be protected by the *spirit* of your promise.

Yes, my daughter, *in the world*, and beneath a surface that neither *startles* nor *perplexes* anyone, we need souls who love and suffer, and thus make reparation. Our Lord awaits compensation from those who have not abused certain choice graces.

## The Way of the Heart

25

*December 13, 1880.*

. . . You have certainly suffered a good deal, since you have prayed and accepted this storm as a new form of trial, and since you found therein at last the grace of inward humiliation. Oh! indeed it is no small undertaking to give oneself to God! It is so hard and it lasts so long, it is so thwarted and often veiled with gloom, that were it "our undertaking" we should never have a notion of it, nor could we persevere in it for a single week. But, my child, it is not our enterprise. "You have not chosen Me," says our Lord to the Apostles, "but I have chosen you." Of whom is this truer than of you? When did you think of choosing our Lord? What were you thinking of when He came to take you? What did you know of the path on which He was setting your feet? Yet there you are in that path. He who has put you therein, who has removed from you all that could satisfy you in this world, and has taken from your heart all that was within your reach, He knew from the very first where He was leading you. He saw beforehand all the struggles of mind, struggles of the imagination, struggles with human respect, struggles with misgivings about the supernatural, human desires returning to the attack, lingering outcries of the heart of flesh coming after the ineffable hours in which self-immolation seemed so sweet, He foresaw all that as your Master and Creator, who intends and does all that He sees except moral evil. Is it not enough to know that the whole list is prepared by

## Letter 25

His hand, and when, in His merciful loving-kindness, He mingles a little of His heavenly sweetness with the bitterness of humiliating depression, is anything more needed to enable one to recognize Him amidst all the darkness, just as the wayfarers of Emmaus knew Him in the breaking of bread?

My daughter, I was waiting for this attack of human feeling before I could definitely believe in the call that marks your place for time and for eternity among those souls who *sing the new canticle made only for those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*. The seal of this trial had to be set on all the signs that showed your vocation: natural and lawful desires taking an appearance of inward temptation, affecting its characteristics and producing its effects, so that it might be clear that what is open to others is closed to you, because God wills to open to you what remains closed to the majority:—and that, not because you are any better than others, not because you are above such weaknesses (far from it, you experience them), but because it has pleased the *Lord of all things* to choose you for a better love, and to follow up its austere claims in you with a divine jealousy.

The passage of the *Imitation of Christ* which comforted you was indeed made for you, not only the words you quote, but the context and the whole of the chapter. Read again, too, Chapter VIII of Book II. What gives a final touch to my joy is that your storm passed away in one of Mary's smiles. That is a good sign indeed, it would be enough without the rest!

Yes, my child, I am quite willing to share the

## The Way of the Heart

graces I get from my *Exercises*. These few days are my spiritual bath. I could not live without this refreshment, and when the closing months of the year approach I yearn for it with all my heart. Do not think that they are days of delight on that account! No: they mean hard work, sometimes dryness, but they always bring forth these three blessed results, humiliation, hope, and desire.

26

MY CHILD,

April 5, 1881.

Now it is your game! Now it is you who think me close, and, *what is worse*, one who shuts up others! I did not think I was close with you, and if you were my director I think I should open myself out to you with joy. But I have not to give you an account of my soul, but I have to hear about yours, and in spite of all your good intentions, even this morning you hardly succeeded in telling me about it. As you were leaving, the dispute about the medal was on the point of setting you going, but time was slipping away, and I had to go out.

No, I do not think you proud *in yourself*, but your mental training has been so, for rationalism is made of pride. If it pleases God to take on Himself our humanity, and if He therefore gives Himself to us and gives us a Mother, and if this Mother loves us to trust in her and to love her, and if she takes pleasure in the naïve signs of our confidence, in the sensible proofs we give of our professions that we are hers, what canst thou say in reply, O proud reason of a woman that art not proud? You were

## Letter 27

no Christian, my child, and *consciously* you had done nothing to become one. But God found an entrance into your soul by the ill-guarded gate of your heart, and took possession of you by surprise. That was wonderful and divine ; but the work of Christianizing you is not completed : there are first rudiments known by those who have led a Christian life which are still unknown to you. The Master who has Himself inoculated you with the main thing will be able to add what is superfluous or secondary ; neither you nor I will urge Him on. But from time to time I shall make a little endeavour ; and when I make you kneel down, this is all that I am doing.

I bless you, my child.

27

May 15, 1881.

I was only able to find time to read the famous article yesterday. What can I say, my child ? that I can't understand how it upset you ? Well, no ! I can understand.

Those who upset have easy work. To give weight to a note of interrogation requires neither knowledge nor sincerity nor logic, one only has to put the question. Doubt breeds doubt, that is only natural. But let me add that the contagious result of the doubt is proportional, on the one hand to the disposition of mind of the recipient, on the other to the worth of the mind which disseminates it.

The effect in your case was great, because of the primary element in yourself, your constitutional malady. Everyone here, even the unbelievers, agrees that Havet is talking about what he knows

## The Way of the Heart

nothing of when he touches on these matters. Five years ago, did he not venture to say, in this same series, that the whole of the Old Testament, including the Pentateuch, may have been written fifty years before Christ? As to biblical questions and Christian origins, he does not even know enough to suspect the hidden reefs. But what really shocks one is his impudent assumptions. Not only does he reject the supernatural, *a priori*, declaring that attested facts are false when they have such a character, but also anything wonderful, anything that will not square with his thesis. Thus, Jesus could not have been buffeted before the high priest, because that would show a strange notion of police regulations in court. Therefore, it never took place; and since it is narrated in the Gospel, the Gospel must be fabulous. I wish I had time to discuss the miserable article with you; you would not have any difficulty in settling the matter for yourself then. I was quite expecting to find that it repeated the disgraceful statements of M. Soury. Must we be grateful to M. Havet for not recording them? I don't know. He has thought fit to praise them twice, and to count them as a merit in their author. As for myself, I am not even ruffled, and after I had finished reading I felt more established in the faith. If that were all that Jesus was, only a Jew of the Jews, less than John the Baptist, a patriot suffering from hallucination put to death by the Romans, then the place He occupies in the worship of mankind, not a hundred but forty years after His death, at the very time assigned by M. Havet himself to the three synoptics, is by far the greatest

## Letter 27

of miracles, and since it is agreed that there are no miracles, it is still more : it is an effect without a cause.

It seems to me that the writer has ransacked the works of his masters, Strauss and Renan, to rob them of all the specious appearances that give them any verisimilitude. All measure and discrimination and subtlety have disappeared : falsehood alone remains, crude and repulsive.

And now, ought you to begin to study apologetics ? I am quite willing for you to do so by way of trial. We shall see how it turns out. Like you, I think it will disturb you. But, perhaps, the idea that you are afraid of such inquiry will disturb you more. Besides, if the work is undertaken for God, it is a way of serving the Master. Lastly, I am persuaded that He is really your Master, and that if doubt makes you suffer it will not separate you from Him ! *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ?* You remember the dear eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans ? Read it again : repeat this cry of the soul. Ah ! if only the unfortunate folks who speak against religion knew the meaning of loving ! M. Havet speaks of the Christ painted by Rembrandt, at the meal at Emmaus, and calls Him a disturbing and divine personality. He is indeed both : divine to those who love, disturbing to others : disturbing, like all that is unexplained and inexplicable ; and this makes M. Havet say that if Jesus was during life an embarrassment to the Jews (whom He compromised in the eyes of the Romans), after His death there arose from Him another embarrassment, Christianity.



## The Way of the Heart

Whence I infer, my child, that you would do well to study a little, out of respect and zeal. I will send you Wallon and Meignan. But in paying the tribute of your mind to duty, go on above all to pay the tribute of your heart to love. For this, you must pray and suffer, leave earthly happiness aside, and seem happy yourself as you scatter happiness around you. This is the way I understand your destiny, and I believe we both understand it in the same way, and that M. Havet would not understand it at all, unless our Lord were to tear the scales from his eyes for a moment, as He did from St. Paul's, which is one of His ways of enlightening men ; and then I can guarantee you that, in such an event (a thing which has been known to occur), the Gospels would appear to him to be quite authentic, without any change being made in their text.—I bless you, my child.

28

June 10, 1881.

*Dunque* your children have given you a deal of vexation ? The general situation they have shown you is quite deplorable, and at the same time you felt the burden of your frailty and the tortures of doubt that made you uncertain about the choice you had decided on at the dictate of Love ? Very well ; will you be loving enough to say, it is well that it should be so, and that more consolation would lessen the value of the testimony which, in spite of your mind, your heart desires to bear to Him who deserves all these sacrifices ?

32

## Letter 29

How glad I am to hear of the discovery you have made at last, the discovery of Mary! More peace amidst suffering, more sweetness in austerity, more confidence in trial, more generosity in love, such are the characteristic fruits of intimacy with Mary. Do not let the Octave of Pentecost go by without asking *through her* for devotion to the Holy Ghost, that is, to the interior life, to the principle of love hidden in our hearts to inspire them with prayer and sacrifice. Then, at the season of Trinity, when so many new priests are ordained, oh! ask Jesus to give Himself and us true priests! All the evils of the Church have come through the priesthood, and all its good things ought to come through them. I think this prayer is quite part of your vocation.

## 29

September 14, 1881.

Even if your letter had not come yesterday, I meant to write to you for the feast of the Holy Cross. I am sure you love it. And what was your offering, if it were not an inward *exaltation* of the blessed Cross you had put above all else in your heart, so that from that height *He who draweth all men unto Himself* might keep you fastened to Himself for ever?

The redeeming Cross, my child, is an answer to everything, even to the sharp sorrows that afflict souls who see others apparently being lost. But what do we know of the secrets of grace? Is the Cross of Jesus a common thing? Is the love of the Crucified a love that is regulated, limited, and

## The Way of the Heart

methodical ? There is the official formula of salvation, that we must die within the rules. And this formula has to be preserved in its integrity by God's ministers who did not make these rules, but whose duty it is to apply them. But our Lord is above His own laws, and He asks no one's permission to save a soul who has rather been in ignorance of Him than betrayed Him. In the last struggle of death, when the mind is clear and the voice is dumb, when the outward world is growing dim around the dying soul and leaves him alone with his inner self, when his ear can no longer catch any of the deceptive words intended to reassure him, and when his spirit hears the *answer of death*, telling him of the truth that is so near and so dread, in this hour of anguish and of clairvoyance, certainly comes some supreme solicitation of mercy ; there is an apparition (I use the word in its most metaphysical and widest sense), an appearance of Jesus ; there is the recollection, suddenly aroused, of the scattered fragments of religious instruction forgotten since childhood, of religious ideas spread here and there throughout society, and formerly encountered with indifference on the way. All this is gathered together, and comes to life again, like the bones in Ezekiel, all this makes up a representation of truth which presents itself to the soul under the blessed features of the Redeemer. And when the soul is upright, when it has sinned through ignorance, frailty, or impulse, when it has not committed and multiplied the great wrongs of inward treachery, and of resistance to the known voice of God ; of speaking calumny and ill in bad faith ; of warring impiously against faith

## Letter 30

and virtue in others ; oh ! then it realizes the person of Christ Crucified. It feels that it is *drawn* towards Him, it casts a last look at His Cross, mercy speaks its final word on earth, and Purgatory lies in the background to bring it into harmony with justice.

On Sunday I said Mass for the soul who is so dear to you, and I will say it again to-day, and we will both join in confidence, shall we not ?

If you knew Latin, the office for to-day would encourage you with fresh life. It is a fragrance of age-long piety, compounded of veneration and love for the *good Cross* of Jesus. Next year, I hope you will be able to understand these voices of the suppliant centuries behind us, which tell us we cannot do better than become their echoes.

## 30

September 24, 1881.

The coincidence, or foreordained harmony, still continues, for the letter, in which you tell me so touchingly of what you have discovered in the *Contemplation of the Kingdom*, reached me between the first and second meditation which I had devoted to this wonderful subject. It is the key to the whole of the Second Week of the *Exercises*. When we understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to *call* us (a word we constantly meet with in the Gospel), and that every inward or outward manifestation of Jesus is a *call*, we hear His voice in every mystery we meditate upon, and in everything that happens to us. At Bethlehem, it calls us to poverty, to littleness, to infirmity,

## The Way of the Heart

to dependence, to silence, to helplessness ; in the Temple, it calls us to sacrifice ; in Egypt, to persecution ; at Nazareth, to a life that is hidden and obscure, unprofitable and toilsome ; on the banks of the Jordan, to the confession of the faith ; in the desert, to penance ; on the mountain, to heavenly doctrine ; in Judæa and Galilee, to the Saviour's intimacies and initiations. Need I go on to say to what it calls us in the Cenacle, the Garden, the Prætorium, and at Calvary ? Then, after the story of Jesus, there is our own ! the tale of our first graces, our first falls, of our great betrayal ; that of our return, of our first progress, and of the first steps of the Master in our hearts. And does not all this seem to us like a voice saying to us as Martha did to Mary : *Magister adest et vocat te* ?<sup>1</sup>

And then, there is a kind of condensation of all Jesus' appearances, of all His actions, of all His mysteries, into one single appearance, one single action, one single mystery ; and in it are gathered and blended together all His calls. I need not tell you where all this takes place. Are we agreed, my child ?

Perhaps, as you read the above you will think 'nat my retreat plunges me deep in the sweetness of the interior life. Yes, it did so after I had crossed a little strip of the desert ; but it did not altogether immerse me in it. I see too much of the struggle going on outside to forget it inwardly ; and I would not wish to forget it, for I have come to get strength and to wind up the springs, not to let them run down. This is just what we are taught in " the Kingdom,"

<sup>1</sup> " The Master is come, and calleth thee."

## Letter 31

*Offerent se totos ad laborem.*<sup>1</sup> But the sight of it is so lowering not only for one's self-love, which trembles at the approach of sacrifice, but also for one's higher love, which loves sacrifice, but marvels, grieves, and is disturbed almost, to see not only our poor little offerings, but that of the Man-God produce such little apparent result. There are dark mysteries the disconcerting effect of which upon the soul is known to you. If it behold these abysses, *standing* on the edge of them, that is to say, by reasoning about them, it runs a risk of becoming giddy and falling. These things must be considered on one's knees, that is to say, in prayer. Prayer finds an answer to everything, and if all Christians were to pray, the face of the world would be changed, and the kingdom of God would no longer be merely what it is.

You are pursuing the right method, and that is, to write without thinking when your letter will be posted. Perhaps it is because we have the post every day, and because we only write for the passing moment, that our correspondence of to-day is so inferior to that which so delights your father. But *our* letters are about things that do not pass away.

31

October 2, 1881.

I do not mean to go to bed before saying something to you about the Rosary. I was thinking of you to-day while I was thinking of the Rosary. As yet, perhaps, you have no great love for it, but

<sup>1</sup> "They shall give themselves wholly to the work."

## The Way of the Heart

you will come to love it. It is the prayer of the simple and childlike, who like to enter into the sublimities of contemplation by this little and low doorway. The naïve repetition of the *Ave Maria* does not hinder the uplifting of one's mind in any way, and, since it does not prevent distractions, why should it prevent meditations? On the contrary, it promotes the latter by intermingling Mary therewith. If we contemplate the Nativity, we address Mary with all our hearts, while our eyes behold the Holy Child. We ask His Mother to show Him to us, and to make us love Him, and to love Him for us. Is it not easy? What poor unlettered woman, what child, cannot thus contemplate? And when we come to the sorrowful mysteries, it is still easier. I do not dwell on this. I hope you will soon tell me that you take a delight in the Rosary. My sister, in her great sufferings, finds consolation and strength in it. . . . Only you must not force yourself. . . . Meanwhile, this is *my* October, the month of my birthday, first communion, going to the seminary, ordination, and first Mass! Help me in my thanksgivings.

32

October 13, 1881.

If I did not write before, dear child, it was because I have only just finished preaching my retreat to the Seminarists this morning: two sermons a day, the subject for meditation in the evening, and the spoken meditation in the morning; which makes four addresses a day in addition to my usual work, and then there is the necessity of preparation for

## Letter 33

them, which does not facilitate correspondence. On the other hand, I assure you, that when one has left the bath of the *Exercises* oneself, it is a good thing to begin them over again for others. The necessity of speaking for our Lord to those who are well disposed, of entering deeply into the divine mysteries to introduce others to them, to draw from the spring of Holy Scripture to give them the substantial sustenance they require, is a true grace to him upon whom the duty falls. How often, in diving into the doctrine revealed to us by Redeeming Love, in order to draw from it teaching and exhortations appropriate to my audience, did I think of you, my child, and of the avidity with which you too would take such food! Is it a bad thing habitually to cast a look aside towards your soul, and to desire to share with it all that does me good? I think not, and I am not at all contrite about it.

## 33

*All Saints', 1881.*

I am anxious to devote to you an hour of calm amidst this great and holy day. The few moments I shall give you will not be lost to God, since it is for Him and of Him I wish to speak to you, and in doing so I seem to be speaking to Him. To remember you is no distraction to me, but an inducement to think of God! What will this heavenly day have in store for you? Joy or sorrow? Possibly both; but in either case, Love. When will you know Latin well enough to read the Apocalypse in the original Vulgate? This book, which is sup-



## The Way of the Heart

posed to be so unintelligible, is perfectly clear to the extent of at least one third of its contents, which go straight as an arrow to the heart. The new Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven, adorned as for her Bridegroom, is the assembly of the Saints—but it is just as much the faithful and devoted soul, whose likeness is borrowed from heaven and brought down to earth to kindle us with the desire to reproduce it within us. The virgins who sing the song of the Lamb and follow Him whithersoever He goeth; the multitude of souls of every tribe, who are known by the two signs of purity and sacrifice; the victors who have come out of *great tribulation* (that is to say, our present life), and who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb,—do they not make a beautiful and delightful company that fills us with a great yearning to belong to it, and with great joy if we do belong to it? And then those dialogues of Jesus in the three first chapters with souls who are guilty or lukewarm or faithful; the splendid glittering symbols of the twenty-first chapter; the ineffable sweetness of the last chapter, *Lo! I come quickly—Amen—Veni Domine Jesu*. Are you going to tell me these things do not thrill you, and that they are not written for you?

All Saints' also brings us the Beatitudes. What majestic and serene might there is in the repeated affirmation which proclaims the will of Jesus to distribute happiness, and the strange and delightful conditions on which He wills to do it! Who could dare to beatify poverty, but He who has heaven's riches at His disposal? and tears, but He who has

## Letter 33

in reserve divine delights? and perfect purity sustained by sacrifice, but He who can *manifest God* to the clean of heart? and persecution and undeserved suffering, but He who has the treasures of justice and goodness in His keeping? And to whom shall we go to find happiness? to wretched human beings like ourselves, or to Him in whom is all fulness, and who *is able* to satisfy to overflowing?

How good it is, my child, to let one's mind rest upon this thought: a day will come, it is already near, when the sad spectacle of the disfigurements and wretchedness, which are all we have to show, will be replaced by the sight of what is perfect! when we shall no longer have to look upon what is either suffering or sin! when we shall unreservedly praise beauty, holiness, greatness, love manifested, communicated, and imparted! when we shall see how wise and just and happy was the preference that determined our choice when we chose God! when we shall remain astounded as we remember that our choice was sometimes painful and burdensome! when we shall not find eternity too long to keep on repeating: "the snare is broken and we are delivered!" "My inheritance is goodly unto me and my chalice inebriateth me. My soul is athirst for the living God, and lo! it is satisfied; its dwelling-place is on the holy mountain," etc. My daughter, none but the Holy Ghost can give such tones to human speech. I wish you could learn by heart in Latin the Psalms, the Prophets, and all the New Testament. Their burning words would melt your soul within you: they speak quite other things than the words of man.

## The Way of the Heart

And then to-morrow,<sup>1</sup> sadness, pity, charity, and, in addition to these compassionate lamentations, a thought of love unfolding: a thought of divine jealousy, for Purgatory is nought but that: and its flames, the fire of jealous love. It takes vengeance as befits love, its vengeance destroys, not the beloved who has been unfaithful, but the unfaithfulness itself, and by thus inflicting punishment purifies and renders worthy of love. And why should it not do this for us now, and that without waiting, when to the purifying quality is added that which ameliorates and increases merit? Why should not present suffering have the effect of setting our lives on fire so as to consume all that is earthly and unprofitable in them, at the risk of making the flesh cry out, and even the spirit? Why not, if it be Jesus' will?

There are two meditations. If our letters cross, yours is not to count.

34

*December 24, 1881.*

Christmas without Mass, and perhaps without communion! how hard! I imagine you will be saying, as you lie alone in bed: "I, too, shall go to Bethlehem to see what has happened." But I am going there by another road, and no less do I find the given sign! a Child in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger. What a way of coming into the world! Poverty, littleness, dependence, pain, all that goes to make up the servitude wherein guilty humanity is constrained and obliged to groan, *He* chooses all

<sup>1</sup> All Souls' Day.

## Letter 35

this of His own free will, and this is *His* way of delivering us. After Him, and with Him, we will henceforth bear these burdens freely, as sons, and not as slaves.

Here am I preaching. Come soon to silence me, or to set me speaking.

*Buone feste, buon capo d'anno a tutti.*

*Christmas Eve.*

How good God is, my child, to let me have half an hour amidst all the young people's confessions to realize my dream of writing to you on this Eve! I begin with a prayer to the Holy Child not to deny you a little visit, and I take the liberty of suggesting to Him that He has given you enough trial and shock and dismay for some time past. . . . God forbid that I should make any complaints about it, not only because it is He who has done it, but because I think I can see some of the reasons which led Him to do it. I doubt not that all these trials are a rather rough but a very significant way of His expressing His acceptance of your gift, and also of the character of the sacrifice belonging to such a gift. . . .

35

MY CHILD,

*April 12, 1882.*

I accept your strictures. No doubt my behaviour deserves them, but not so my intentions. When I tell you that I am always afraid that He who wills our service to be pure may reproach me for being too satisfied with serving Him in you, you

## The Way of the Heart

will perhaps understand that I cannot perceive the supposed coldness you seem to think so great, though it is so non-existent ! Well, He doubtless has His own designs in allowing it to be so. He means to speak to you by me, and He does not mean it to be too easy and pleasant, lest the business should cease to be His own and become ours.

My child, I am led to think just as you do as to your old friend. If there are many mansions in the Father's house, that not only means several degrees of reward, but several modes of winning them. The sole *way* is Jesus Christ, but if there is a manner of finding Jesus Christ which is official and intended, no one, I think, can deny Him the right to enter into relationship with souls by other means. Kings hold audiences, but they would not be kings if they were not at liberty to make visits *incognito*. We grant this in the case of those who live in the darkness of paganism ; but to-day, who can fail to see that the atmosphere of free thought gathers about a cultivated mind right in the heart of a Christian country darkness thicker and more difficult to penetrate than the darkness of naïve ignorance ? To believe one is scientifically in the right as against Christ is really being much farther from Him than to have no notion of Him. And why should not this state of mind coexist along with the same good qualities, the same natural virtues, the same moral good faith, as are admitted to exist amongst the *good heathen*, which made St. Thomas Aquinas say : *To one with such dispositions God will rather send an angel from heaven on his death-bed than allow him to die unredeemed ?*

## Letter 35

I am in the way of finding that you are right all along the line. Yes, you need a guide, a support, a confidant, when you are carried along the way you are going, a way which is so unnatural: I say so unnatural, not so untrodden, for all the real friends of God have gone along it, and this kind of life has its laws, its evolution, its phases, like all lives: it has its science like everything else; and its science is a science of observation. God acts, the soul co-operates; one lets it be, and the *guide* notes the operations and observes whether things are going on *as they should do*, that is to say, as they did in souls which bore the right mark. . . .

Yes, once more you have the right, and even the duty, of accepting all at His hands, even what is pleasant. That will not happen too often. Call to mind what St. Ignatius says in his *rules of discernment* of the Second Week. The time of divine sweetness is the time for laying in store for the coming fray.

Yes again, love has a right to be *elated* (*exalté*), for it tends towards what is above *all things*. Is not the fifth chapter of Book III of the *Imitation of Christ* full of elation? Still, is it not right? Can human love find anything to blame in it? Well, what then!

Yes, in fine, it was a good thing to be at *la Réparation* Monday morning. That altar was really *taking*, and I quite understand your being tempted to stay on. But, my daughter, if you only knew how He disappoints souls who are eager to rest in Him! Assuredly, it is not on earth we must look

## The Way of the Heart

for this. He gives us a desire for it, but He only satisfies the desire in heaven. Even in the cloister, one finds material cares, *business*, and, what is far worse, human passions. . . .

36

June 4, 1882.

. . . I don't want to exaggerate what you tell me. I would rather believe it was merely a case of want of training and dignity, and that it was only another form of falling short in good rather than a positive manifestation of evil. True it is that this negative sort of evil, just because it shocks consciences less, is more general, and, because it is more general, it exercises an influence which is perhaps more fatal to society as a whole. Scandals are easily taken to be exceptions ; *shortcomings* seem to many to be the rule, and this makes people say : what is the good of what such people stand for ?

I confess that such a thought is to me one of the most saddening I know ; but it must not be allowed to be discouraging as well as saddening. For in the first place, one of the first accusations we bring against those who are in question is that they despair of the good ; and one must not be like them. Next, God's kingdom has always been fought against from within as well as from without ; hence there is nothing new in it. History shows us that the remedy for this evil has always been action and the prayers of the saints. Taking this word in its broadest sense so far as it expresses rather a tendency and a desire than a secured result, why should

## Letter 37

we not try to find our consolation in that quarter, going somewhat in the direction of sanctity? And then, in spite of all, if our soul remains in sadness, let us not forget that sadness itself may become a means of reparation, for there is no prayer that is better listened to by God than that which is breathed forth like the sigh of a soul wounded by the spectacle of man's ingratitude towards Him. The conclusion to be drawn from all this is, that you ought not only to resume your work in spite of any fresh difficulties it may encounter, but because of these very difficulties. Providence has put all of you there (I use the plural, because without the assistance of your dear parents you could do nothing) to act as a counterpoise to the bad influences of some, and to fill up the gaps left by others.

I quite think that your work, in growing more general, will become sufficiently neutral to exclude no one of good-will, and to be dependent on no coterie.

37

*August 20, 1882.*

After the different phases and the variety of clouds you have passed through for over a year, I am more than ever convinced that our Lord has ratified your undertakings. And what say you?

Your last was not the kind of letter to dissipate my conviction. Do you know how really remarkable is this fixity of purpose given by God to one who appears to be wanting in all that certainty can rely upon? You do not see your way plainly ahead, your path often lies through the wilderness, you



## The Way of the Heart

have not got away from the felt need of human affection which has so long had possession of your heart ; and yet you are not at all shaken ! Your resolution seems to be up in the air, and yet it holds firm, and you feel its solidity, and, further, that this solidity is not due to yourself. Is it not so ? And if it be so, what can it all mean but that it is the work of God ?

But now this is clear, my daughter, you must lose no time in self-analysis. You must take note of the great things God omnipotent has wrought in you : *fecit mihi magna qui potens est*,<sup>1</sup> and, starting from this, you have to magnify Him, and to rejoice in God your Saviour. He has looked upon the lowliness of His handmaiden and uplifted her to the level of a spouse ; her earthly friends feel pity for her, but the generations of heaven call her blessed. That is a reason for losing yourself with Mary in an endless *Magnificat*. Possibly you may be in no mood for exultation ; but you will rejoice nevertheless in that part of your soul which is above all sadness because it depends only upon love.

As for me, I am reminded of the words of St. John : " He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice." I dare not flatter myself that I am a worthy friend of the Bridegroom ; but it is my priesthood that gives me an authentic claim to such friendship : (*I will call you no longer servants, but friends*) ; and I avail myself of this to hear the voice that is calling you ; and I feel a deep joy in the lowest depths of

<sup>1</sup> " He that is mighty hath done great things for me."

## Letter 38

my heart. Yes, I tell you so, my child, because it is giving a testimony to God Himself. To have given you to our Lord, to have put you on the road afar off, and to have led you on to this donation of yourself, is the consolation of my priestly life which has known more than one sorrow, and the encouragement of my soul which has felt more than once tempted to falter. Let us thank God together; and, having received everything from Him, let us begin to give Him something in return. I bless you in His name.

38

September 5, 1882.

Yes, my child, you may hear everything, and when the Master's interests are at stake you may do everything. So you did well to go there, and if you followed your own instinct you did well to compel the poor soul to open her heart, as our Lord laid open the soul of the Samaritan woman, first saying: "I know all," and then adding: *Si scires donum Dei*.<sup>1</sup> What a difference there is between His way and man's! Just imagine a woman of the world, a woman of honour, saying to some unfortunate, such as the one now in question: "I know all." That would mean: "I look down upon you." And if your woman of the world were not honourable, it would mean: "It doesn't much matter." But when it is Jesus who says: "I know all," or when one says it in His name, it means: "It is wrong indeed; but you knew not the gift of God; here is a new life, a new outlook, here is an unknown spring whence you may drink

<sup>1</sup> "If thou knewest the gift of God" (John iv. 10).

## The Way of the Heart

to quench your thirst which is only aggravated by guilty pleasures."

Is it not your *rôle*, and a beautiful *rôle* too, my daughter, to go and speak thus to souls, after you have heard such words yourself before the tabernacle? And is not this the real meaning of your *gift* of yourself? As far as you can, choose with Mary: *Optimam partem elegit*,<sup>1</sup> and as far as He pleases, do the work of Martha, but refer all your external endeavours to the sole preoccupation of Mary, so that if the Master were to say to you as He did to Martha: *Sollicita es et turbaris erga plurima*,<sup>2</sup> you might be able to reply: "Lord, Thou knowest indeed that if I am much occupied with many things, I am only preoccupied with one thing, and that the one thing needful, *unum necessarium*,<sup>3</sup> to please Thee and to give Thee what is Thine." *Vovete et reddite Domino Deo vestro*.<sup>4</sup>

Do you know I am delighted to find you quoting texts, not only from the Psalms, but from Jeremias. This shows you are getting on with your Latin, and that you are reading the Prophets. Oh! read Isaias and Jeremias; read them so as to know them by heart; the first chapter of Isaias alone would be enough to feed your soul, and then chapters xl to lv. That is what will build you up in true spirituality, and not the little books which you are quite right to detest!

How wonderful are the works of God! My

<sup>1</sup> "She chose the best part."

<sup>2</sup> "Thou art careful and troubled about many things" (Luke x. 41).

<sup>3</sup> "One thing is necessary" (*ibid.*).

<sup>4</sup> "Vow ye, and pay to the Lord your God" (Ps. lxxv. 12).

## Letter 39

daughter, it does me good to praise Him in your soul, because He has quite freely wrought great things therein. Looking on at His working, I grow warmer, and I have much need to do so. Ah! how chill a sphere is the world to the friends of Jesus Christ! Frozen as I am, I am about to try to impart warmth to others. A retreat for priests is a great thing. Pray for this new ministration which I do not undertake without emotion. From the 12th to the 19th help me by your prayers to preach the love of Jesus to those whose mission it is to preach to others.

39

*September 25, 1882.*

I have just finished getting ready a third, slightly altered edition of the Life of Mère Marie-Thérèse. I want to insert the enclosed letter in it. I did not know of it before, and I think it will do you good. Keep it, but send me a copy.

Here I have met with material anxieties and sadness of heart which would have led me to go back willingly to —, if we lived on earth to please ourselves. But the tabernacle is the place we want to fly to in our troubles, and not to human consolations. And the tabernacle of Louville is indeed a good place to get back to. It was through this little door, and always the same door, that the divine Master spoke to my heart when I was a child, and transpierced it with the arrow of vocation. All the history of my soul and of the graces of God is unrolled in the neighbourhood of this sanctuary, and I never return to it without emotion.

## The Way of the Heart

The graves of all those whom I love are close by—I should like you to know this corner where my sister prayed and suffered so much. But such desires are too human. We have to ascend by the straight, rough, and difficult path; and help and refreshment are not wanting to us if we are found faithful. I think our Lord is helping me to understand this better day by day.

40

*October 28, 1882.*

The whirlwind catches me again, and it is difficult for me not to bear a grudge against all the bustle when it puts silence between me and you, silence of the pen if not silence of the heart. True it is that I have to thank this wretched whirlwind for something else. Yesterday I found it had a good side, while talking to a friend about the value of life. I was saying that for my own part it had, speaking from a merely natural point of view, no value since I had lost my parents and my brother, and further that the duties of which it was for the most part made up, that is to say, my relations with the public and business, were more tiresome to me every day. But while saying that, I felt that things only became endurable so far as they were offered to someone we loved; that abstract duty was not enough to make me face them; and that therefore things that are tiresome create a sort of necessity for one's having recourse to living duty which is also love, and that thus they have a good side which is wanting in things which are interesting

## Letter 41

of themselves, that is to say, because they lead to our Lord of necessity.

*Dunque*, we will meditate no further on the whirlwind. . . .

Here is All Saints', in other words, Heaven and Purgatory, Heaven descried, not through the dreams of human poesy, but through the word of Jesus, through the Beatitudes which are fuller of tears than of aught else ; but wherein at every line we come upon the mighty word *Beati*. Oh ! dive deep into the Beatitudes ! These and the *Pater* contain the whole of the marrow of the Gospel.

And then Purgatory,—this too descried not through pictures of the imagination, but by means of prayer, sacrifice, and love ; Purgatory which speaks to us of the jealousy of the divine love and teaches us to say with St. Francis : *Deus meus et omnia*. You will love this Octave, will you not ? All this time I shall be deep in the vortex ; and that is why I am talking of the season beforehand, so that we may agree to make it our meeting-place.

I found Mgr. — very sad about all that is taking place in his diocese. And just now, who can help being sad, especially as to our *divisions* ? How little Christianity there is amongst Christians !

41

November 6, 1882.

. . . Oh ! how right you are to take His side in everything ! . . . Yes, indeed, He is quite right to draw us aside and compel us to enter into solitude, when it is *for His sake* that we are obliged to get

## The Way of the Heart

dispersed, for otherwise we should allow ourselves to be taken up with externals, and then we should no longer be working for Him. . . . But it is not quite right on your part to make so many subtle refinements about your actions. One must not do good for the sake of praise; but to give it up for fear of praise would be to act like a dupe. St. Bernard once felt an impulse of vanity in the pulpit. The thought of going down occurred to him. Then, reflecting that it would not do to give up God's work, he said to his vanity: "I did not come up here to please thee, nor will I go down to displease thee." And he went on preaching Jesus Christ.

Shall I avow that the thought of Reparation has taken entire possession of me for some time? Is not this the most striking proof that we are serving the true and living God, that He can make Himself loved through all the veils and all the mysteries, and *interest* us in His glory and His sorrows? Oh! this is the most inward, the most hidden, the greatest of all miracles!

I knew you would come to St. Paul as you have already come to Mary. When you know Latin well, the Bible will be your food.

Do not blame yourself for feeling natural dislikes: it is enough to trample on them.

Yes, I have read Renan's articles. The last, that of November 15, is simply fatuous; but I admit that the article of the 1st inst. is disturbing; it is

## Letter 42

one of the worst bits of reading one can come across when one has inhaled the intellectual atmosphere of our times. I have to read these things, it is part of my duty, but as for you, when you are not obliged to do so by reason of your surroundings, I forbid them to you, not only because of the danger they involve in your *mind*, for that might be remedied, but because they give offence within you to Him to whom you belong. A virgin soul has no business to be listening to outside rumours. . . . In reading these sad pages, especially the last, I said to myself : this unhappy man is destroying something else along with dogmas, that is, morality. He makes excuses for his chastity : he speaks of it as a vanity. And then he brags of being happy. Among his readers, many will think a vanity is not worth troubling to struggle for, and they will fling themselves deliberately into vice ; and thus, though he pretends only to be attacking theological prejudices, he will have killed virtue in men's hearts. A still larger number of his readers, who suffer and groan under the burden of an adverse fate, will say that Renan's serenity and pleasantness do not put them under any obligations, since they are lacking in everything, and no longer having the Cross of Jesus Christ to consecrate their sorrows, nothing but despair will be left to them. Emptiness, nothingness, madness, suicide, such is the goal to which the pretty periods and charming phrases of the dilettante lead all those who learn from him to believe no more, to hope no more, to love no more, and who cannot get him to lend them his good luck in the lottery.



## The Way of the Heart

I think of that, then I think of Jesus taking suffering upon Himself, to become touched with our feelings, and I say to myself : truth is on the same side as love.

It is quite true, my child, that *reparation* underlies all real interior life. But you know the difference between acknowledging a truth with the intelligence, and discovering it within one's heart. This discovery, delayed no doubt by many infidelities, by a too external life, a life too busied with outward things, I am beginning to make on my own account after having made it more than once for other people.

I want nothing better than to help you to complete the holocaust. But I believe that is especially the *Master's rôle*. I am there to help you to understand yourself, to find your road at the cross-ways ; but it is *He* who gives the call, *He* who lays down and measures His requirements, and I can only repeat to you the words which the Blessed Virgin addressed to the servants at Cana : "*Whatever He saith unto you, do it.*"

I bless you, my child.

43

December 26, 1882.

After some weeks of rush, I was getting up this Tuesday morning to go into retreat, when I had to give it up to go to one of my brethren of the archbishopric, who was dying. Instead of meditating on the Last Things in a book, I am doing it at a death-bed. But there is nothing sad in it, it is

56

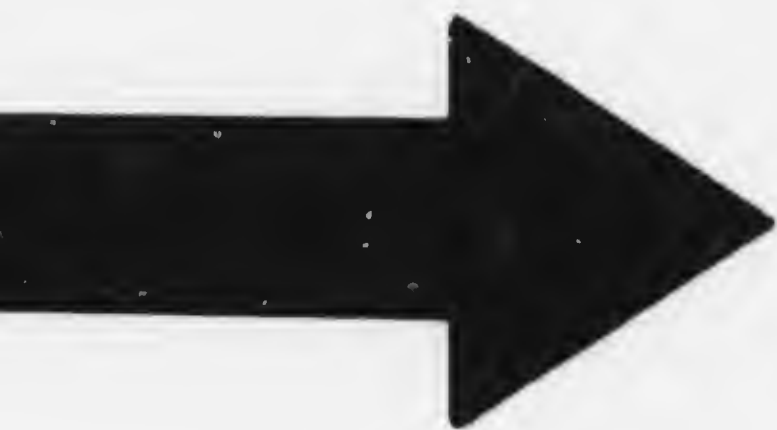
## Letter 43

rather just what one would wish for, for it is the death of a saint. I have rarely seen a soul more humble, more upright, or more strong and gentle. The calm and easy way in which he gets ready to make the move shows that he has long felt that he was not at home *amidst his earthly belongings*. This morning I was two hours at his bidding making all preparations for his departure, all done with wonderful simplicity.

Let us understand thoroughly, my child, that the spectacle of a holy death should rather fill us with a desire to live well than with a yearning to die well : a good death being above all a gift of God, whilst a good life is in a way a gift we offer God, something of infinite value to Him who loves.

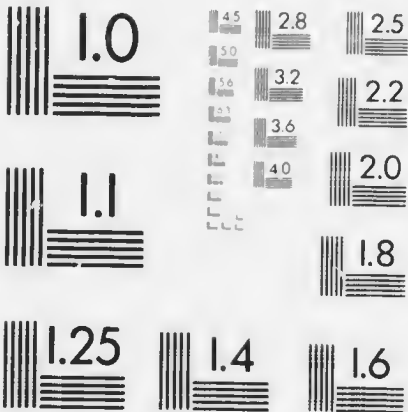
. . . I was interrupted by the premature close of the dying man's life, and it is only to-day, Wednesday evening, that I am able to resume writing. You asked me to speak to you of Advent and Christmas : both are now gone, and I have said nothing about them. But Christmas-tide is not over, and it is a good thing to carry it on with St. Stephen's Day, the first martyr to give testimony unto blood, and with Holy Innocents' Day, the purple flowers around the divine cradle ; then, after all these feasts, it is well to return to the Crib in greater solitude and silence, and to spend more time in contemplating our Emmanuel making His first steps on the path which is to lead on to the Cross and the altar. How well all Christianity is represented in this picture of gentleness and severity, the Child-God taking to Himself all the severity, and leaving to us all the gentleness, and His silence saying to us :





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## The Way of the Heart

*Exemplum dedi vobis,*<sup>1</sup> be ye also gentle to others, severe to yourselves, and if you need a little sweetness look for it in drawing near to Me.

44

February 14, 1883.

Your little note goes straight to my soul and heart : to my soul, by your union with me in my retreat ; to my heart, by your union with me in my memories. You can understand how the poor soul of a priest, which must also be the soul of a mother, needs to take nourishment in order to get milk to give his children ; and how a lonely heart, which has seen the departure of almost all it loves, is deeply touched by sympathy associated with affections now transformed into regrets and prayers and hopes.

Yes, indeed ; we will go shares, will we not ? I will ask the Master to send you the graces of solitude while you are in the world ; and you will beg Him to let me become so steeped in solitude as to return full of Him for bestowal upon others.

45

February 14, 1883.

What, my daughter, am I going to leave you out of my retreat ? . . . The least I can do is to say a word about the Master to you. I am going to tell you a great piece of news : the Master is good, and therefore with Him all is good. It is good to feel oneself stupid and inert at His feet, when one

<sup>1</sup> " I have given you an example."

## Letter 45

quits the tumult of the world for the solitude which is full of Him : because that makes us feel how much we miss by busying ourselves with what is not Himself. It is good to be once more beneath His eye, but in a state of shameful poverty and covered with infidelities, because it puts Him in a position to exercise His infinite mercy and to reply to the soul that humbles itself by giving to it the graces of humility and of compunction of heart. Next, it is good above all to contemplate the heavenly King in His strange insignia of royalty, made up of poverty, humiliation, sorrow and love, and to hear through the silence the *call* which He addresses to us in all its gentleness and power : " Wilt thou follow Me ? Wilt thou take up My Cross ? Wilt thou love what I love, serve the souls whom I serve ? Wilt thou sacrifice thyself with Me for their sake ? " Lastly, it is good in His presence to think over the reforms which He desires and demands in our lives, and to offer Him the results of our deliberations that He may accept them, consecrate them, and confirm them by setting the seal of His Passion upon them.

There are the *Exercises*, my daughter ; you well know that you would like to make them. But there is something better than means to reach Jesus ; it is Jesus' will, which sometimes intends us to do without means ; sometimes even without the great means known as the Eucharist.

But just now He leaves you the latter. Let it make up for all the rest !

## The Way of the Heart

46

April 23, 1883.

I am pleased with your two letters, my child. Now you are really opening your heart. You feel that you are lacking in simplicity with regard to *others*; but I begin to believe that it is no longer lacking in your dealings with me. You were evidently wan'ng in it so far as X. was concerned. . . . Well, what if someone else did perceive our Lord had taken possession of you and cast you down, what a grand misfortune! What, if it draws others' hearts to Him? When will you be humble enough not to be afraid of anyone thinking this or that of you, even if it be something good? *He must increase, and I must decrease*, that should be your motto henceforth. Decrease, until you no longer count.

I am glad the Master has taken His share in reproaching you for forgetting His Mother. So I am no longer alone in taking up Mary's cause! I greatly wish to use my authority with you in the matter. Yes, I am going to yield to the temptation; and this is what I lay upon you as a charge: you are to say the Rosary for a week.

From to-morrow you are to take the *Magnificat*, one verse a day, as the subject for your meditations.

As for the rest, I am satisfied. *He* is guiding everything, leave things to *Him*. If *He* takes it upon Himself to lay suffering upon you, is that not better than any amount of disciplines? If *He* should wish to add any of these things as well, *He* will know how to make Himself clearly heard; you



## Letter 47

will pass on His orders to me, and I shall not hesitate to countersign them. I have not the least desire to spoil you, to coddle you, and to withdraw you from the demands of Love. I desire what He desires, and I want you to will it too, simply, fully, strongly. What I do not want is that you should overdo things physically when it can be avoided.

I will pray for your little girls, and I commend to you two very dull souls who are wasting a great many graces.

47

MY CHILD,

May 19, 1883.

Your little complaint, which was so discreet, so free from all reproachfulness, so full, too, of sympathy, was not needed to make me feel that I was behindhand and in fault with regard to you, and also that you were lacking to some extent in the direction which you wanted in order to correspond with the abundance of divine grace and action within you. But, in fact, I was powerless. And I doubly regretted being reduced to silence when our Lord was speaking so strongly to your soul, and when the wonderful feast of Pentecost would have given me so much to say. Moreover, your letter gave me much consolation, showing me that the inner Master well knew how to dispense with His poor speaking-trumpet in teaching you what the Holy Ghost had to impart. This is the teaching which is reserved for those who understand that the kingdom of God is an inward thing, and that all the external apparatus of the mysteries of Jesus Christ and of the ministry of the Church is

## The Way of the Heart

only intended to put us in possession of this hidden pearl. . . .

I am anxious for this letter to reach you to-morrow on the feast of the Blessed Trinity. Another feast that means nothing to you, is it not so? "Oh! nothing whatever." I can hear you saying this, as if I were there. . . .

Perhaps in this case you would say it in all sincerity. And yet the Holy Ghost may still be taking an advantage of you, and give you a surprise by revealing to you an unknown world. There is nothing so abstract and so apparently theoretical as the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. It is a matter which is God's affair, not ours. Yes, it is God's affair, for it is His life, His inner life, His reserved life which is inaccessible, impenetrable to the looks of the creature; it is His secret, a thousand times better kept than is in man the secret of his own conscience, of his silent thought, for the play of expression may reveal in spite of ourselves what our lips leave unspoken, but God does not betray Himself. Only it is His good pleasure to communicate Himself. Giving something of Himself, reproducing His countenance afar off, sowing the world with a little being and life, was not enough for Him. He determined to share His own life with the creature which was the work of His hands, and this is the essence of the supernatural order. The design carried out in this prodigious conception has been unfolded amidst all the vicissitudes of Divine Love and human ingratitude until the present era, which is that of Redemption perpetuated in the Church.

## Letter 48

We enter into our supernatural state by Baptism, which is an impress of the Blessed Trinity on our souls : and this is why the form of Baptism consists in the invocation of the three Divine Persons. The sign of the Cross, which is the universal symbol of prayer and of all sanctifying activities in the Church, is nothing else than the invocation of the Blessed Trinity united with a reminder of the Passion. From Baptism to Extreme Unction, our Christian life is unfolded under the protection of this mystery. And what will be our future life and blessedness, which are the final cause of all the works of God ? Nothing but the clear view and the loving possession of this impenetrable mystery, which is on earth the object of our adoring faith. The six first centuries of the Church suffered, fought, and worked to keep intact and to hand down to future ages the true formula of the Trinity. The blood of martyrs flowed for the defence of a syllable. Nor was the price too high, for this formula is the guardian of our hopes.

My child, I entrust you to the keeping of the Holy Ghost.

48

*May 31, 1883.*

. . . Let us enter into the dwelling which God has set apart for Himself. Therein we find the ever-painful conflict between demands inward and outward. My daughter, all those who have desired to follow our Lord, or whom our Lord has desired to serve Him, have felt this very strongly : if, then, you were not to feel it, it would be either because

## The Way of the Heart

you did not want to serve Him, or else because He did not want to use your service ; and yet both things are quite sure ; you wish for Him, and He wishes for you, and your unworthiness no more prevents you from wishing for Him than it prevents Him from wishing for *you*. All this is well proved. Therefore, it is necessary for you to undergo the struggle.

Only, it is also necessary for you to be helped and guided by obedience. The day *He*<sup>1</sup> no longer rebukes you for the slightest satisfaction, the slightest comfort sought by yourself, *He*<sup>1</sup> would cease to be the absolute Master and exacting Spouse you have accepted and desired *Him*<sup>1</sup> to be. This permanent attraction towards sacrifice is the *motion* of the carriage ; obedience determines its *direction*. Direction without any motion would have nothing to direct, you cannot direct rest ; motion without direction would mean disorder, jolting, breakdown. . . .

. . . Do you suppose that life was simple in the age of the catacombs ? On the contrary, I imagine it was extraordinarily complicated : immense efforts for the propagation of the Gospel combined with the work of ordinary life and endless mysterious doings in secret. When the day came for laying down one's life, they must have said : " At last ! here is rest ! " But there, too, they were anxious for others, for everybody was not ready for martyrdom, and what a bitter anxiety to the loftier and more generous souls must have been their doubts as to the constancy of others !

<sup>1</sup> In the French, *On*, implying the help contributed, by obedience under direction, to the sense of divine guidance.

## Letter 49

The inference (St. Paul's): *Per multas tribulationes oportet nos introire in regnum Dei.*<sup>1</sup>

I do not speak to you of the Sacred Heart. It has been too much spoilt for us. Our Lord must speak to you Himself about it. We speak of it so badly for Him! Let us define the devotion if you will: the holy hour endlessly prolonged! Will that do?

49

July 6, 1883.

I have come to spend only one day here, my child, because we are having Adoration in our little church at Louville. Hence, it is to our good Lord and to His Sacrament that I owe my leisure for writing to you after my too long silence. If it were enough for a thing to cost us somewhat and to be distasteful to dispense us with reproaching ourselves about it, I should be free from all remorse: for I can truly say, that in your case it is not writing that costs me anything, but failing to write. But no, this excuse won't do, and I am angry with myself for not having done when I could what it is a pleasure to do.

I can well see that you are suffering; but as to being uneasy about this moral suffering, I can't. Our Lord has made Himself felt by you sensibly enough this year for me not to think all is lost if He hides for a little while. But as soon as He hides, doubt is bound to return as to everything, as to "the truth," as to "the way," and as to "love,"

<sup>1</sup> "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 21).

## The Way of the Heart

since that is at the root of your soul in its natural relations with God. . . . I am not alarmed at this state, but I really cannot allow you to be unjust towards yourself. You say : " I am resigned, but resignation without thanksgiving is no use." What bad reasoning ! How can thanksgiving be joyous when the soul is sad ? What is resignation but a sad form of union with the divine will, the joyous form of which is enthusiasm ? And what right have we to demand of a soul deprived of joy that it give its acquiescence a form of joy ? And what matters joy or sadness, provided the reign of the Spouse and Master be acknowledged, accepted, and realized in the depths of the heart ? Well, I for my part tell you : " The kingdom of the Master, the kingdom of your Spouse, is set up in your heart, and you will sing His glory throughout the alternations of gladness and sadness, until He calls you *ubi non erit luctus, neque fletus, neque clamor, neque ullus dolor, quia prima abierunt. . .*"<sup>1</sup>

50

July 15, 1883.

What you tell me about your " preachings " does not contradict what I wrote to you from Louville. You are right to tell your little girls that they must obey joyfully to obey lovingly. But in the first place, that is an ideal which is put forward, but rarely attained ; next, the parity between serving

<sup>1</sup> " Where there shall be no more mourning, nor weeping, nor outcries, nor any sorrow, for the former things are passed away " (cf. Apoc. xxi. 4).

## Letter 51

God and obeying one's parents is not complete : for if, on the one hand, God merits a service of love far more infinitely, on the other hand, He is invisible, and the love He inspires only gives rise to joy when He is pleased to effect it in the soul. When He prefers to leave a soul in darkness and aridity, love is not, and cannot be felt, and then it cannot bring forth joy : whilst the visible presence of a mother who is loved naturally produces joy, and seasons this joy with the desire of pleasing her.

To sum up, in the order of human affections, true love is inseparable from joyful service ; in the mysterious order of our relations with the Unseen, true love is compatible with both joy and sadness, the desire to please being the same ; because it is the beloved One who gives or denies joy according to His good pleasure.

Have I made myself intelligible ? In any case, verbal explanations are not far off.

## 51

*August 11, 1883.*

. . . I was deeply touched by your dear father's letter. Yes, he should have had a place among the wise who lived before Christ ; he would have been one of His in heart ; now he ought to be one of His in spirit. Yet there must be truth in the saying : *Seek, and ye shall find.* But he is seeking, he has been seeking, therefore he will find. Will he do so under the official form which would give our friendship the consolation of assurance ? Will it be in some specially reserved form, which divine mercy

## The Way of the Heart

alone can adapt to the needs and possibilities of each soul? The future will show, but I have no doubt that this future will belong to grace.

I am glad to see you like the faith of the Bretons! Oh! how rightly does it make us feel that mankind cannot wait for the learned and the philosophers to have done with their quibbles in order to discover and attain with its heart the supreme Good which the depths of our being demand. But who will put the supreme Good within everyone's reach—yes, even within reach of the poor fishermen of the sea-coasts, unless it be our Jesus, who said to Simon the fisherman: "Come, and follow Me"?

I hope you are going to pay your best court to Mary for the day of her glory,<sup>1</sup> which is the last victory of love in her heart.

52

*August 23, 1883.*

I am leaving you to go back to my meeting, and I thank you for following me there with your prayers. There especially, one feels so well that one's words are only an echo, and that it is God alone who touches men's souls! In such gatherings, one sees a little of all sorts, some very good, and this must gladden the Master's heart, some second-rate, and this must sadden Him, and some deplorable, which He must find heartrending. And one feels deeply one's own littleness when faced with the task of renewing priestly consciences, and at times one would wish to flee; one trembles at

<sup>1</sup> The Feast of the Assumption B.M.V.



## Letter 53

the approach of certain great and difficult duties ; but the wave comes, and instead of engulfing you, it uplifts you ; one is quite amazed at seeing plainly ahead just when one expected to be groping dimly, to feel a sense of authority just when one thought one would be timid, and charity, and even tenderness of affection, just where one feared one would feel nothing but repugnance. You understand that I am no longer talking about preaching.

As for preaching, I don't know what good it may do to those who listen, but I well know the good it does to the preacher. From morning till night one has to be handling the most touching mysteries, to study them in their most secret depths, and to dive into them in order to introduce one's brethren to them, and one perceives one's own great need of returning to them. Hence, it is a good thing.

I am following your example, and speaking of myself ; but you will forgive me for doing so, because it is another way of talking to you of the Master, and also because, if I had to preach to you this time, I could only do it by returning you your own letter. And is it at all to be wondered at, since you were merely repeating to me what you had been hearing yourself ? I bless you, my child.

53

*August 31, 1883.*

I thank God, my child, for the very necessary and salutary rest, so full of Himself, which He has just granted you, and now I call upon you to be His in the measure of activity and distribution it pleases

## The Way of the Heart

Him to assign you, as you were His in the solitude  
He filled so well.

Let us begin by answering the questions : (1) I never meant to make you read the whole office every day. Unless there is some special impediment, I desire you every afternoon or evening to read next day's Matins to get the Church's marching orders and to enter into her spirit at communion and all the rest of the day. Since you love the 118th Psalm, say it as a devotion, but not as a binding obligation. You might recite only one of the little hours every morning. . . . Are you not fond of Compline? If so, take it as your evening prayer instead of the French prayers that are so little to your taste. Above all, let there be no sense of obligation in all this. Let it be a resource and a help, not a burden. (2) The time assigned to prayer should not be given to anything else. (3) I quite approve the Stations of the Cross on Friday, and the Rosary on Saturday, but only when they are feasible : *in spiritu libertatis et non servitutis*.<sup>1</sup> (4) Other customs no doubt refer to penances. . . . You have answered quite well, and you have told the truth, and you could not tell all the truth. Sincerity goes very well with this modesty in things sacred, which formerly gave rise to the discipline of the secret, and which is so little understood by the fussy, clumsy piety of modern times, with all its lack of delicacy.

A word in conclusion, since I have promised you an "exchange." Well, I find at the close of my second retreat that it is a very good thing to speak

<sup>1</sup> "In the spirit of liberty, and not of servitude."

## Letter 54

of the Master four times daily for a fortnight, and to search the Holy Scriptures to try to find in them the true testimonies of His Love! The good priests are as docile and attentive as children. I don't mince what I have to say to them, but I try to imitate St. Paul, who constantly passes from great rebukes of great sins to the highest heights of things spiritual. The soul of a Christian is a universe wherein are found all kinds of climates: the soul of a priest is worth two worlds at least, and the word of God yields fruit in every latitude. In short, all to-morrow I shall be rattling along in the train, saying to myself: *Nonne cor nostrum ardens erat in nobis dum loqueremur DE ILLO?*<sup>1</sup> (The variant is quite in harmony with the true text: *Dum loqueremur in via et aperiret nobis Scripturas.*<sup>2</sup>)

In a week I expect to be home in time to sing *Nativitas tua, Dei Genitrix Virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo.*<sup>3</sup> Tell your dear mother that, with my poor heart of a son who remembers what his home-comings to his mother were, I feel a very acute share in the joy she must feel at your return.

## 54

MY DAUGHTER,

September 11, 1883.

You did well to consult Mme. de M. about these matters. I am delighted to know of your intercourse with one so great in mind, heart, and

<sup>1</sup> "Did not our heart burn within us as we spoke of HIM?"

<sup>2</sup> "As we spoke by the way, and He opened to us the Scriptures?" (cf. Luke xxiv. 32).

<sup>3</sup> "Thy Nativity, O Virgin Mother of God, hath proclaimed joy unto all the world."

## The Way of the Heart

faith ! Oh ! what a faith she has, a faith that costs her hardly anything, and is not at all like ours ! That was the main subject of our last conversation. Fancy ! she cannot understand how young people can doubt, if they are properly brought up !

The Nativity, the Holy Name of Mary, the Seven Dolours, then the Rosary, the Maternity, the Purity of Mary, etc., enough to last till All Saints' without losing sight of the "Star of the Sea." And the Pope is taking a hand in the game, and writes an Encyclical on the Rosary. Read it : it has touched me. Had St. Bernard been Pope, it is just the Encyclical he would have written.

### 55

MY DAUGHTER,

September 14, 1883.

It would have been well indeed to talk of the Cross on the feast of its Exaltation, it was still better to *set it up* as a sign of hope amidst a family in desolation. I thank the Master for making use of you in such holy labours, and for moulding and breaking you in to them ; in the end respect for man is bound to lose the last vestiges of its claims upon you, after you have been obliged to trample it under foot in such a compromising way. I don't wonder that afterwards your nerves gave way, owing to the strain and emotion entailed by such sad services. In the end you will learn to love them. As for myself, I am devoted to doing the last for the deceased ; I have often done it, and always with happiness. Oh ! how one would fain

## Letter 56

make the closed and discoloured lips speak! But at any rate one can substitute for one's interrupted duologue the monologue of prayer, a prayer which God answers in silence.

It is plain that the Master wishes for such services from you, since He so far helps you as to enable you to do things that seemed to you impossible. But that does not prevent all this from being your life's filling in; its fulness is something else. Return into yourself very gently, *intra in cubiculum tuum, et clauso ostio tuo ora Patrem tuum in abscondito*.<sup>1</sup> If this be true of those who pray to *the Father*, how much more so is it of one who prays to her *Spouse*? Are not the *cubiculum*<sup>2</sup> and the *ostium clausum*<sup>3</sup> specially made for her? Only the best thing one learns in this inner colloquy is self-oblation, and therefore to break off the intercourse as soon as the service of the Spouse demands it.

No, my daughter, administrative life has never hindered me, and it will never hinder me from following you into the region of "sublimities." In following you there, I find my soul's peace and my heart's joy. I know not if that be in any way an imperfection, but I think not. I bless you.

## 56

October 2, 1883.

. . . I arrived too late for my poor uncle. . . . A crushing blow put an end to an illness which was expected to last several weeks. In his case, too,

<sup>1</sup> "Enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father in secret" (Matt. vi. 6; cf. Isa. xxvi. 20).

<sup>2</sup> Bed-chamber.

<sup>3</sup> Closed door.

## The Way of the Heart

we must have recourse to *abounding mercy*. He was very upright, very clean-living, deeply God-fearing, but his religion was far from being of an *official* kind. Happily such recourse is something quite other than a mere makeshift. . . .

How can you doubt, my child, that all these matters have their place in my priestly life, since it is clear that one of the ends for which I was made a priest was for the service of your soul? My poor child! no one feels more keenly than I the struggle that has to be made not to be unfaithful to one's inner self, and not to shirk one's outward duty. Unfortunately, I feel a repugnance towards it which amounts to horror! And I feel the net closing round me more and more. But God is good, and orders all things well. Distaste for action facilitates the interior life; and the interior life enables one to undertake action advantageously and supernaturally.

I approve and much like your way of understanding Martha and Mary. I see nothing rash in such reciprocity between Jesus' Heart and ours. Or rather, if rashness there be, it is not we who are responsible for it.

Be sure, my daughter, that it is good, salutary, and pleasing for me to talk to you of these things, and to reply to your questions about them, and that when you are the first to speak of them you are so far from committing any indiscretion that you really bring me assistance in the midst of my whirl and bustle at its worst.

I bless you with all my heart.

## Letter 57

57

October 26, 1883.

Can I altogether keep silence with you when I am truly with God? I think not. Oh! how often I have regretted that you were not there behind a grating to hear what I was listening to! Fancy! I had just come to Clamart to make a solitary retreat, when I found a general retreat going on; and as I got there just at the same time as the rest, I feared to be singular, and followed the general exercises given by a Father who is a real saint. Four times daily he gives the subjects of the meditations, but each time it degenerates into a spiritual conference of thirty or forty minutes' length. It is rather upsetting when one wants to get back to one's hours for prayer afterwards. But also, how good it is to hear a "friend of the Bridegroom" speaking! Several times he had to stop short. Tears choked his voice; once he was speaking of *St. Peter's denial*: while he was saying, "I know not the man," he could not finish his remarks. Another time, in recalling *St. Andrew's invocation to the Cross*, on reaching the words, *et jam concupiscenti animo preparata*, his voice broke down: and this, right in the midst of such a familiar, humble, and recollected address, that it was far from all thought of eloquence! I never felt our Lord *through* a man as much as I have this week. And I cannot tell you how it humbled me! When I think of all the confidence that is displayed towards myself! Souls come to find the Master, and with such small success!

## The Way of the Heart

On the *Passion of our Lord's soul*, the holy man said such divine things that they would have made you exclaim: "There's real devotion to the Heart of Jesus!"

I should like to repeat it all to you, but I can't think of doing so. I seem, then, to have a real desire to begin to serve the Master, and I want you to help me by prayer and by making an exchange, as I, for my part, want to help you in every way.

And now, my daughter, what am I to say to you of the Adoration of rue d'Ulm? There you were shown the sacrifices of the future. But do not forget that to-day's grace is for to-day's sacrifice, and to-morrow's grace for to-morrow's sacrifice. You will be supported when the time comes, and then you will regain all your rights as a Bride. You will feel that your consecration is not in vain, and that it strengthens you to carry in your arms the souls that depart, and those that remain, to give them both to Jesus the Redeemer. Be faithful to present grace: this is the best, the only preparation for future trials.

. . . I am not at all sorry to see the sensibility of your natural affections being awakened. The supposed aridity of heart with which you thought you were affected was merely the absorbent effect of the divine action in its beginnings. Little by little the soul gets acclimatized to such action—and then all the good feelings of the heart—all the Master can approve of, begin to pulse anew, like the physical heart after we have recovered from a shock of surprise. But how can we fail to range among good



## Letter 58

feelings such as our Lord Himself used to feel? In the case of Lazarus and St. Peter and of Mary, did not He *show heart* and *tenderness*, and did He not experience the sufferings of friendship in the case of Judas? Do not His parables, and, among others, that of the Prodigal Son, move us to tears? How, then, can He find fault with our tears?

58

November 25, 1883.

. . . In your last letter you repeated something you had heard, and which was quite true, that to some souls is given quite an exceptional omnipotence of prayer. . . . Think you this is a reward? It may be so after *prolonged service rendered*, but at the outset, and so soon after conversion, it is another matter: then it is an act of sovereignty. But is not He the Master? Who, then, is to lay down laws for love? His choice is not bound, but it binds. It depends upon Him not to choose you, it does not depend upon you not to be chosen. If you are His, first from His choice, and afterwards from your own, why should He not delegate to you the ministry of prayer as well as that of reparation, or of zeal, or of preaching, or of contemplation?

After some hesitation I am sending you the notes of my retreat, except that I have rightly set apart all that touched my conscience too closely. The rest goes to the roots of the soul. I cannot think the Master will blame me for going shares with you.

## The Way of the Heart

59

December 11, 1883.

Your letter went to my very heart! Be sure that if anything could bind me closer in soul to you than I am already bound, it would be to see you taking a daughterly interest in my soul with all devotion and sincerity. God sometimes lets such words be more effective than those apparently possessed of more authority.

As to what particularly concerns myself, the thought of you has long been linked with all that reminds me of the demands of the interior life. Further, you need never fear that your interesting me in yourself will distract me from my duty, since all that draws me towards you brings me nearer to what is a priest's first duty, intercourse with God.

I now return to you. You cannot understand how it is possible that hope should be counted to you as a virtue, because it is so pleasing. One might say the same of all the virtues when one is running before the wind. But as soon as sensible grace withdraws, all the virtues become more difficult, and hope is not one of the least arduous, because it is made up of detachment almost as much as love is, and to confide all one's desires to the *Invisible*, when He is at the same time the *Insensible*, is a work of great courage and high merit: *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est, ponere in Domino spem meam.*<sup>1</sup> *Bonum est* in every sense

<sup>1</sup> "But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord my God" (Ps. lxxii. 28).

## Letter 60

of the word : it is both good and sweet ; it is both good and meritorious, according to the weather we meet with.

But your sky seems to have been rather overcast of late. . . .

60

December 30, 1883.

We must have certainly met each other on Christmas night, since we were in the same place and in the same spirit. I shall be frank enough to confess that at the time, being very busied with souls which are a burden and an anxiety to me, I did not think of you. But the next three days it was quite otherwise. I spent the feasts of Christmas, St. Stephen, and St. John, at Evreux. I went there on business connected with our Institute, and at the same time I preached the Adoration at the Cathedral. But I cannot be before the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed, or speak to Jesus in it, without thinking of your soul and feeling very closely linked with it. *Jesus our Companion*, such was the subject of my *triduum*. His *arrival* in our midst, or Christmas and the Eucharist ; the *journey*, or the mysteries of Jesus and the Eucharist ; the *goal*, or heaven and the Eucharist. And during my last sermon, the impression I took from the close of my retreat came upon me once more, and I told the people all I had said to our Lord in my last meditation.

## The Way of the Heart

61

May 3, 1884.

I have not been letting you fast for your own good, while you were so regular in *writing to me* and *telling me everything*. It was because I could not do any better. Necessity has a sour expression, and a sort of higher initiation is needed for recognizing beneath its frowning features the loving and lovable face of the Master whom we serve.

I have only a few minutes to tell you that I am very pleased with all you have written me the last three weeks, especially with your last note—*the one you don't believe a single word of*. It expresses what you feel in the depths of your heart better than any other. Yes, it is true we must let Him act just as He pleases, then He will find compensation in our soul finally set free, and will use it as His instrument.

My child, I have only a minute to spare, and it is the feast of the Invention of the Cross. Who was the first to discover it? Not St. Helena, but Jesus. The cross was known before Him, but not His Cross; the slave's cross which brought disgrace and death, not the Saviour's Cross, which rehabilitates and gives life. But the *invention* has to be made afresh by each one of us. Who fails to find the old cross which makes us murmur? But how few there are who can find the true Cross which makes us love! To find this pearl, our Master sold all that He had: immortality, impassibility, and divine power and riches; He became poor and little, suffered and died, to buy this new treasure. And

## Letter 62

He wants us to do the same. So go and *sell everything*, that is to say, all self-possession, all self-retention, and buy the Cross of Jesus Christ. This is all I can say to-day.

62

June 22, 1884.

What happiness, my child, to know your dear sick father is now convalescent! Now I shall sympathize with him rather than with you and your mother. When one is no longer crushed with sickness, and yet has not altogether recovered one's strength, there are a number of privations that make themselves felt, which were unperceived while one lay ill. In your dear father's case, such privations will be chiefly of an intellectual nature. But you must be ruthless, and check rather than promote any resumption of real work. I fancy that if I were there I should be able to engage his mind without putting it on the strain, and points of contact would not be wanting to us. Some time ago, I was thinking of this with regard to a speech I delivered at the meeting of M. de Mun's *Cercles*, a speech for which the *Temps* took me to task. Had the paper fallen into the hands of the invalid, I should have felt that I had to excuse myself, for the *Temps'* criticism was founded on a faulty analysis, and it made me say the opposite, or very nearly the opposite, of what I actually said. It is a strange thing, that separated as your father and I are on essential matters in our way of looking at things, I often feel that I am nearer to him in

## The Way of the Heart

mind and in heart than I am to some of my comrades in arms. Besides, when I believe I may be confused with the latter, I am pained to think of him. Is it not a sign of true and deep friendship to feel such a need of being approved, at least in silence, by one whose support nothing obliges one to seek? . . .

I must tell you, my daughter, that your way of taking and of informing me of your last trial gave me the most lively and agreeable satisfaction I have ever received from you. And only to think that on the feast of the Sacred Heart I was more than ever united with you! So there must be some correspondence of soul between us! For I can assure you there was nothing of a mystical character in the day I was spending. Six hours of theological examinations, then running to and fro, and some legal business, all this going on till half-past seven in the evening, when I got just a moment after Benediction, and had to start afresh after dinner. But what does it matter? I thought of you in our Lord, and, while I was doing so, something was occurring in the outward and inward circumstances of your life.

Will the Master accept this sacrifice of yours *in fact*? That is His own secret. What is certain is this: you must offer it as something you do not mean to go back upon. Abraham's sacrifice was no pretence. And then, even when Isaac was spared, there was a ram to be sacrificed. In all this there is an express invitation to detachment; something of yourself, whatever happens, will remain alienated from you; the grace of immolation you

## Letters 63 and 64

received on that occasion will have to be applied to something else, and this will be revealed to you at the proper time. . . .

### 63

July 7, 1884.

Sing inwardly St. Francis' hymn: *Deus meus et omnia*. It is said he spent the whole night singing it. And how can this life's night be better employed, this night in which God seems to be so little to us, than in *forcing oneself* to exclaim that one acknowledges Him as being all things and better than everything? In heaven we shall gain no merit in thus exclaiming, because we shall see it too plainly. Happy is he who can say it here below at the dictate of faith; still more happy is he who repeats it as an echo of love!

I am glad you love the Liturgy. You must have relished the Offices of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of the Precious Blood. Make these holy thoughts your home and native air.

### 64

July 18, 1884.

. . . So you are passing through a *squall*. It may seem to you *nox in acternum duratura*.<sup>1</sup> It is only a storm. And if it is dark and violent, it is its business to be so. Yours is to do like the sailor who gets lashed to his seat and lets the waves sweep over him, constantly submerged, and reappearing directly afterwards, dripping with foam, shrammed

<sup>1</sup> A never-ending night.

## The Way of the Heart

with cold, gripped to the heart with anxiety, but not allowing his eye to wander from the compass, not letting go the helm, and between two thunder-claps invoking "Mary, Star of the sea."

You describe a twofold state, full of contrasts, and you ask if you can act with sincerity as if you were one when you are really two, and whether you can yield up your life to your heart and its affirmations while your mind is full of doubt or denial. Yes, my daughter, you can, and you ought, you wish it, and you will do it. And Love will win the day. Oh! if you only knew how sure I am that I did rightly, and that I was not speaking of myself that day in the wood, when I pledged you to bind yourself for ever. That blessed vow is to-day your only strength and *raison d'être* in this world. Jesus is not ungrateful, and remembers it especially in your hours of suffering. He will give you your father's heart in exchange. Will it come about in a visible way and in the official dispensation of the Redemption? Will it take place in the mysterious *tête-à-tête* between the creature and his Creator, in the very act of passing to the land of light, and according to the hidden and inaccessible laws of that Love which knows neither rule nor measure? I know not at all. But this I know well, that this soul will see God, and that you will see in God the bond which binds his salvation to your self-donation, your sufferings, your mental temptations, your anguish of soul! . . .

Take advantage of your darkness to humble yourself deeply, to acquire an experimental and heart-felt knowledge of your nothingness.



## Letters 65 and 66

65

July 25, 1884.

*In festo sancti Jacobi fratris Domini.*

. . . I leave you with James, the brother of John, also called the brother (or cousin) of the Lord. He is one of the two for whom their mother asked for heaven upon earth, and Jesus answered by speaking of the *cup of bitterness*. He is one of the three who, after seeing Thabor, saw Gethsemani close at hand. Ask him to let you know what you can best do to please the Master: he will answer: suffer your unbelief, as *He* suffers it, and love Him with it, as He loves you *in spite of it*.

66

DEAR MADAME,<sup>1</sup>

September 14, 1884.

How touched I am by your letter! Yes, you are quite right to leave everything to God. No overture, either direct or indirect, however discreetly made, could be otherwise than unhappy in its effect. You would not only run counter to his defects, but to his virtues. Leave his fine soul to Him who knows how to reach its depths, and to make any substantial changes or modifications in it, and to reveal Himself within it. He has many ways of acting, and, even when nothing betrays His action, we must not infer that He has done and achieved nothing.

Still, along with you I am praying with all my

<sup>1</sup> Letters to the mother of the lady, to whom the others are addressed, begin with "Dear Madame."

## The Way of the Heart

heart for some visible manifestation of grace which will appear outwardly, and bring consolation to those who behold it.

Be sure that I am with you in heart and in prayer. Remember me most affectionately to your dear sick one, etc.

### 67

*O magnum pietatis opus!*<sup>1</sup>      September 14, 1884.

Yes, it is a beautiful and touching ministry to proclaim Jesus to those who already know Him, and to restore Him to those who have lost Him. A preacher of ecclesiastical retreats has some hours which are very hard, and others which are full of sweetness. He feels and touches grace sensibly: he sees white-haired elders in tears at his feet: he takes part in scenes of joy and resurrection, but all this is accompanied by bitter sorrows. How wonderful is the Master to entrust Himself to us in the way in which He does!

Now I return to you, my poor daughter, and how can you ask me if it is a bad thing to feel a fear of, and even an aversion to, the chalice? Did not He, then, feel it before us? It is the most subtle of all the traces of His love. He might have been hard as brass, but He would not be so; He might have been satisfied with suffering deeply, but He willed also to feel the horror and alarm of suffering; He might have gone to His death borne on with enthusiasm, but He chose the pathway of inward agony. *O magnum pietatis opus!* O great work

<sup>1</sup> "O great work of love (or tender affection)."

## Letter 68

of love! Did He not thus sanctify our bitterest sorrows, those that we hide, and of which we should almost be ashamed! The best proof that you do not offend Him by your manner of suffering is that He censures *bitter peace* or *peaceful bitterness*.

That external work should overwhelm you more than ordinarily is not to be wondered at; and you have a good right to cut it down and to simplify it a great deal, since your first duty is towards your dear sick father. There will still be many inevitable duties left, and the only way to carry them out is to consider them as really your Master's business and not yours. *On the King's service*, as the old pages used to say; and with these words on their lips they were ready to go through fire. "On the Bridegroom's service" you must say, and then you will find nothing impossible.

No, do not force yourself to make novenas. Your life is one long novena. The particular *forms* of devotion are only useful according to the strength of the attraction we feel for them. You have an attraction that is well worth any others; follow it, and nothing else. Yes. Long live the Cross of Jesus Christ! . . . I am convinced that prayer, being the life-giving blood of the soul, never flows so abundantly as when it springs from some deep wound.

68

September 23, 1884.

How good of you, dear Madame, to write to me again amidst all your anxieties! Take care, or I shall get used to it, and become exacting. I had

## The Way of the Heart

such good parents, and I feel so sadly the emptiness of my home, that wherever I meet a little friendliness, my strong family affections are awakened, and I cling like bindweed.

69

October 8, 1884.

Is it really so, Madame? Are you not passing from hope that was too high to too deep a discouragement? I ask myself the question, and yet I should be wiser to believe what you tell me, and to address you the words your soul has need of, words that look to a higher source than this world to bring hope down to dwell with us in this valley of tears, to make it the companion of our anguish.

Hitherto your religion has been a religion of the will only, which satisfied your conscience; and your heart found its fulness elsewhere. Now your heart is rent, and it is in agony at the prospect of a painful separation. Believe what I say! Let the loving part of yourself be permeated by what has hitherto been to you merely a principle, a duty! But how is it to be done? you will say. I feel no force of will. True; but God inspires such feelings as He wills, and He wills what we ask Him for, when we desire to go towards Him. Pray then that the mystery of the Cross may be revealed within you, so that you may understand what love God is concealing beneath your sufferings. In this way, become *supernatural for two persons*. Thus you will find the strength you lack, and obtain for others

## Letters 70 and 71

that which they lack. Yes, you will obtain it, I repeat, even though you have to wait till you get to heaven to know the joy that you have succeeded in obtaining it. Be sure, Madame, that my heart and my prayer are ever with you.

### 70

October 14, 1884.

And I too yearn for great graces in your case ! I am not surprised at the deep trials to which your grief has given rise. The peacefulness of his end, which was not what our faith yearned for, cannot fail to awaken all your interior enemies. What can you do but rouse your inward Friend, if He seems to be asleep in your storm-tossed vessel, and cry out to Him : *Tua sum ego, salvam me fac ?*<sup>1</sup> My child, Love has an answer to everything. It takes the place of faith, it creates hope, it is the strength of prayer, and the sinews of patience. And who can take it from you, since you are His and He is yours ? *Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi.*<sup>2</sup> Praise and bless Him for all things !

### 71

November 10, 1884.

. . . Here is an extract from a letter to which you can give a reply : " When will God be ours ? Now at once : is it not so ? " Yes, my daughter, now at once, and to-morrow, and always, both on this side

<sup>1</sup> " I am Thine : save me ! "

<sup>2</sup> " My beloved to me, and I to him. "

## The Way of the Heart

and on the other side of death, which separates faith from sight, and hope from enjoyment, but not love from love. It is your heart's Guest who gives you the sweet assurances that temper the bitterness of your sorrow at the present moment. Love can wound, and can also tend the wounds with infinite delicacy, and therein, as in everything else, we must leave Him to act as He will.

72

*November 10, 1884.*

I hope, Madame, you will find in M. — the regular help you require. We all of us need assistance. Those who sustain others themselves want to be sustained. Just as faith is communicated by preaching, and maintained by education, so is the interior life communicated by the Sacraments, and cultivated by priestly direction. Under the first stupefaction of your grief, you want hardly anything more than a sympathetic heart. But as by degrees outward and inward circumstances develop after the blow you have received, there will arise a number of questions which will take shape of themselves within you, and which it will be well for you not to determine alone, nor should your spiritual father decide them without you. Direction is no oracle speaking from the top of a tripod; it is a collaboration in which the one shows what is within, and the other helps to find the way and to follow it.

## Letter 73

73

November 29, 1884.

It is now more than a month since your calamity, dear Madame.—I am reproaching myself for allowing too long an interval to have elapsed between my last letter and this one.—Yet you are well aware that indifference has nothing to do with it.

Your first impression was one of coldness, was it not? . . . There is something very forbidding in the prearranged and expected meeting with a soul coming to confession. A chance meeting would make it almost easier to open one's heart. And sometimes one must wait rather a long time, until some unforeseen hour or circumstance leads up, on the part of the penitent or of the confessor, to one of those heartfelt utterances, the tone of which is unmistakable and inevitably provocative of an answer. The only thing to be done to *bring it about* beforehand is to choose some one whose sterling qualities are such as to justify one's confidence. Then all anxiety as to the first step must be left to time and Providence. If I am sometimes able to reply to the cry of your soul from afar, you know how gladly I shall do so. Your daughter tells me you are very brave. This does not delude me into thinking that your poor heart escapes anything in the way of suffering. How sad will this winter be with this dreadful weather, and its long and lonely days in the great house in which it was so good to shut oneself off in cosy intimacy, and where you have now nothing to talk to each other about but your mutual griefs! I am often with you in

## The Way of the Heart

thought in this first stage, which you can hardly have left behind. May God be with you, and be your consoler!

74

November 29, 1884.

. . . We are beginning Advent: *Regem venturum Dominum, venite adoremus.*<sup>1</sup> We shall soon be saying: *Prope est jam Dominus, venite adoremus.*<sup>2</sup> Since the time we said it last, He must have come indeed! It is true He has come, as the saints prove. But He is always proclaiming His coming anew, and drawing near again. Happy is he who desires His coming and goes to meet Him. *Ecce sponsus venit, aptate lampades vestras; exite obviam ei.*<sup>3</sup> How joyful to be among these, my daughter! And how can you wonder at the peace He imparts to your bitterness, and which you scarcely dare acknowledge to yourself?

75

December 14, 1884.

I have been obliged to decide to make my retreat during the feasts only, from Christmas morning until the 30th inclusively. It is a good time for making the Second Week of the *Exercises*; but I much need to make the First Week beforehand. I am going to try to do so. One must purify one's

<sup>1</sup> "O come, let us adore the Lord and King at His coming!"

<sup>2</sup> "The Lord is now at hand, O come, let us adore Him."

<sup>3</sup> "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: trim your lamps: go ye forth to meet Him" (*cf. Matt. xxv. 6 and 7*).



## Letter 76

soul by humility and penance to see clearly into the mysteries of love. *Beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.*<sup>1</sup>

76

DEAR MADAME,

January 2, 1885.

. . . Alas, who can make your heavy grief a reproach to you? Yes, were you to listen only to your feelings, you would say with Job in speaking of the year just past: "Let it be blotted out of the number of the years!" But if there are a thousand reasons for abandoning yourself to an inevitable dejection, you must not therefore give way to it, otherwise in your sorrow you will be *like those without hope*. Now, to have no hope when there is no one to give it you, is a calamity; but not to have hope when God Himself comes from heaven to bring it to us would be both ungrateful and unjust. If you look at the sad year in this light, you will find underlying it that which is the solid foundation of our hopes: divine Mercy. You will find it there, in the first place, enfolding with an invisible but real protection your dear absent one, whose upright and sincere soul received from God more than he thought, and to-day he certainly recognizes the source of the rays that gave light and warmth to his life. The Scriptures, when speaking of the wicked, the false, and those who, knowing God, have insulted Him and persecuted His servants, show them to us in spite of themselves entering

<sup>1</sup> "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8).

## The Way of the Heart

into the clear brightness beyond the grave, and exclaiming : *Then, we were mistaken!* But it does not say this of the wise, the just, and the good who have *sought after God gropingly*, in the words of St. Paul. Oh ! such as these, entering into the land of light, must exclaim : "*Then, it was Thou O God, whom I was loving without knowing it!* It was Thy beauty that attracted me in all I thought beautiful, Thy goodness that charmed me in the sweetest affections, Thy holiness which bound me to duty, and filled me with zeal for virtue ! Ah ! how much better is it to behold Thee than the feeble reflexions of Thy countenance ! how much better is it to drink at the fountain-head than to slake one's thirst with the little drops wherewith Thou waterest the desert of this world from afar !" And then, you find this mercy in yourself also ; yes, in your soul drenched with bitterness, but sustained with such a sweet and strong affection, so happily inclined to look higher than earth for consolation, understanding a thousand times better than formerly the function of this life, which is not an end, but a passage, and the function of grief also, which is not a form of cruelty, but a lesson and a call.

When you have thus learnt to regard the past, when you have unlearnt to execrate the year gone by, you will be ready to hear and to receive once more the good wishes of your friends for the year which has just begun. You will understand that it is much to be desired that the *trial* may give you that for which God sends it, and that you may find out all that He is to those who love Him, all

## Letter 77

that He wishes to be to you! Praying that He may bless and restore you, dear Madame, I am, etc.

77

January 7, 1885.

. . . My retreat was much needed, and it was a very good one. I proposed to anticipate the *Exercises* of the First Week before shutting myself up. But I did not succeed in doing so. I found it rather hard to have to spend Christmas-day without the Office, without Benediction, alone in my room with the fundamental meditation, and as it were turning my back upon the Crib. But I held firm, and I am all the better for it. Two days after, St. John the Beloved saw me ascend to the altar once more, and on the fourth day I finally kept Christmas at the foot of the Crib. Yes, it is very necessary to begin with humiliation. Jesus only bows down to us when He sees that we have abased ourselves. But then, how He can descend and condescend to us! how He can raise us up and lead us in! I can assure you, a poor priest often needs to hear Him say: *Veni seorsum et requiesce pusillum*.<sup>1</sup> But never do we desire His visit as much as He wishes to pay it. The further I go, the more do I feel that spiritual life consists in those two elements: good desires which are its beginning, and good-will which is its fulfilment. We must water our souls with good desires by prayer, and then make it bring forth good resolutions. These two elements must never be separated. Un-

<sup>1</sup> "Come aside, and rest awhile."

## The Way of the Heart

happily, in a retreat in which one gets an abundance of the first, there is no room for the second, except in promises. And when one has got back to ordinary life, when the time has come for the redoubling of good-will, we foolishly allow ourselves to be deprived of the assistance of good desires, by not renewing them at their source, which is prayer. I hope that I have this time carried off a receipt for avoiding such a misfortune.

And how about yourself? Are you rather less overdone by your orphans, and are you rather less dark within? . . . Nothing is more salutary for those who are in affliction than to become consolers. . . . May He to whom you belong bless this year!

78

January 18, 1885.

How grievous are these scandals! O: *the thought of reparation* can soften the bitterness of them. To take expiation on oneself is to be like Him of whom it is said: *Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit.*<sup>1</sup> If this thought had thoroughly entered into us, without running after great penances, should we not give quite another reception than we usually do to sufferings, vexations, and the dullness and bitterness of our poor lives? And then the thought of reparation is so beneficial to poor souls like ours! It is a great mistake to think it is the privilege of the perfect. On the contrary, it pleases our Lord to open up

<sup>1</sup> "Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. liii. 4).

## Letters 79 and 80

these horizons to the weak to give them courage by turning their attention away from their own wretchedness. If I am incapable of satisfying God in myself, I will try to make up to Him for others. If I cannot lament my own ingratitude sufficiently, I will learn to do so by lamenting for others. *Non è vero?*

### 79

March 8, 1885.

. . . The further I go, the more convinced I am that modern society (and we are both very sure of it, you and I) cannot do any longer without God, nor reach Him otherwise than by way of the heart. We must prepare, facilitate, accept, and expand the reign of Love! We must enter into the designs, the regrets, the complaints, the demands, the inspirations of Love. The heart is the best thing in an uncontaminated nature, it remains the sole thing which is good in those who have been compromised, and the life which takes refuge in the heart shines forth and gives life to all the rest, provided that it drink its fill at the divine fountain-head.

### 80

April 18, 1885.

If you only had one or two troubles, and those light ones, I might pity you: little ills do not bear up their victims. But you are surrounded, I was about to say submerged, by griefs: all these wavelets make up a great wave which seems as if it must engulf you: hence it will uplift you, and carry you

## The Way of the Heart

up heavenwards. *Quum infirmior tunc potens sum :  
virtus in infirmitate perficitur.*<sup>1</sup>

Good-bye for the present. I bless you.

81

May 3, 1885.

So your stay at \* \* \* is over. It would have meant a risk of temptation to you three years ago, whereas this year it only helped to prove to you the conquering sway of a better love. Your letter was very short and concise, and it was like a cloud full of beneficent rain which has not yet fallen. I wish I could have answered it at once, to make it pour forth its contents. As always, just when a punctual reply would have been most opportune, I found it impossible. Does the Master thus mean to show us both that He has no need of anyone? In any case, He does not intend to show us that we are each of us to remain shut up within ourselves. I am quite sure of that; and so are you, are you not?

. . . Be quick to send me news of your second return to \* \* \*, and try to pour a little of your heart into your inkstand. For my part, I have just been speaking on the *Invention of the Holy Cross*, and I find it is really a grand discovery. The robber's cross had long been known, the cross of dishonour and of torment and of death; but the great innovation was the Cross of Jesus, the cross of life and hope and glory. Yet this is a sad thought: though

<sup>1</sup> "When I am weak, then I am powerful: power is made perfect in infirmity" (*cf.* 2 Cor. xii. 9 and 10).

## Letter 82

the true Cross, the redeeming Cross, was discovered so many centuries ago, it still remains for so many souls to discover ! And has it not still to be re-discovered daily by those who have discovered it ? Pride prevents such discovery ; we want to estimate God's designs in our trials, and then the mystery deepens and turns to a stumbling-block. And what wonder ? The Cross is the mystery of a divine humility, and we want to enter into it with an effort of pride ! Will you not try to find the fruit of humility everywhere ? Let this be your solution of every difficulty that may be aroused against your outward actions.

82

May 17, 1885.

. . . What *He* told you about the Ascension is just what is best for you to understand. As for me, that is all I too can say to myself, and to all upon whom the wind from our modern desert blows.

" They may try in vain, they will never do away with the ideal, the need of perfection, beauty, goodness, truth, and unity. They may try in vain, any ideal which is not a living ideal is but a chimera, a pleasing creation of the brain ; and whoever makes it, being able to unmake it, cannot bow down before it, nor commit his destinies to it. They may try in vain, they will never find any other ideal, an ideal that is living, independent of man but accessible to man, except the God of Christianity. Let us, then, be Christians, if we mean not to abdicate what is best within us, what in human nature is indestructible."

## The Way of the Heart

And I may well add : Let us be Christians to the point of being intimate with Jesus Christ, for no other Christianity has a meaning that can satisfy any but common souls, or such as have never seen the possibility of attaining so high.

All this sounds very cold when thus spoken. But when it suddenly shines in upon the soul from on high, as the luminous inference from some word of the Gospels or the Apocalypse—then it is quite otherwise—is it not ?

I bless you, my child.

83

June 14, 1885.

Here at last I am writing again, but, as always happens, only after our dialogue has been made impossible all through my fault. . . . Is it not a sign of the sovereign will that wills our intercourse, but does not will it to be too consoling ? . . .

. . . Your letter of May 19th helped me more than anything else to understand what is happening to you, and how sovereign is the action by which you are being governed. I fancy that when it is over you will feel as if you wanted to run away. Your faithfulness will lie in your offering yourself freely to your Master's governance. Acting in you and by you—is not this to HIM (may He forgive me the expression) a sort of divine fancy which nothing can explain, call for, and inspire, either in the past, or scarcely in the present ? Yet the less clearly it is *indicated*, the more impossible is it to doubt its reality. And if it is real, how can He be



## Letter 83

resisted without defying the one of all His powers which least admits of defeat, the power of the heart. My child, to speak the truth—and I am sure you will agree with me—the mystery does not lie in the fact that there are souls in whom God reigns by love, given the fact that God is love and that He reveals Himself in man's heart ; but the depth of the mystery consists in this, that such souls are rare, and that the revelation of love is so little welcomed by mankind. . . . And this mystery is the great trial of faith. How is it that He who is omnipotent is the Master who is the worst served ?—And when He lays on one side might in order to rule by kindness, how is it that He who is the most amiable is the least loved ?

Yes, this is indeed the great stumbling-block. But here is the other side of the mystery, and it is full of light. How is it that He gets so much from the saints, although their nature is the same as ours ? And in ourselves, after all our resistance and infidelity, amidst all our contrary influences and tendencies, how does He make His demands sink so deep down within us ? how does He get us to accept and to love Him ?

The more I look at this poor world which turns its back upon the Gospel, the more do I pity it. Many who are upright feel the fascination of negative doctrines, and yet keep up their reverence for duty, and for moral Good. But how are they to be pitied ! for, separated from the living God, duty is but an abstraction, and sin but the violation of this abstraction, somewhat like a mistake in an astronomical reckoning, an error made in good faith.

## The Way of the Heart

Is that what conscience says? No, conscience cries out after sin, and the cry is so like a cry of the heart as to be mistaken for it. Therefore the heart is interested in duty. But who can understand this, unless it be *the Children of God*, to whom all sin means ingratitude and treachery? Hence, we must go on with our negations to the end, or deny conscience itself; or else, we must revert to the opposite extreme of affirmation, and acknowledge the Love of which it is said: *Quum dilexisset suos in finem dilexit eos.*<sup>1</sup> And thus, true mysticism becomes the last word of morality. Believe me, this foundation is indeed solid, and on it your life is based.

I bless you, my child.

84

July 16, 1885.

*Sancta Maria succurre miseris,*<sup>2</sup> this really refers to us! *Juva pusillanimes,*<sup>3</sup> and this still more so. *Refove flebiles,*<sup>4</sup> this is just what we want! *Ora pro populo,*<sup>5</sup> this is much better than abusing them. *Interveni pro clero,*<sup>6</sup> let it be your devotion. *Intercede pro devoto femineo sexu,*<sup>7</sup> which is what I am doing for you. *Sentiant omnes tuum juvamen quicumque celebrant tuam solemnem commemora-*

<sup>1</sup> "Since He loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Holy Mary, succour the miserable.

<sup>3</sup> Help the faint-hearted.

<sup>4</sup> Cheer those that weep.

<sup>5</sup> Pray for the people.

<sup>6</sup> Mediate for the clergy.

<sup>7</sup> Intercede for devout women.

## Letter 84

*tionem*,<sup>1</sup> is not that our hope for this feast of Mount Carmel? So this antiphon was just made for us, was it not? Yes, my daughter, I wish and pray with all my heart that you may *feel Mary's help* in the state of soul you have so well described to me, and which, though not at all a thing to be uneasy about, is none the less grievous. Well, yes; I give up trying to make you a *believer* who is conscious of her belief. Since the supernatural life has faith for its root, faith in your case must be really solid, since you possess such life. There are, however, plants that grow in the rocks, which send forth their slender roots into arid fissures, wherein it is impossible to see the *humus*<sup>2</sup> on which they feed. But they live and prosper nevertheless; and botanists tell us that, on the one hand, in the clefts of the rock, accumulations of detritus have deposited a little *humus*; and, on the other, that these plants, so ill provided with roots, make up for it by their leaves, and really feed upon sun and dew! And is not this your case? Your faith plunges its rootlets into hidden clefts, unknown to yourself, and the little earth they find therein is invisible. What does it matter? There it is, and if it be only very little, He who is sun and dew, that is to say, light and heat, and satisfaction, that is to say, Love, can easily find the wherewithal to supply from above what is wanting down below. He has the right and the power to do so, and it is His *will*. Yours must be a will to allow Him to act as He will. And to engage yourself to such

<sup>1</sup> Let all feel thine aid who celebrate thy solemn commemoration.

<sup>2</sup> Soil.

## The Way of the Heart

acquiescence, to put something of yourself into such passivity, I can think of nothing better than a child-like impulse towards Mary, whose privilege it is to illumine what is dim, to soften and to brighten self-renunciation, and to replace disturbing questionings with childlike and joyous confidence.

85

*September 3, 1885.*

To-day this is not a real letter : I am only sending you a simple motto which occurred to me during my thanksgiving yesterday.

How great a Master to serve !

How good a Friend to please !

Is not this the principle of both our lives ?

86

*September 16, 1885.*

. . . In Paris, I found all a priest's cares and sorrows. . . . There was a soul to be snatched from suicide or dishonour within twenty-four hours. The most urgent entreaties were fruitless ; and two interviews, in which I had thoroughly exhausted all my powers, ended without any result ; but I had got my sister and her community to pray, and next morning the soul was on its road back. Since then, this very guilty but very unfortunate person has met with terrible catastrophes, and is taking the fearful trial in the right way. I ask you to help me to sustain this soul, for in its place I fear I should break down.

## Letter 86

What a vocation is ours! And what things do we behold! I see that the worst of our novels of to-day fall short of the reality. In spite of all, it is a good thing to be in the service of the divine Captain when He takes a soul by assault.

. . . As to studying religions, I do not share Abbé X.'s view. . . . He and the Archbishop are deeply interested (like myself) in Christian apologetics, and they have said some very fine things on the subject. But I think you would be made to take the wrong road, if anyone were to engage you in such studies. It is not your path.

Besides (and Mgr. Meignan admitted it the other day in a most touching manner), at the bottom of every religious question there is always a *why* which nothing can resolve, and which is alone answered, but admirably answered, by Love. "God," said he, "makes Himself sought after and loved like a woman." This thought, the expression of which is strange and might scandalize the weak, seems to me just, and most deep. It contains many solutions in germ. It combines wonderfully well with the dogma of man's freedom to give some interpretation, at any rate of a divine kind, of those awful problems which disturb us when we read St. Paul, and help us to find some solace in the cry *O altitudo!*<sup>1</sup> Yes, it is indeed an abyss, but which abyss? When the exclamation is *O altitudo potestatis,*<sup>2</sup> the heart and mind still hesitate. To satisfy them, is it not enough to add, *O altitudo amoris?*<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I think you should read Holy

<sup>1</sup> O the depth!

<sup>2</sup> O the depth of the power!

<sup>3</sup> O the depth of the love!

## The Way of the Heart

Scripture and the Fathers, and confine your study of religion to these. It is by long and frequent inhaling the atmosphere of Love that you will strengthen your soul against the stumbling-blocks of the mind.

87

MY CHILD,

October 16, 1885.

So you are always dark within ! I wish I could send you a ray of light from the centre where I now am. But perhaps your Master wishes only to shed upon you rays of obscure warmth, until the great day dawn, *donec dies elueescat et Lucifer oriatur in cordibus nostris*.<sup>1</sup> Your destiny, then, is the same as that of which St. Paul spoke to the Areopagites : to feel after and find God : *Quaerere Dominum si forte attrahent eum*.<sup>2</sup> But do you know that this is the fundamental destiny of man here below ? Seeking God here on earth, finding Him hereafter. Read again the third chapter of the Canticle of Canticles : *In lectulo meo per noctes quaesivi quem diligit anima mea ; quaesivi illum et non inveni. Surgam et circuibo civitatem, per vicus et plateas quaeram quem diligit anima mea ; quaesivi illum et non inveni*.<sup>3</sup> Guides and pastors do not always help her to find Him whom she is seeking.

<sup>1</sup> " Until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in our hearts " (2 Pet. i. 19).

<sup>2</sup> " To seek God, if haply they may feel after Him " (cf. Acts xvii. 27).

<sup>3</sup> " In my bed by night I sought Him whom my soul loveth : I sought Him, and found Him not. I will rise and go about the city : in the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth : I sought Him, and found Him not."

## Letter 87

*Invenerunt me vigiles qui custodiunt civitatem : " Num quem diligit anima mea vidistis ?"*<sup>1</sup> But far beyond the region of the faint light of faith, which is at the disposal of the guides, there is the clear light of God : *paululum quum pertransiissem eos, inveni quem diligit anima mea.*<sup>2</sup> And when at last the Friend, the supreme Good, has thus been found, He is lost no more : *Tenui eum, nec dimittam.*<sup>3</sup>

But note that, while she seeks and complains to every creature that she cannot find Him, she loves Him so much that she has no other name to give Him than : *He whom my heart loveth.* And you, my daughter, if you did not love your God, your Friend, you would not complain of the darkness, you would let Him be, and that would be all. But your tormented life is consumed in painful seeking, and you cease not to say to all that goes by : *Num quem diligit anima mea vidistis ?*<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, you love Him ; but to love Him is to find Him so far as He is to be found in this land of shadows, in which our eyes are useless to discover the Invisible, but where our heart has only to exercise itself in beating true to the rhythm of eternity.

Yes, but this love is merely a nervous disorder ! So we have come down to this ! . . . I shall not hesitate to make a frontal attack on this monster, which is nothing but a phantom.

<sup>1</sup> " The watchmen who keep the city found me : ' Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth ? ' "

<sup>2</sup> " When I had a little passed by them, I found Him whom my soul loveth. "

<sup>3</sup> " I held Him : and I will not let Him go. "

<sup>4</sup> " Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth ? "

## The Way of the Heart

Yes, there are all sorts of nervous disorders. Nervous disorder, and even madness, may assume an appearance of the love of God. It may be witnessed any day in a mad-house. And the priest comes across it outside.

But the love of God in the guise of a nervous disorder is to the real love of God what the mania of greatness is to greatness, what an obsession of being persecuted is to real persecution. There are none so impervious to doubt as monomaniacs.

Granted ; but here there is no question of madness, it is a question of nervous disorder, that is to say, of an abnormal organic disposition, which exaggerates certain of the heart's needs, and leads one to seek to gratify them in the region of the ideal, and the same exaltation, which urges one to seek this, and makes it as painful as all efforts in the void usually are, brings it about that sometimes one fancies one has found what one is looking for ; delicate, refined, and fleeting sensations, which one links up with a religious system, but into which one puts oneself what one believes oneself to feel ; until there is a slackening of the nervous tension, which brings back doubt and deception and discouragement.

I will admit this description, and I recognize its exactness in the case of certain people. And it is because he has met such as these that here and there a novelist or a doctor of to-day has been able to make such an odious caricature of Christian mysticism, believing, perhaps, in all good faith that he was drawing a true portrait. But I maintain it is a caricature ; add, if you will, *after nature*,



## Letter 87

since nature provides beings who act as models for such a charge.

For the above description of nervous disorder to apply to mysticism, anything really supernatural, an intimate communication between the soul and God, an exchange of spiritual love between the Infinite Beauty and the creature, would have to be an impossibility, or, whether an impossibility or not, there would have to be no way of discriminating between it and nervous excitement.

Now, in the first place, is intercourse with God a possibility? This is a question that in no way depends on the work of M. Charcot. It is the highest problem of philosophy and morals that can busy the mind of man. And how are we to proceed towards its resolution? Wherewith are we to try to find its solution? With the senses, with the imagination, or even with the heart? . . . No, with cool reason. Does God exist? Is the Infinite, the Absolute, behind things as their motive, or only before them to draw them to Himself? If God is at the beginning, how does He coexist with His work? Is it by governing it, or in living by it? Is the supreme Cause transcendent or immanent? Here we are a long way from la Salpêtrière. My child, it is twenty-six years to-day since I began to handle such questions. I have gone on thinking, I may say, without ceasing. I have read everything of importance that has been written on the subject, the most skilful and the cleverest of the writings of atheists, positivists, and of all kinds of pantheists, and I can only declare to you that all this has only proved to me to demonstration the existence of an

## The Way of the Heart

absolute, personal God the Creator, in whom your father believed, and in whom you believe yourself. But if this God be Creator and Master, He is not all this to have His hands tied ; if He has implanted in man higher faculties, which are the image of His own, if He has endued man with understanding and love, it is not that they may remain idle. If He is Himself the Truth and perfect Goodness, it is not to conceal Himself from those in whom He has put a passion for knowledge and love.

Therefore God will communicate with His creature. But how ? Answer. As He will. I hear some philosopher who claims to control the etiquette of our relations with God in a sovereign way. The claim is ridiculous. My friend, " is not you who settle such things. God will do as He wills. He will establish the order of nature : and if He pleases, He will sometimes set it aside with miracles. He will also establish, if He pleases, the higher order of grace. Will He do this, has He done it ? It is a question of fact, not of right. And how, in turn, is this question of fact to be cleared up ? It has nothing at all to do with sentiment ; it, too, is a question of reason ; not of reason applied to metaphysical speculations as to the origin and end of things, but of reason applied to history and morals, the two great witnesses of Christianity.

And now, given Christianity, are there, or are there not, means for discerning true from false mysticism, real communion with the real God from morbid excitement and exaltation, from nervous disorder ? Yes, most certainly. It is Jesus Christ Himself who has given us the criterion. *A fructibus*

## Letter 87

*eorum cognoscetis eos. Non potest arbor mala bonos fructus facere neque arbor bona malos fructus facere.*<sup>1</sup>

What is a nervous disorder? Is it a good tree? No, how can it be? Then it will not yield good fruit. And, as a matter of fact, look at these hysterical devotees, they are nothing but frailty or vice. Ah! well indeed do I know them! and well could I depict them! Egoism, jealousy, sensuality, pride, often an altogether earthly passion for some priest, that is about their net balance! Bad fruit of a bad tree!

But here we have the case of a Christian who is seeking God with all her heart. *She thinks* (I use your own words) God is speaking to her heart. And what is He saying to her? He tells her of self-sacrifice, giving up self for others, humility, patience, charity. And while she follows the call, while she goes along the rough road, generally feeling her way and without consolation, from time to time the star of her first vocation appears to her again; from time to time a joyful thrill disturbs her heart; at other times, she sees nothing and feels nothing; but she is more than ever drawn towards that to which she immolates herself, and the outcome of all these interior phenomena is invariably favourable to the progress of goodness and virtue, and of absolute morality in her soul and life. Are these good fruits? Yes, all men declare it. Man proclaims, even in opposition to the municipal Council of Paris, that Sisters of Charity, the Little Sisters of the Poor, Missionaries, etc., are a real good, and

<sup>1</sup> "By their fruits ye shall know them. An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruits, nor can a good tree bring forth evil fruits" (*cf.* Matt. vii. 17 ff.).

## The Way of the Heart

not an evil, in the world. The fruit is good, therefore the tree is good.

It is true that I have assumed by the way that Christianity is proved, and its divinity demonstrated. And you will reply : this is the point as to which I doubt. And I say in reply : The divinity of Christianity is certain ; it is recognized as such by the best and sanest part of mankind in both the past and in the present, with a few exceptions which are worthy of respect. But I admit that the certainty is one of those that does not strike every mind, especially to-day. I observe that your mind is one of those least disposed to believe in it. But, at the same time, I observe that you are seized so to say by the heart ; that your heart-felt intercourse with the God of Christianity leads you on towards the good, not towards evil, and I infer that truth has found its way to your soul by the heart. . . . Your conspicuously reasonable nature survives . . . and I, who have seen the nervously affected, the hysterical, the inflated with illusions, the half-mad, and the people who suffer from acute religious mania—I give you my word, as your spiritual father and friend—that you are the very antipodes of all that. *Therefore* : glory be to God, glory be to Jesus, God who draws near to us ! Ah ! to draw near to the Invisible, to the perfect Good, this is the great passion of mankind. But it does not succeed in doing so apart from Christianity. Elsewhere, there is but impotent effort, painful dreaming, reason bowed down under the burden of the Infinite, and misrepresenting God in its endeavour to define His likeness ! As for us, we

## Letter 88

have the *Emmanuel*, the God who comes down and dwells in our hearts. *Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.*<sup>1</sup> *Non est alia natio tam grandis quae habeat deos appropinquantes sibi sicut Deus noster adest nobis.*<sup>2</sup> My daughter, it is twenty years to-day since I first went up to the altar. After two days of abstention and humiliation I ascended again this morning : *ad altare Dei, ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.*<sup>3</sup> I took the memory of you with me. May this God, this Friend, take more and more possession of your heart. And do you commit yourself to Him, and your hope will not be confounded.

I am finishing my retreat on Monday evening : I bless you, my child.

88

MY DEAR CHILD,

October 19, 1885.

We have very nearly come to understand one another, but I think you may reach a more restful state of mind. Take this as a fixed point : absolute morality. When the heart is pure, it is impossible to doubt that the conscience is right. But if moral Good is absolutely good and binding, it is almost unrealizable as long as it only is imposed on the reason and the will. It is only practicable when it becomes an object of love. And tell me, speaking of either the past or the present of mankind,

<sup>1</sup> "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John i. 14).

<sup>2</sup> "What other nation is so great and hath gods so near unto them as our God is unto us?" (Deut. iv. 7).

<sup>3</sup> "To the altar of God, the God who maketh glad my youth" (Ps. xlii. 4).

## The Way of the Heart

where and when virtue has been *an affair of the heart*, except it be in the religion of Jesus Christ, in His positive religion, the religion of the Crib and of the Cross, the religion of the Eucharist and of Mary? Hence, it is this religion that must be the true religion, since it alone sustains duty which is absolutely good. It is this religion, and not that of M. Cousin, which would be the privilege of a refined few.

89

April 29, 1886.

. . . Yes, the country is charming, although rain is close at hand, and the sky cloudy; nature is inebriated with the fecundity which she receives from *the Father's breast, a quo omnis paternitas nominatur in coelo et in terra.*<sup>1</sup> How sweetly she does her work, and how faithfully she fulfils her law! No doubt there is no merit in it, since the intelligence that shines in it is not hers, and the power she displays does not belong to her. But what she carries out from necessity, allowing its Author to be seen through it, why should we not do from free choice, from the affection of love, giving the hidden God the testimony of our hearts?

Yes, Jesus has two kinds of speech, the one for Thomas, the other for the Magdalene. The language He speaks to Thomas is not that which is intended for you. All your life you will hear the other, which is all contained in a single name: *Maria*, which is answered by a single word: *Rabboni*,

<sup>1</sup> "Of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15).

## Letter 90

which inflames desires and puts off their satisfaction : *noli me tangere, nondum enim ascendi*,<sup>1</sup> etc. But there is one part of His discourse which is equally addressed to the Apostles and to the Holy Women. If Jesus says to the Apostles : *Euntes docete*,<sup>2</sup> He says to the Magdalene : *Vade, nuntia fratribus meis*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, we must always preach Jesus Christ in whatever way we may have recognized Him, by touching Him, by adoring Him from afar, or by finding Him within our hearts ; the conclusion is the same ; we must make Him known and loved. Then ——'s toils and slavery are a good thing for her, and if you were still alarmed about them, I should still say to you to-day : I leave you to what you are afraid of ; but you are not afraid of anything to-day, are you ?

## 90

May 3, 1886.

*In inventione sanctae Crucis.—Pulchra inventio !*<sup>4</sup>

. . . What shall I say to you about the Jubilee ? You know that Catholic doctrine admits of several degrees in the remission of sins and their consequences. The pardon accorded to the repentant by the application of the Redeemer's merits wipes out the defilement of the soul, and thereby remits the eternal penalty which is only conjoined with the survival of sin ; if sin is destroyed, it cannot subsist. But this grace, which is accorded by the

<sup>1</sup> "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended" (John xx. 17).

<sup>2</sup> "Go and teach" (Matt. xxviii. 19).

<sup>3</sup> "Go to My brethren, and say to them" (John xx. 17).

<sup>4</sup> On the Finding of the Holy Cross.—A fair Finding !

## The Way of the Heart

Sovereign Judge, has the character of being a commutation. Eternal punishment is commuted for a temporal punishment, to be undergone in this world or the next.

The dogma of temporal expiation is a mixture of justice and mercy, mercy, however, dominating in it, for without this intermediate state there would be no mean between the moral position of a soul given over to evil, and sanctity, the perfect purity required by heaven.

Only, since temporal expiation is not, like eternal punishment, conjoined with sin, an aspect, a concomitant consequence of sin; since it belongs to positive ordinance, since it is a divinely wise institution, but also free and contingent, it can be regulated by a law of clemency which modifies it or does away with it in particular circumstances. This high administration of the law of grace in the order of temporal expiation belongs by divine delegation to the Church; it is included in the universal extension of the power of the keys: *Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*, the penalty as well as the guilt.

When the Church had a very rigorous system of penance, and set expiations for the various public or avowed sins, she had the power to modify or remit the penalty according to the age, the infirmity, the fervour of the penitent, the danger of persecution, etc. The remission of part or of all of the canonical penance, this was the origin of *indulgences*. Canonical penance is gone; sacramental penance, which is given in confession, is the only remaining vestige of it. But the law of



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temporal expiation remains ; it must be fulfilled in this world or the next. In this indeterminate form, *the measure of which is decided by God alone*, penance has not been withdrawn from the power of the keys ; the Church preserves her high jurisdiction in this matter, but exercises it as it were in the dark, remitting to a certain extent without knowing what she is remitting ; dispensing, for instance, from the amount of free expiation, or from the amount of Purgatory, to which the canonical penance of so many years would have corresponded, without knowing the scale of the correlation. Such is the meaning of the words : an indulgence of seven years, seven quarantines (or Lents of forty days).

When, on the most solemn occasions, the Church grants a plenary indulgence, she remits that amount of free expiation or of Purgatory to which the full canonical penance would have corresponded. Does this remission mean an entire remission of all expiation due till that date ? Theologians are in dispute on the subject, and God alone knows.

The Jubilee is only a great periodical indulgence. The law of Moses set up the fifty years' Jubilee for the remission of debts and for the liberation of slaves. The Church borrowed the name of "Jubilee" to designate the indulgence she had instituted, first of all, at the beginning of each century, then once every fifty years, and, lastly, every twenty-five years. In addition to these periodical Jubilees, the Popes grant extraordinary ones.

Why should Jubilees and indulgences be multiplied in the way in which they are being multiplied to-day ? Does it not cheapen them ?

## The Way of the Heart

If we go back to the beginning, we shall see that the mind of the Church in the institution of the Jubilee went beyond the advantages offered to the faithful by a lightening of their debts towards God. The true end was the moral improvement of Christians ; in fact, the remission of temporal punishment is granted upon certain conditions : confession, a deeper repentance than usual, communion, pious pilgrimages, fasts, etc. Now, in proclaiming the Jubilee, the Church by the voice of her Pastors provokes the faithful to all kinds of sanctifying works which they would not have done without the Jubilee, and which are much more profitable to them than the Jubilee itself. Permit me to make a trivial but just comparison. When the *Louvre* or the *Bon Marché* organize a *great exhibition*, they afford the public capital opportunities for buying a quantity of things more cheaply than usual, and the public is attracted by the opportunity and buys in crowds, and spends much more than at ordinary times. Thus the Christian public, being put in the vein by the promise of the Jubilee indulgence and by the encouragements attached to it, pours out more prayers, more repentance, more religious and meritorious acts, than it would have done otherwise ; and it is above all else this redoubling of supernatural life that benefits them.

And since the Church in turn reaps the advantage of the virtues and prayers and merits of her children, when the Sovereign Pontiff, being a prey to great anxieties, feels the need of being more powerfully assisted by the co-operation of supplicating souls, he flings into the world a kind of

## Letter 91

call to prayer and penance, and proclaims a Jubilee. There is the end of my catechism. . . .

How right you are as to the Blessed Virgin ! Do you know that yesterday, and the day before yesterday, I was saying exactly the same thing to the good people of Louville, who had assembled in considerable numbers for the month of Mary ? Yes, there is a *finish* imparted to Christian life, which is only obtainable from devotion to Mary, and according to the extent of such devotion, whether it concern prayer, repentance, hope, or love. One goes all the farther to the extent of one's abundance in the *spirit of the Son*. But the spirit of the Son not only cries out in our hearts, " Father, Father !" *spiritum Filii sui in corda vestra clamantem, abba Pater* ; it also cries out, " Mother, Mother !" The day we understand the facilities, the advantages, the assurances, the economies of time, effort, and suffering, procured for us by a beautiful opening of our hearts to the " Mother of Fair Love," we shall have made a decisive step forward along the road to God, and *we* shall then have set our faith in a secure place.

No more to-day. I bless you, my daughter.

91

June 20, 1886.

. . . You will perhaps be rather curious to know what impression the strange and extra-human life of the Chartreux monks makes upon me. I feel no attraction towards it, but I can understand how certain souls find their satisfaction in it. I have

## The Way of the Heart

just seen a young religious who is slightly related to me ; he has been brought up about the same way as most of the aristocracy ; his two elder brothers are officers ; he was apparently destined to follow the same path. But "from childhood," says he, "*I loved wisdom*, and I asked God to give me the love of it ; and it seemed to me I should find it better in the Chartreuse, although I was quite unacquainted with the life." He entered when he was eighteen, as soon as he had taken his degree, and he has never had an hour's regret. He has been here six years, and is "every day happier than the day before." He feels it such a happy thing to have given himself to God, "and would be quite happy if heaven were to turn out to be nothing else."

Is not this the reward of perfect innocence and perfect fidelity ?

And, *noi alteri, poveri*, we who have so often broached these things to one another, what can we say but : *Tu autem Domine, miserere nostri*.<sup>1</sup>

. . . Yes, God has many things to say to us, and we do not listen ; I, because I am too busy, on the pretext of serving Him ; you, because you are afraid He is deceiving you, or will carry you too far afield ! Well, this is indeed a strange way of treating with the sovereign Good ! He might punish us by holding His peace once and for ever ! He is too good to do so, and He continues to exchange places, and to be a beggar at our doors. *Ego sto ad ostium et pulso*.<sup>2</sup> What a grand oppor-

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, have mercy upon us.

<sup>2</sup> "I stand at the door, and knock" (Apoc. iii. 20).

## Letter, 91

tunity there is of opening the door to Him on this great feast of the Trinity, which is so mysterious, and so little observed by Christians, but so full of all that concerns us, for it has to do with the life of God which ought to be ours. For my part, I experience a real happiness in finding consolation for all the shortcomings of the creature in the thought of the perfections of God. This ideal, which has charmed all the sages, inspired all the artists and all the poets, which all have sought and called for and saluted from afar, and which seemed to vanish whenever they attempted to approach it, lo! it is here! It is no longer an abstraction, a quintessence of the mind, extracted from imperfect things; it is the first of all realities, more lovely than all because it is the rationale of all: it is the living God, God who is charity, God who is truth, God who is love: He from whom all life proceeds, through whom all truth shines forth, in whom all love takes its rise! Have you said Matins for to-day? Did you not feel a profound joy in repeating: *O beata Trinitas*?<sup>1</sup> Well, this is just the thing for you, it is just how you should think of heaven. This living God will be our mirror of the perfect vision: *in lumine tuo videbimus lumen*:<sup>2</sup> this love liberated from the conditions of expiation will be the ocean of joy in which we shall be immersed: *Intra in gaudium Domini tui*.<sup>3</sup> It is not necessary, and it is not possible to linger long thus thrilled with holy hope, but it is a good thing to give it a welcome by the way.

<sup>1</sup> O Blessed Trinity!

<sup>2</sup> "In Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10).

<sup>3</sup> "Enter into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21).

## The Way of the Heart

You see the Chartreuse is doing me good ! And I have to return to the rush. Pray for me and write to me.

92

MY DAUGHTER,

July 20, 1886.

I was much touched by your daughterly little note as to the Cardinal's death. You were not wrong in thinking it had plunged my heart in mourning.

The same evening after the funeral, I left for Saint-Claude, where I should otherwise have been three days earlier. I told you I was going to make my retreat there. This was only half true, for I am above all giving a retreat to others. To induce me and make me come to a decision, the saintly and admirable superior of the little monastery of Canons Regular said to me : " You will make your own retreat in giving us ours." But with all my present correspondence, this piling up of work is impossible : when one has done with preparing and giving instructions, heard a few confessions, and written a great many letters, there is no time left for oneself. I shall therefore make my real retreat alone, in October, as usual. But this one does me almost as much good. I am really in paradise, in the company of holy, pure, mortified, and joyous souls. One is quite astonished to find such as these. The Superior is a true St. Bernard. I have known him for twenty years, and all along I have considered him to be such. But I feel it is a real happiness and a true grace to live with him

## Letter 92

a whole week. Faith in the means approved by the Church has led him to undertake the impossible, and he has succeeded in doing it. With the sons of iron-workers and the children of the hills he has made religious who renew the examples of the monks of old, and endure with joy a discipline nowadays thought unworkable. Besides, he intends them to carry with them into the country districts the treasures they have gathered in the monastery, by making little rural priories, in which two or three religious, living together in a presbytery, will serve one or two parishes, while keeping up their monastic observance : the Office in common, rising at night, fasting, and other exercises. There is already a priory of the kind in the diocese of Saint-Claude, and there are two over the frontier in the diocese of Fribourg. This enterprise affords many difficulties, especially on account of the government, and sometimes owing to the Bishops. But if God blesses it, what a renewal will it be of the pastoral office ! Fancy a priory of this kind at \* \* \* ! Can you not imagine what edification would be given by its life of prayer and penance, by its beautiful offices, by the purity of its virtues, by the thoroughness of its charity so fully carried out in the practice of mortification ?

I knew all this beforehand, for I made my retreat here fifteen years ago ; and ever since I have been in relations of friendship with Père Gréa. But I assure you that it has done me much good to see all this again once more, and to look into it more nearly. I thought I was meeting your wishes in communicating to you the good I am getting here.

## The Way of the Heart

Yes, I have seen the article on St. Teresa.<sup>1</sup> It is almost perfect, and will do good in the world, by revealing the reasonable side of her great mind. The author is a woman and a Protestant, and she is doubly meritorious in seeing and saying what she does see and say.

93

August 1, 1886.

. . . Yes, dear Madame, it is hard to see one's best joys turn into sorrow through the absence of those with whom one was accustomed to share them. Yet the feeling must be resisted, and instead of drawing into one's sadness those who have a future before them in this world, one must come down to their gladness, even if it were only for the sake of leaving it intact. This is what you are doing, I know, because you are a mother, and mothers possess the gift of making nothing of themselves. This gift of nature's teaching is much like that which grace teaches the saints. And so I have always observed that it was easy for mothers to be sanctified, because they have at their disposal what lies at the very root of virtue, I mean self-forgetfulness. They have nothing to do beyond uplifting their devotedness to God that it may return to them purified and consecrated! Sorrow is a great help towards making our human feelings take this heavenly path!

<sup>1</sup> By Mme. Arvède-Barine, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.



## Letter 94

94

August 12, 1886.

You have probably forgotten what you wrote on July 26, speaking of "Why's," and of the harm they do us. No one can be more convinced of this than I; and I consider it one of God's greatest mercies to me that He has so long enabled me to put these wretched "why's" aside with ease. In reality, I reduce everything to this argument: to explain everything there must be a God. He, indeed, is inexplicable, and we need an inexplicable God. Our mind can only go astray in trying to decipher Him, our heart is not so mistaken, because it is able to tend towards Him amidst the darkness, and thus gets a more profound grasp of Him. Therefore every intellectual objection against God is negligible, and when mind and heart are in conflict it is the heart that is right. And the intellect will be wrong to complain, for if God be done away with the intelligence itself is upset. It can no more do without Him than the heart. So much the worse for it, if it needs God as much as the heart, and yet finds it more difficult to attain to Him. As this is the case, when I meet with a "why," I dismiss it into the category of the inexplicable; I don't wonder at it, but think no more of it.

There is another way of working for *interior peace*, and it consists in making up for all one's curtailed curiosity by additional generosity of heart. Here, I shall no longer put myself forward as a model, and I shall confine myself to my favourite

## The Way of the Heart

business of exhorting you not to bargain with Him who loves excesses. Yes, it is the business of the *amicus sponsi*<sup>1</sup> to say that to the bride, and I shall tell you so.

95

September 19, 1886.

Yes, my daughter, your letter of the 14th was just what it ought to be. And you made your Stations of the Cross just as you ought to have made them, when you did not finish them.

This thought, that the Cross is *duty*, is also the one that takes possession of me so far as I see behind the pleasant hours of leisure, calm work, and prayer, the return of toilsome and heavily charged days draw near. It is for the service of Him whom we love ! And as He loved His Father, He was loved by Him, and found no better way of serving Him than to take up His Cross, we can invent nothing better in our turn.

What a grand succession of feasts ! The Holy Name of our Mother ! The Holy Cross of her Son, and to-day her Sacred Dolours ! Always a picture of death and of immolation, and always a sense of sweetness too, because sorrow and death here are but forms of what is really love ! And almost everyone is unaware of this, and those who know it do not think about it, and those whose office it is to repeat these things to their brethren forget them for themselves ; and the world is full of these two things : love and forgetfulness of love ! And mankind complains of being miserable, as a

<sup>1</sup> The friend of the Bridegroom.

## Letter 96

wretch might complain of dying of thirst beside a spring of fresh water. And God sees all this and lets things be : why ? Because He will not force our hearts. But can He not win them ? Yes, no doubt ; but He wishes to be helped in doing so. How ? In us who have known His love, He wishes to be helped by our desires ; and in others who know Him not, He wishes to be helped by our prayers.

Therefore, we must pray. You will pray, will you not ? You will ask Jesus, like the Centurion, like the woman of Samaria, like the Canaanite woman, like the good Thief, like all the dear unhappy ones of the Gospel who knew how to pray, and who, when they could not pray enough, at least knew how to grieve over it and to beg to be taught : " Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."

I am doing as you did. I am telling you what is in my heart. I counsel you in the way in which I need counsel, and I exhort you to try to get that in which I am wanting myself. I have many proofs that our souls' needs are alike, and that I need not use two different modes of speech, one for praying, and another for writing to you.

So, write quickly again, let us take advantage of our last few days. I would not be behindhand with the goodness of God, nor with you. I bless you, my child.

96

*September 19, 1886.*

It is already a fortnight, dear Madame, since I left you ! If I have delayed so long in giving you any direct sign of life, it was because I did not wish

## The Way of the Heart

to put you to any trouble by tempting your kindness to send me a reply. . . . When the nerves have been overwrought, they retaliate in various ways. . . . The remedy lies in quiet ; but it is one of those remedies which one is ill-received in prescribing. Saying to folks, " Live in happiness and peace," when their heart is broken, is like prescribing Bordeaux wines and fresh meat to a consumptive when he has not the wherewithal to buy bread.

There is still better advice. It consists in inviting wounded hearts to draw near to the Heart of Jesus, and to mingle their sorrows with His. Even that is not always easy, but just trying does one good, and in proportion as one tries one grows more skilful. Sorrow is the door by which God enters into our hearts most frequently.

You have understood this, dear Madame, and I thank God for doing what He has already done to draw you to Himself. If you do not feel as yet the sweetness of His presence, at any rate you have come to desire it humbly, and you may be sure that this attitude is the one that pleases Him most, and the one which He will not be long in rewarding with most decided graces.

My sister-in-law and M—— came a few days back to take me out of my absolute solitude, which much benefited my work, but left me, also, far too acutely in touch with painful memories, the keenness of which in this beloved spot at times is more than I can endure. Nothing can better enable me to understand your sufferings and unite me more closely with your feelings.

## Letter 97

97

September 30, 1886.

. . . So God, then, is to be no longer free? If there is an ordinary way for Him to make Himself known amidst the darkness, *quaerentes si forte attrectent eum*,<sup>1</sup> He is not to have the right to make Himself felt by whomsoever He will? "If intimacy exists, it is the reward of faithfulness and work." So says Dr. \* \* \*. And what about St. Paul? Had he a long career of faithfulness on his way to Damascus? And what about the Magdalene, and St. Augustine, and all the rest? "Very good," says the doctor, "but they were exceptions. To think one is an exception is to risk an illusion." And is not refusing to see the position assigned you also a risk?

I don't deny the risk of illusion, but I say: (1) It can be provided against; (2) once provided against, there is still more risk in shirking it.

First, it can be provided against. How? By the surest principles of the spiritual life. If you go in search of extraordinary ways, if you indulge in them with complacency, if you feed up your vanity with them, if you acquire a taste for what is strange, if you put devotion before duty, if your supposed progress in the mystical life corresponds with a far too real progress in egoism, pride, with a lack of charity and vigilance and self-denial, then illusion is sure to follow. And all that in any way resembles such a picture makes illusion only too probable.

<sup>1</sup> "Seeking if haply they may find Him" (Acts xvii. 27).

## The Way of the Heart

But when all the outlines of such a picture are inapplicable, there is surely an absence of illusion. And now to resume. Have you gone in search of, I will not say extraordinary ways, but piety itself? Were you not taken by surprise, and borne off like the prey which an eagle flies away with in its talons? Since you have been in the Master's service, have not all the changes of your life been wrought from within before you were conscious of them, and even before any outward change had taken place? Do you like being singular, or is it repugnant to you?

This inner presence, this interior converse, this sense of God within you, that is to say, all that might be matter for illusion, has all this ever inspired in you any other desire than that of giving up self, of going out of self, of embracing a kind of life that was but little in harmony with either your natural or spiritual tastes, of serving your neighbour in ways that were monotonous and fastidious, and not at all calculated to puff you up? Have you any other reason for doing all that fills up your life (excepting where your mother is concerned) than the desire of pleasing Him who possesses you? Is it when you hearken to Him, or when you close your ears to Him, that you are inclined to be discouraged, idle, selfish, and to fall under malign influences?

Has He, *bc He who He may*, ever given you any evil counsel? Has He ever failed to make you tend towards the good? Was your conscience ever satisfied after you had refused Him anything, or ill at ease after you had obeyed Him? The answers to all these questions are *absolute evidence* in

## Letter 97

contradiction of the hypothesis of illusion, and, out of twenty doctors of the spiritual life, though they were the coldest of cool theologians, though they had but the smallest personal experience of the mystical life, there would be twenty who would agree with me. Therefore, my child, I want and require you to look at this question as settled, and to treat all thought of illusion as an evil thought, and that you make up your mind to put yourself down as one of the least worthy objects of the outpouring of the sovereign freedom of sovereign Love.

The other matter is far less serious. Mortification of the senses belongs to the very essence of Christianity. It is the condition of spiritual conquest. The form of mortification is in itself indifferent. The Church's days of abstinence, and the troubles and sufferings of life which are attached to the duties of one's position, afford the general run of Christians a very satisfying round. Souls who hear the Bridegroom's call usually at the beginning of their conversion feel a great yearning to run to meet suffering. It is one of the phases; you have passed through it, and at the time you could hardly have escaped it. Some persevere in this way, but more often the attraction changes. God varies the form of the Cross, and one's *expedients* gradually lose their *raison d'être*. In all this one should follow and not anticipate one's interior leaning (and this is quite reconcilable with sense-repulsion or with pride). Therefore, I am not asking you to do anything in this line except to acknowledge that, if mortification is a good thing,

## The Way of the Heart

the acts whereby one practises it cannot be blamable. Things must be regarded in relation to their end: to make alternate movements with weights in one's hands is a silly thing in itself; but, considered as a gymnastic exercise, as a method of strengthening the muscles or of developing one's chest, it is reasonable. Apply this.

You see, I am not at all in the mood to let you off altogether, or even a little! But I am quite ready to bless you, without the least fear of any illusion, when I say to myself that you are indeed my child.

98

*October 24, 1886.*

It was almost a struggle to keep from writing to you during the last three days, which were the first of my retreat. But first of all I had to devote such time as I had free to the most urgent arrears. Now I am well forward, and, without prejudicing the things of the spirit, which are here my main business (would that it were thus everywhere!), I can give you a few minutes without filching them from my retreat, since that is what you want me to tell you about.

What can be said beyond the well-known and wonderful fact that we always find God expecting us, when we set to work to seek Him again? The more easily we forget Him, even though it be through attending to His service, the more easily does He discover Himself as soon as we turn afresh towards Him. Children are fond of hearing stories they know and dread. They ask for them to get a



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thrill of fear, and yet at the beginning of the story they are not immediately afraid: the tale must be unfolded to produce its effect. Here we are not dealing with fear, but with grace. We well know we shall find it in our retreat, and yet we know everything by heart, and all day we are telling others what we are about to hear in the retreat.

Only, the child's fear ends with the story, and the grace of the retreat is made to last. It lasts a little while indeed in the feelings, it lasts longer in the will; then it gets worn out and evaporates, and the provision of it must be renewed. Saints add to each renewal some progress beyond last year's. *Noi altri!* . . . But God never tires; He is ever ready to begin the divine story again!

Divine it is, for it takes hold of what is best in us, and, as I wrote to you in my last letter appealing to your experience (and mine quite agrees with yours), conscience is never at ease after leaving Jesus, and it never feels regret after following Him. What is conscience? It is the rule of right within us. What is Jesus? He is the rule of right without us. And these two rules are but one, and the rule within testifies to the rule without, and cries out: *Vere filius Dei es!*<sup>1</sup>

Have you heard any talk of the *Abbesse de Jouarre*? It is universally condemned. It is the beginning of the punishment of contempt which falls on one who has dishonoured Jesus. I know of men of the world whose indignation over the book has drawn them nearer to the Church. They are saying that when anyone drags Christ down to the

<sup>1</sup> "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God" (Matt. xiv. 33).

## The Way of the Heart

level of man, he falls himself below the level of humanity !

But we are running away from the retreat. Yet not so far. I confess that the more I feel myself taken hold of by the Saviour, the more I feel I am busied with the maladies of souls, of which my own, alas ! is only a likeness. I feel that the majority to-day are languishing through want of faith, and that the remedy is to be found in loving !

Amidst all this, I am very quietly following up the *itinerary* of St. Ignatius, and I am exercising myself by turns in the considerations of the *Fundamental Principle*, in seeking for compunction, in passing the year in review in a spirit of humility ; then, in the contemplation of the *Mysteries*, and in the work of the *Election*. And a fine work it is, and I specially like the prelude which leads up to it. "The composition of place," says St. Ignatius, "consists in seeing myself present before God and before all the Saints, busied with *desiring* and *discovering* what is most agreeable to His divine goodness."

In the morning, in spite of two hours' prayer, Mass and thanksgiving, and the Little Hours, I have to give up two hours to correspondence and other work. But my time from the afternoon to the evening is entirely occupied ; and when it strikes nine o'clock, I retire to rest, rather worn in body, but well satisfied in soul, and quite wondering that one can so easily busy oneself with God six or seven hours running. Unfortunately, it will be all over to-morrow ! for though I began this letter yesterday,

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it will not be posted till to-day, and to-morrow I shall have come down once more to the plain, where one fights in the dark and the cold. Would that I might carry away with me fire from the altar, and keep it long enough to send forth sparks to all those who wish to be enkindled.

99

DEAR MADAME,

*October 26, 1886.*

. . . How well I understand what you say of the impression left upon you by the stay of those dear children ! the happier you would have been in looking forward to the future in the companionship of the past, the more sorrowful you are when you feel beside you the void which would have been so well filled by a loving grandfather ! The little ones, who see your eyes weeping through your smiles, will not understand your tears ; they will pass on their way through life without knowing what filled yours ; and on the road they will find other sorrows, for the old story is repeated in every generation. Happily there is a grief that is higher than ours, a voluntary grief, compassionate and consoling, a grief that accompanies every one, if he will, who suffers in this world, a grief that begins the journey over again with each passenger, and, without dispersing the shadows that encompass the mystery of trial, still provides those who are able to wait for it with an inner solution which is summed up in the two words : Love and Hope.

God wills to be loved and sought after ; to make us seek Him, He hides ; to make us love Him, He gives Himself ; in return for the brave love which has felt,

## The Way of the Heart

after Him gropingly, He will one day disclose His light. And then, says St. John: "He will wipe away the tears from our eyes; there shall be no more weeping, nor mourning, nor death, for the first state will have passed away."

To love, again, must be left the solution of enigmas as to the destiny of those who are dear to us. Does He lack the means of revealing Himself to them even apart from the forms He has instituted? Cannot perfect good faith find grace in His eyes who hates only what is false? After saying: "Seek and ye shall find," can He fail to reveal Himself to whoever has sought Him with sincerity of heart, and has only refused to follow us, who are His friends, to the full extent of our beliefs, because he would not go beyond his own? The more I think of all that, the more confident I am that infinite Love is only preparing the way for the great reunion. And if, in order to complete the work, some supplementary pains of purification are needed, do not complain of suffering, for it is helping you to attain what your heart most of all desires.

100

*November 11, 1886.*

*St. Martin's Day.*

Yes, my daughter, the feasts were good and beautiful, and they brought me rest of soul, at least in the mornings; and very welcome it was in the whirl in which I now am, and in which I shall be till the end of next week, after the Bishops' meeting. So far, the aroma of Clamart has not faded away,

## Letter 100

and this morning I was meditating on the *Beati pacifici* with much happiness. The race of the peacemakers, of those who *fili Dei vocabuntur*,<sup>1</sup> is indeed a people apart ; they reign over their senses, their imagination, their desires, and their fears by the will ; they even rule over events in the sense that they do not allow themselves to be disturbed by them ; and this governing will obeys love. Hence comes a peace that is not like that the world promises, *non quomodo mundus dat, ego do vobis* ;<sup>2</sup> a peace that passeth all understanding, because it dwelleth in those regions in which the disturbances of sensibility do not enter : *pax Christi quae exsuperat omnem sensum*.<sup>3</sup> How hard it is to get there, but how much to be desired !

I put down on a spare sheet some notes of my sermon for All Saints', and here they are. But these notes are cold, and I broke away from them considerably when I was speaking.

I should like to tell you how I considered the question of Purgatory this year. On leaving this life, many souls saved by mercy are completely strangers to heaven ; they know not its tongue ; they are not fitly clothed to enter into it ; they would not be able to find their places there. Then, mercy sends them away to be purified. And there are three phases in this purification. The first is humiliation. God gives them His light, and they see themselves as they are ; the confusion thence arising

<sup>1</sup> " They shall be called the children of God " (Matt. v. 9).

<sup>2</sup> " Not as the world giveth, give I unto you " (John xiv. 27).

<sup>3</sup> " The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding " (Phil. iv. 7).

## The Way of the Heart

is an agony like that of Jesus in the Garden, when He found Himself covered with the sins of the world. On earth, these poor souls had drunk sin like water ; now they are filled with horror of it, and find they are loaded with it. This torment lasts a long time unless it be shortened by sacrifices and prayer rising from earth.

When these souls have won at their own expense a true notion and hatred of sin, God, by a second illumination, shows Himself to them from afar in His beauty, and kindles in them desires such as they knew not what it was to possess. Then they remember the time when God was quite near, when He was knocking at the door, and when they would not open, preferring some pleasure or plaything or piece of money. Now they are all on fire to go to Him, and it is He who draws back. These desires are a torment, but a torment that purifies and prepares the way for love.

When the second work is over, love comes upon the scene. It enters into souls and melts them with its heat. Then, they recall their scorn, and the repulses they inflicted on love ; and perfect contrition, the contrition of great penitents, such as they were incapable of at the moment of receiving absolution here below, the contrition of love, takes possession of them, purifies them inwardly, and raises them to heaven.

There is Purgatory, with its *three hours of agony*. What is there to hinder us from anticipating it ? from beginning with humiliation, going on with desire, and ending with love ?

What say you, daughter ?

## Letters 101 and 102

### 101

December 4, 1886.

No, my daughter, I never meant to keep you fasting for an answer during the whole of Advent, and I really never ought to have let Advent begin without writing to you. Your last letter awakened echoes which have hardly been able to die away till to-day, and now that they might sound forth they have grown weak. What does not wear out or grow old is the Master's love. I see it is ever working in your soul, sometimes painfully, sometimes with infinite sweetness. . . . Don't forget what St. Ignatius says : " To God alone it belongs to console His creature *without any previous cause* (*i.e.*, without any occurrence of a joyous nature), because it is the Creator's privilege to *enter into the soul*." Creatures can only get as far as the entrance-hall—*i.e.*, the senses, the imagination, and the memory. But the soul which thinks and wills remains closed to them. God alone can enter therein.

And this is why, when the attraction towards things divine is felt in these depths, one is sure that God is there, and that illusion is impossible. One cries out with St. John : "*Dominus est*, it is the Lord." Is it not so ?

### 102

December 6, 1886.

You have thoroughly appreciated and entered into the office of the first Sunday in Advent : and so did I. But yesterday's office is no less beautiful.

## The Way of the Heart

You must have addressed to the Master the question of St. John Baptist's disciples : *Tu es qui venturus es, an alium expectamus ?*<sup>1</sup> Ah ! let us look at the world : see what they find who would "look for another" ; let us acknowledge that our lot is well apportioned.

Do you know that all this political muddle fills me with lively compassion for those who have to flounder through it ? They imagined that with pride and impiety, that with trampling under foot all that is sacred, with losing and killing respect, they would achieve wonders, and there they are in the position of schoolboys aboard of a sailing-ship which they have taken out into the open sea without knowing anything about navigation. Unfortunately, their muddling costs the country dear, and also the soul of the people. . . . M. Maspéro is turning to silly hatred. He is making a classical manual of the history of the East, in which he tells children that the religion of Moses was first of all fetishism, that nothing was written on the two tables of the law, which consisted of two stones used as idols ; that the golden calf was another god of Israel, the serpent a third ; that the prophets, later on, put all this in order by inventing monotheism and compiling the Pentateuch before, during, and after the Captivity. Renan is beginning to distil the beautiful theories of Reuss in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Might we not have expected the learned to have mastered these matters themselves before flinging them all to the children to browse

<sup>1</sup> " Art Thou He that art to come, or look we for another ?" (Matt. xi. 3).



## Letter 103

upon ? Alas ! they seem to be very much afraid of their not turning into atheists quickly enough !

You see there is no reason for being gay. But when we are enclosed on every side on earth, we must look higher. *Levavi oculos meos in montes unde veniet auxilium mihi.*<sup>1</sup> I have a very strong feeling that with our faith and our love we hold in reserve what will enable society to revive after these fellows have killed it. Soon, there will be no more morals or theory or practice, apart from us. Oh, if only our people understood this, and would so act that these things might always be found among us, and never anything of a contrary character ! But no ! the clergy are asleep, and do not see ruin drawing on. They do not understand that we are on the eve of the day when people will be wanting holiness like their daily bread. You will find traces of these cares in my address.

103

January 24, 1887.

Just fancy ! the weather is rather chilly morning and evening, mild in the middle of the day with an unclouded sky and bright sunshine and a summer-like depth of blue overhead ; and that is what we have been enjoying at Rome for a week.

Amidst all this the Romans are shivering with cold because they don't know how to keep warm. But how fair and fine their weather is ! Only two days after my arrival I met with a piece of good luck. It was the 18th, the feast of St. Peter's Chair.

<sup>1</sup> " I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me " (Ps. cxx. 1).

## The Way of the Heart

A catacomb, called *Cemeterium Ostrianum* from the *gens ostroma* to whom the place belonged, has preserved some rather vague but very authentic memories of St. Peter. Before the existence of the cemetery, but in the property in which it was dug out in the third century, St. Peter exercised hospitality, and baptized in the neighbouring marsh. There, according to the most ancient documents, was *sedes ubi primum sedit B. Petrus*. Later on, he transferred his base of operations to the Vatican hill, where there was then another *sedes*. Hence the remembrance of the two *Chairs* of St. Peter. In the Middle Ages these memories had grown dim, but the feasts of the two Chairs were kept up, and the second was called the feast of the Chair of St. Peter at Antioch.

Well, on the 18th of January, a confraternity recently formed, under the name of *Cultores martyrum*, met in the *Ostrian* catacomb. They honoured me with an invitation to sing the Mass which was to be celebrated there. In a chapel of the third century, a hundred feet below the ground, at the confluence of narrow galleries cut in the tufa, and lighted by candles set along the walls, before a gathering of two hundred people assembled like the early Christians at the time of the Decian persecution, I celebrated a solemn Mass with deacon and subdeacon, and delivered an allocution to those present. Need I say how much I was moved? Your dear mother and you, *figlia*, were lacking to my joy. After Mass, M. de Rossi mounted on a chair and gave a wonderful archaeological address on the traditions of the place.

## Letter 104

After that came the feasts we love : St. Agnes, St. Timothy, and to-morrow is the Conversion of St. Paul. All this gets a savour, a character, an unequalled power, in Rome. But one wants to be initiated by some competent authority. The Rome of Baedeker and the English is insipid, and that of the Italians is odious. How I wish I could be there when you come ! Well, we must make our plans beforehand ! I already know that in January next year the Pope's sacerdotal jubilee is to be celebrated. I expect to come and to represent our University at it. Why should not *la madre* and you arrange your journey to take place then ?

104

February 4, 1887.

I only left Rome yesterday. . . . I had not a moment to go on with the more intimate and private matter of the letter I wrote you from Rome. And yet there was no lack of material. . . . The business and visits in Rome left me as little spare time as the life of Paris.

More than once during my sojourn, notably at the Mamertine prison and at the tomb of the Apostles, I found that *sense of the faith* the absence of which results for us from the very air we breathe. Then it was that I most ardently prayed for the grace of being always true to this faith, and also for the grace of being of some use in serving the Church and souls. My main business (our Congress) being in my opinion one of the means of serving this cause, I earnestly recommended it to God, and I

## The Way of the Heart

was glad to think I was in communion with you in the fresh zeal which the ever-supreme will of the Master has succeeded in inspiring you with in your own despite.

Between Rome and Pisa I had a carriage all to myself. The solitude did me good. After a last greeting to all the basilicas passed by the train, after a little day-dreaming in the beautiful and mournful desert which surrounds the "Imperial City," all the impressions of my stay first clashed together, then mingled, and then fell into order : on the one hand, there was the sight of the frailties and the *human* elements to be found in the Church ; on the other, the higher view, the living Christ beginning over again in His Church the mysteries of His joys and sorrows and glories. And then, between these two extremes, there was the narrow space left for the seekings of human ambition, for desires proceeding from love of the Master, for the results of circumstances. And after all these thoughts came a great calm, a great disdain for all that passes away, a very clear view of things as they must appear in the light of death, and a strong cry of the heart sent up to Him to please whom is the only thing that matters.

In the midst of such reflections the sun of my February the second went down, while the plains of Latium, the waves of the Tyrrhenian sea, and the first ascending steps of the Tuscan mountains were disappearing in the gloaming. Compline and Matins and the Rosary came very appropriately at nightfall to gather up the remainder of my meditation.

Before meeting you once more amidst the banali-

## Letters 105 and 106

ties of Paris, I thought it well to send you this foreword as a memento of one of the best hours of my life.

### 105

February 17, 1887.

What a happy surprise! Dear child, yours was the only letter this morning at Louville! What a pleasing attention of filial feeling! The whole of your letter is good, including its avowals.

. . . Yes, the love of God is the only passion that is pure and satisfying, the only affection that grows better as it becomes more passionate, the only madness with reason in it, the only jealousy which is generous, the only abdication of self which uplifts instead of degrading, because one alienates oneself to give up self to what is better than oneself. So then, *optimam partem elegit*<sup>1</sup> . . . no, but *ad optimam partem electa est*.<sup>2</sup> It only remains for you now to spend your life in making your choice in turn.

### 106

April 13, 1887.

We have only to say: *Ita Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te*.<sup>3</sup> Plato said long ago that the truth was to be sought *with all our soul*. He said that of abstract truth. And, to attain to the living truth, are we to think that with nothing but the reasoning of the mind we shall do enough to succeed?

<sup>1</sup> She hath chosen the best part.

<sup>2</sup> She hath been chosen for the best part.

<sup>3</sup> "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. xi. 26).

## The Way of the Heart

Then why has God given us all the other things ? All that comes from Him must return to Him : and therefore also and above all our hearts. *Tibi dixit cor meum ; exquisivit te anima mea, faciem tuam Domine requiram.*<sup>1</sup> Seeking God with all our heart, with all our soul, such is the business of our present life : *when we have seen His face*, there will be no more seeking, or doubting, or suffering ; and that time will come, *I swear it to you.*

107

April 19, 1887.

I do not wish to leave the calm of Louville before answering you. . . . What a sad letter ! It grieved me much, but did not discourage me. *Et quid dicam ? Pater salvifica me ex hac hora ? Sed propterea veni in horam hanc.*<sup>2</sup> This is the prayer you need, my daughter. It is the prayer of Jesus Christ in His hour of trouble, the prayer described by the Psalmist when he says : *Anima in angustiis et spiritus contribulatus clamat ad te.*<sup>3</sup> In any case, you must pray. This winter, I made you pray for others.<sup>4</sup> Now, I am praying for you, and I wish you to pray too. Don't begin arguing with me with a logic as clear as it is absurd : how can one pray to a being in whom one does not believe ? Is it so

<sup>1</sup> " My heart hath said to Thee : my soul hath sought Thee ; Thy face, Lord, will I seek " (cf. Ps. xxvi. 8).

<sup>2</sup> " And what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour ? But for this cause I came unto this hour " (John xii. 27).

<sup>3</sup> " My soul is in trouble, and my spirit in its affliction crieth unto Thee " (Bar. iii. 1).

## Letter 107

difficult to send forth a cry of distress into the Infinite ?

“ If heaven be void, then no one we offend :  
If some one hear, then let Him pity send.”

Prayer is the last response of those who lack everything : for it is the cry of the needy, and there is never any lack of the needy. I, who well know what storms mean, but who am standing on the shore, I indeed can see plainly why *He (On)* is allowing you to traverse this typhoon. It is to oblige you to cry out and pray. I repeat it : if you were suddenly to die in the height of the hurricane, and if God heard you sending up your desperate prayer to Him from the depths of the dark night, you would be found amongst those of whom it is written : *beatus servus quem quum venerit Dominus inveniet sic facientem.*<sup>1</sup>

This morning, before taking leave of my dear departed ones of Louville, I desired to say Mass for them ; but I could not do so without saying it for you, and for another soul who is also in doubt. Then I offered the Holy Sacrifice for the souls of my dear ones, begging them to repay my prayer by offering it for you both. I think I was helping you to make a good bargain.

Yes, my child, you are indeed mine, and never more so than in this trial. Go on with your communions ; be humble and suppliant. Write to me every week, or oftener still, but never less than this, until I give you fresh instructions. *I mean this.* I bless you, my daughter.

<sup>1</sup> “ Blessed is the servant whom the Lord at His coming shall find doing thus ” (Matt. xxiv. 46).

## The Way of the Heart

108

May 5, 1887.

The time already seemed long, for I felt your trouble from afar, and heard the storm growling in your soul and had no news of the vessel. Yes, the sky overhead is indeed dark, and the sea tosses wildly below. I can understand the passenger thinks she is lost, but *I* know the good ship is well ballasted, that storms don't last for ever, that the blue sky is behind the dark clouds, and that beneath the tempestuous waves there is a mass that nothing can stir. And I am full of confidence. Go on with your communions, and put all the responsibility on my back. Can He take it ill of me if I urge you towards Him after having given you to Him? . . .

109

May 19, 1887.

It is said that Clovis got baptized in order to submit to the God of Clotilde. Why should not *Clotilde* give up her mind to the God of him who has taken charge of her?

My child, I know all the troubles of your soul: the doubts that strangle you, the repugnances that suddenly spring up, either against some dogma that seems to you absurd, or against all the dogmas which, taken together, seem either uncertain, or impossible, or childish; the feeling that reason is enough to save all that is essential in moral and religious belief; and then, the abrupt disappearance of this confidence, and the God of reason vanishing into



## Letter 109

idealism, the God of the heart into a doubtful mysticism, the God of conscience into a prejudice hardened into a habit : all this taking place in the soul, thought, and imagination, with astounding rapidity ; the mind running through immense spaces, then suddenly recalling Catholic doctrines, promises, practices, menaces of the hereafter, all these things definite, framed round, formulated, and, from the contrast between these two ways of conceiving of the world, a painful shock resulting within us, something like the shaking given us by a giddy fall—this is what you now experience. . . . None of all this astonishes me. I have experienced every one of these things enough to estimate the greatness of the danger and the depth of the despair they may entail. Well, my daughter, after all these experiences, I remain convinced that we have got hold of the right end of things, and that, if we are given over to such vicissitudes, yet we are right when we cleave to the God of the Gospel. *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est.*<sup>1</sup> No doubt there may be something "childish" in our way of conceiving and formulating dogma. The infirmity of man's mind, the imperfection of speech, the necessity of wrapping up truth in forms intended for the ordinary run of people, all this is enough to explain and account for a certain amount of uneasiness in cultivated minds confronted with revelation. But a day will come when the veils will fall away, when the rind of the letter will allow one to see and to relish the fruit of the spirit. Until that day comes let us keep close to the letter because of the spirit

<sup>1</sup> "It is a good thing for me to cleave unto God" (Ps. lxxii. 28)

## The Way of the Heart

it contains, and let us bid our hearts go before us through the shadows till we reach the source whence the light shines forth.

Tell me soon how you are. I have asked for your prayers in a delicate business. . . . Nothing is so consoling to the poor as giving alms. I bless you, my child.

110

June 2, 1887.

It is now a fortnight since I last wrote to you. Your answer seemed very slow in coming, and it is I who am behindhand after all. When I got your letter, I saw you had written to me several times. Go on doing so, but send me the bundle more often. Is your terrible crisis so extreme as to affect your simplicity with me? Are you going in for discretion? This would be the finishing touch, and I should not get over it.

As for me, I am constantly thinking of you in my prayers, and during my reflections. Whether the dimnesses of the faith appear to me more striking, or whether the divine adjustments to the soul of man, to life, and to society, stand out before me more visibly and more full of consolation, I give you a share of my thoughts, in order to lighten your load when they are heavy, and to comfort you when they are benign. Just now, this is the only way I can act as a father towards you, my poor tried child.

This week is a week of the second sort, the sort most familiar to me, because it is the week of the Comforter : *Veni pater pauperum, Consolator optime,*

## Letter 111

*dulcis hospes animae, dulce refrigerium.*<sup>1</sup> I send Him to you at all times of the day, but especially from the altar where I am celebrating, and where the thought of you follows me. May you soon receive His visit! When it occurs, how the night flees away, or, if it remains, how an inward song echoes through the darkness and makes us love the shadows! Write soon, and less briefly: I bless you, *mia vera figlia*.

111

June 20, 1887.

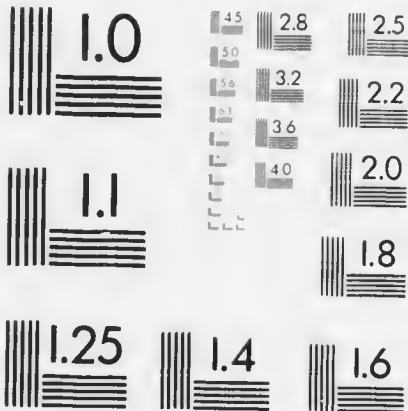
There remains prayer. As to this, I do not fear any discussion. Your objections, which savour of the natural religion of Jules Simon, are as old as the hills and worthless. There is no question of *influencing God* who is immutable, but of conforming to His established order. As He can dispose at will of His own gifts, He has determined to subordinate part of them to our petitions, in order to oblige us to have recourse to Him and to enter into that inner intercourse with Him which is the foundation of religion, the great duty and the great interest of man. How are relations set up between our contingent and temporal prayers and the immutable will of God? How can the divine decrees, which are conceived in eternity but executed in time, make room for a prayer which has been foreseen in the arrangement of future events? How can events, which are future with regard to ourselves, be present to Him who knows not succession?

<sup>1</sup> Come, O Father of the poor, O best of Consolers, O sweet Guest of the soul, O sweet and cool Relief.



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## The Way of the Heart

These are so many aspects of one and the same mystery : the relation of the Infinite to the finite. God would not be God if His life were like ours, if it flowed on always incomplete and governed on all sides. Two things are certain : the world exists, and God is necessary to the world.

But the God whom the world cannot do without is foreign to the series of things that are in the world, and His transcendent Being escapes the laws which confine our being. No sooner does one speak of His relations with ourselves than one stammers ; and the difficulty as to prayer is certainly the least of all those which constitute this inevitable obscurity. When we want to analyze prayer, we get lost ; but the same thing happens in the case of liberty. Must we then give up liberty as well as prayer ? No, we must give up analysis, and accept the testimony of conscience which cries out to us : " Thou art free, and thou needest God."

The wonderful thing about morality is that it never grows dim in souls of good will. But morality lives on certitude and free will : all attempts, ancient or modern, to prop up any kind of morality without such a support have broken down miserably. Let us then believe in our conscience, and if we listen to its testimony within us and in all mankind, we shall hear the same voice affirm both our power and our weakness : being free, I am at my own disposal ; being weak, I cannot do without help from on high, and I summon it.

Enough of discussion. . . . I bless you, my child.

## Letters 112 and 113

### 112

August 17, 1887.

No, I do not blame you for being passive. In the conditions you describe, it is the best thing you can do. The whole of Psalm lxxviii, except the mysterious maledictions at the end, expresses the language of your soul. I leave it touched, and I wish it to be prayerful for itself and others. To wait for God without urging Him is well, but the waiting attitude must not be one of indifference, it must be full of desire. He only hides to make us desire Him. He only draws near and allows us to catch a glimpse of Himself in order to hide again. *Noli me tangere, nondum enim ascendi.*<sup>1</sup> When we shall have reached the top of the hill with Him, He will allow Himself to be touched, and to be taken hold of for ever.

Take and go through the Psalter for your reading with meditation. That will send you back to prayer. I am saying St. Ignatius's prayer for you: *Sume ac suscipe Domine universam meam libertatem, accipe memoriam, intellectum atque voluntatem omnem.*<sup>2</sup>

Once more we must agree in the end: *quoniam suavis est Dominus.*<sup>3</sup>

### 113

August 20, 1887.

I kept my word, dear daughter; and this morning, with much joy, holding your soul in my hands with

<sup>1</sup> "Touch Me not: I have not ascended" (John xx. 17).

<sup>2</sup> Take and receive, O Lord, the whole of my liberty: accept my memory, intelligence, and all my will.

<sup>3</sup> For the Lord is sweet.

## The Way of the Heart

the Body of the Lord, I gave you afresh to Him, set apart to His service, offered to all He wills, suffering or joy, action or passion, light or darkness. Probably there will be something of all this in your life, but whatever happens you will be His, and you will find that this is the good part, and that it will not be taken from you !

I fancy we are coming out of the *tunnel*, not to enter into a region of light, but into a twilight where one can see well enough to find one's way, and where all the same a certain amount of confidence is required if one is to advance. But is not confidence the thing God eagerly desires from us ? We are always driving bargains with Him over it, and He is always demanding it, and it is what He rewards most in those who give it Him. That is easily understood. On the one hand, He deserves it more than any other friend. On the other, He hides like no other ; hence confidence, so far as He is concerned, is both more due and more difficult. It is due to Him, and therefore He complains if He does not get it ; it is difficult, and therefore He is grateful when we give it Him. So it is settled ; we are going to fling ourselves headlong into the divine unknown, fully assured that this unknown contains nothing but love.

My retreatant has arrived and is going ahead like a man. He is a valiant soul.

All good wishes to your dear mother. I shall end by getting to be too fond of her, as if she were my own mother ; and this will not be very flattering to her, for it would give her a son who is too old. But it is her fault too. I bless you, my child.



## Letter 114

114

*August 29, 1887.*

Thank you for thinking of my souls. They are on the right side just now, but so far nothing has been won. As for my retreatant, he followed your advice from afar. The work of grace in a faithful soul is a wonderful thing, and when, moreover, this work goes on in a vigorous and cultivated mind and in a brave and tender heart, there are marvels to be observed which make up for many disappointments. The result is that he will soon abandon the world and a brilliantly begun career to put all he has and what God may add thereto at the service of Jesus Christ and of souls. It will be a fine vocation if I am not mistaken, and X——, who is sitting on the fence, and wants to be dragged along, would do well if he were to look at his in the same way.

Lourdes ! Why be afraid of it ? You need look for nothing there except the same Blessed Virgin who is everywhere else, honoured and invoked with more devotion in a place where she is believed to have given more favours. I am quite sure that the greater part of the miracles that are talked about are no miracles, and this is the opinion of all serious priests who have studied the matter. There is a small number of facts which appear to resist the most rigorous criticism. Those who have submitted them to such an examination, and remain convinced that they are naturally impossible, acknowledge them as miracles ; but they do this in consequence of their own reasoning, and the authority of the Church has nothing to do with it. What seems to

## The Way of the Heart

me indisputable is that great temporal and spiritual graces have been granted in this place ; I call temporal graces such effects as may proceed from natural laws, but need to be specially influenced by Providence in order to occur, as when we ask for the cure of a curable disease. In order that the cure may take place, things must follow a certain natural course when they might have turned out otherwise. This is not miraculous, but providential. As for spiritual graces, there is no need to define them. But it is of faith to say that *the more we ask, the more we receive*. So then, since for good reasons or bad (and there are no bad reasons for praying), people pray more at Lourdes than elsewhere, with more confidence, simplicity, and absence of human respect, how is it to be wondered at if more is received ?

If then you follow my view, you will not think about the miracles, but you will invoke Mary, Mother of Mercy, *Dulcis parens clementiae*, and you will offer her your soul in the same way as a child shows its mother a hurt finger.

115

September 9, 1887.

At last ! now I have your letter, begun on the 31st at Bagnières and ended the 4th at Luz, which came viâ Carcassonne ! How welcome it is, both on account of the long time it has kept me waiting, and also for what it contains ! Yes indeed, that is just it ; communion nourishes us like bread. We rarely enjoy it (though we do so sometimes, as we

## Letter 115

also enjoy bread), but we cannot do without it. I was thinking this yesterday before the Blessed Sacrament. If the God who makes Himself so necessary to our souls seems to others so useless that they would do away with Him, at any rate in theory, it is because they have not lived with Him and on Him ; and then the imperceptible but real thing, which we call grace, the grace of seeing, feeling, and willing, is lacking to them, and they can do nothing without it. And what if it is no fault of theirs ? Well, then so much the better. God will make up for it, and will help them to do rightly, although they think they are getting on all by themselves, and will show Himself on the other side of the curtain, and will say to them : " You see it was I after all ; and were you not wrong not to recognize it ?" And they will fling themselves into His bosom ! What joy ! Only, and this thought, too, is consoling, they will not be ready to enter in at once, and there will be Purgatory with its purifying fire of love, in which the dross of proud virtue will be separated from true virtue, to refine the gold of their spirits, and to make them worthy to put on the rich adornment of the heavenly King.

Yes again, you must obey the Spirit who bids you tend towards the best ; and when you have fallen short of it, you must begin again quite gently.

I am immensely fond of Betharram, and like it better than Lourdes. I know those Stations of the Cross. They are one of the finest things in the world. Your impressions about nature are the same as mine ; it gives repose and leads one gently to

## The Way of the Heart

God ; at any rate it never turns us away from Him and never does harm. As to the sea, we must correct our impressions by reason ; we know that its infinity is deceptive, and that there is a shore beyond the horizon, as there is also in the case of the stormy sea of our lives. There will be a *terra firma*, a new land, divinely fruitful, where our desires will find a resting-place. . . .

*Figlia mia*, it is very kind of you to pray for all my concerns. The Congress has just been a success. The general meeting of the Germans at Trèves has just given its united adhesion, which promises us the hitherto disputed support of the learned Catholics of Germany.

116

September 17, 1887.

*Signasti, Domine, servum tuum Franciscum signis redemptionis nostrae.*<sup>1</sup>

MY CHILD,

So you are always broken ! How grievous it is ! You will go back to your work and toil weakened and more crippled. What can be done ?

You were, in fact, very backward in writing to me of this accident and of all the rest. But at last, though your letter was written piecemeal and covers a great many things, it relieves me of uneasiness.

I have little to say to you as to your state. . . . You must only go on like a traveller who awaits the sunrise, or at any rate the breaking of the dawn,

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, Thou hast signed Thy servant Francis with the signs of our redemption.

## Letter 116

standing and looking towards the East : *donec dies elucescat et Lucifer oriatur in cordibus nostris.*<sup>1</sup> Note it does not say : *in ingeniis nostris.*<sup>2</sup> The brightness promised in this world is that of the heart : that of the mind will come at the hour of midday, *quando videbimus eum sicuti est.*<sup>3</sup>

I should be very glad to work a little with you at the exegesis of the sacred books. Meanwhile, you will do well to read again Isaias, Jeremias, Ezekiel, Zacharias, and Malachi, passing over anything you cannot understand. I entirely approve of your plans, both for reading and reflection : leave aside details that darken, keep to the broad lines that enlighten.

Shall I say a word about myself ? My stay at Louville, which lasted longer than I expected, did me a deal of good : amongst other things it enabled me to find time to carry well forward a little biographical study of which I have told you already, and which has been lingering among my papers some ten years, the life of my saintly friend Just de Bretennières, a martyr of Corea. I now have some hope of bringing it to an end, and of publishing it this winter. But even if it were never to appear, I should not regret having written it, owing to the good it has done me. Under his sweet and powerful influence, I breathe an air that is supernatural and I regain the lost secret of learning how to pray. The day before yesterday I went to Chartres. My good Mother, the mother of the best days of my life,

<sup>1</sup> "Until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our hearts" (2 Pet. i. 19).

<sup>2</sup> In our minds.

<sup>3</sup> When we shall see Him as He is.

## The Way of the Heart

was there waiting for me. Kneeling at her feet, I passed in review at length all the graces I had received there ; those which I had invoked her to grant me, and those she had accorded (the settlement of family affairs, the Christian and holy death of my father and brother) ; and then I presented her with a list of fresh favours I was asking for ; and you occupied a foremost place in it, my child.

117

*October 1, 1887.*

Your letter of the 29th is indeed a good one, and confirms all my hopes. The sun is returning to your soul's sky, if not in the form of light, at any rate by way of heat. He cannot come back again without bringing after him a train of sorrows, those arising from the sight of his love, which is combated by the wicked and travestied by the good.

. . . There are such times, in which a Judas, a Caiphas, or a Herod triumphs ; when the Apostles take to flight, and their chief denies ; yet it was not the Master's fault then, nor is it His disciple's fault to-day. God is present in these barren conflicts of His children, and watches their sorrowful defeats, the ruin of their hopes, and He has such a strange and mysterious way of measuring things moral, that He discovers that a great many spiritual ravages are made good at such times by the laborious faith, the despairing but persevering zeal, the desperate but unflinching fidelity, of a handful of His servants. And then these inner griefs, these agonies wrought by the sight of sin, which

## Letter 118

reproduce the agony of Gethsemani, have in His eyes a greater value, and a greater efficacy for the future than all the efforts of missionary endeavour.

My child, you will strive in vain, you belong to Jesus Christ, His business is your business, His sorrows are your sorrows, and this will be your way of life until death, just as mine will be to work for Him till I disappear. Just now, I come from resting in Him at Louville, and the work of Carcassonne has very sweetly united me to Him. My retreat lasts from the 9th to the 15th. If after that I do not long retain my warmth, it will be because I am only an old cracked oven. I bless you, my child.

118

MY CHILD,

October 22, 1887.

This is a bad beginning for the year. I had finished my retreat last week ; and a quarter of an hour after getting *home* I began preaching to the Carmelites. I have just finished, and the business that was not spared me even during the retreat prevented my writing to you. But if you suffered from it in any way, I know you were not jealous of the time I was giving to our Master's service, and that you were even glad for me to continue my retreat by telling others what I had just been saying to myself and hearing myself. . . .

That desire of poverty inspired by the feast of St. Francis gave me great pleasure, because it is one of the surest signs of a spirit that is not our own working within us. To strip oneself, what a meaningless thing it seems to such a nature as ours which

## The Way of the Heart

tends to expand outwardly and to annex the universe to itself! And how can this be an attraction unless there be *Some One* who inspires it and suggests an exchange: *Da totum pro toto*.<sup>1</sup> If thou wouldst see Him who is all, leave all that is not Him. Then the stripping of self is no longer a folly—it is a transaction—a splendid transaction, because it is a transaction of the heart, and if our own interest is involved in it, it is not what we are seeking for, but it is our Friend who introduces it. *Inventa una pretiosa margarita, dedit omnia quae habet et emit eam*.<sup>2</sup>

You are also right about faith. There are reasonable reasons for believing; there are also specious reasons for not believing: the specious and the reasonable are not always easy to distinguish; lastly, the reasonable does not carry one on to belief, because there is no *evidence* of the thing that is taught, but at most some discursive evidence of the teaching authority. Hence we must also make an act of confidence in this authority, even after we have acknowledged its claims, just as there must be an act of confidence in a friend who counsels us a hazardous choice, even after long experience has proved that he is prudent and reliable. This act of confidence is what is *voluntary* in faith. It is this that is free; this is what needs grace; and this assisting grace is what is called the gift of faith; and to make this act requires humility, prayer, a certain detachment from things sensible, and a whole sum

<sup>1</sup> Give all for all.

<sup>2</sup> "Having found one pearl of great price, he gave all that he had and bought it" (*cf.* Matt. xiii. 46).



## Letter 119

of moral conditions which are not necessary for the solution of a geometrical problem, nor for the elucidation of some historical question.

My retreat? well, I have nothing to say about it but what is good;—I was spoilt—everything went off comfortably. I hope to be able to tell you something of it, but it must be very brief. There was nothing that was not already known and experienced, only everything fell out just right.

Your friend, who is leaving here, was very touched by your welcome and your mother's, and delighted with her stay. She is only displeased with one person who has scarcely recovered from an illness and is running about like a poisoned rat. As to that individual, I too am not quite satisfied. Give her a scolding for me, and tell me how she is going on, and talk to me about her soul, and assure her that there is someone who will never forget her and who blesses her.

119

October 27, 1887.

You have got into the *black hole* once more. . . . All the time the Friend seems to be asleep, but His heart waketh, and my own heart guarantees me that, for it does not sleep so far as you are concerned, and it is the divine Friend alone who has made it so keenly alive to the troubles of your soul. Let me, as a true father, share my bread with my famished child, I mean my faith and my hope. God gives it me in abundance just now, and the provision I got from my retreat is by no means exhausted. I do not speak of sharing love with you, for He is not

## The Way of the Heart

absent from you, but only concealing Himself ; but what does it matter ? . . . *Tenebantur oculi eorum, ne eum agnoscerent.*<sup>1</sup> You will soon recognize Him *in fractione panis.*<sup>2</sup> I reiterate things tiresomely, but I am sure to be right !

And now I beg you to follow me into a corner of your being into which you have not entered, and where I am the first to show the way ; there you will hear : *Beati qui—beati qui*—a host of strange Beatitudes : we will meditate on them together, and they will fill us with yearning. Then a lamentation will reach our ears, the plaint of those who had not enough confidence in the Beatitudes to sacrifice everything for them, and to say : *Deus meus et omnia.* They are in the way of learning how true a word this is. When they have come to know it thoroughly, they will be ripe for heaven and its bliss. But learning costs them dearly.

Let us come to their assistance, and at the same time take lessons in their school. And if we observe that in spite of our blindness a mysterious guidance has directed our choice, and has established the foundation of our life on this doctrine, let us be honest enough to avow that we have had the better part, which shall not be taken from us.

I bless you, my child.

<sup>1</sup> " Their eyes were held that they should not know Him " (Luke xxiv. 16).

<sup>2</sup> " In the breaking of bread " (Luke xxiv. 35).

## Letter 120

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MY DAUGHTER,

January 5, 1888.

Your sad New Year's letter touched my heart to its depths with its revelation of all your suffering of soul and mind and body. Yet, while I grieved to see you the victim of such trouble, I was cheered at having been able, at least on some occasions, to help you to lift the mask of contentment with which you had to cover your face, and to let your feelings momentarily appear. I believe this occasional alleviation is one that God would allow and approve, and I beg you not to deny yourself an opportunity for it should one occur.<sup>1</sup>

It would take too much time and trouble to go on in Italian, which I do not know thoroughly, having merely learnt it in the street. But how could I help replying with all my heart to your appeal, my child? You are sailing through a thick fog, and see neither heaven nor earth nor water, and only the little bit of the track you are passing over from one moment to another. In such conditions, one has a very good right to take a pilot on board, and you will not hail in vain him whom the Master has put in your way. If I have shown you more than once that I understand your doubts and that your state of mind does not surprise me, I do not want you to infer that in your case I am only a *caecus caeco ducatum praestans*.<sup>2</sup> If my intellect is acquainted with the bewilderments of faith, it also is acquainted with its enlightenings, and my soul above all, that

<sup>1</sup> The first paragraph of this letter is written in Italian.

<sup>2</sup> A blind leader of the blind.

## The Way of the Heart

totality which is so complex and so profoundly *one*, and which constitutes human personality, lives entirely on what faith provides. I am absolutely sure by reason that I am right as against positivism ; and that I am right by all that is within me as against those who stop short between the true God and Jesus Christ. I am ready to seal with my blood the following declaration by Père Gratry : " All is fairer than our dreams, greater than our thoughts." The fashionable notion, the notion of a purely subjective ideal, of a beauty which I am to imagine as immense, and which exists nowhere except in a diminished state, this notion seems to me as absurd as it is revolting, and even more so ; for then, it is I who am the great Creator and the true God ; things only fall off as soon as they pass beyond my range, whereas I feel how pitiful and dependent I am in myself. The Infinite, wherewith every man who comes into the world is obsessed, cannot be the product of ascents which are themselves causeless ; it must be the antecedent cause of these very ascents, and if I find them ever before me, that must be because It was before me.

Hence, I must decide in favour of my mind, my conscience, and my heart ; I must affirm the reality of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good ; and because Christianity, in spite of the spots with which it gets splashed by humanity, shows my eyes and my heart and my conscience more love and power and greatness than I could have possibly conceived by myself, I not only say to myself : that is true, *although* it is beyond me : but, that is true, *because* it is beyond me ; and my certainty is increased

## Letter 121

according to the height by which it surpasses me. *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate; tunc autem facie ad faciem.*<sup>1</sup> That, my child, is enough for believing, for hoping, for loving, for communicating; for to communicate is only to lose oneself in the Invisible and to embrace Him with the arms of love.

This morning I said Mass at the Mamertine prison, where I much prefer *seeing Peter* in the darkness of the dungeon and in the splendours of sacrifice, to beholding him surrounded with oriental pomp and borne on a triumphal throne. I acknowledge that this pomp is useful for the general run of people, but a quarter of an hour's prayer near the old rock of the Capitol suits me much better. Need I tell you that this prayer was made along with you? I bless you, my dear child, thanking God for linking your soul to mine in bonds which are so strong and sweet. *Au revoir* after twenty-five days. May He whom we desire to serve and love beyond the bounds of this dark life bless you!

## 121

April 30, 1888.

. . . If you only knew how thankful I am to you for taking an interest in my Congress, and *that for eighteen months!* I never suspected it; and I was wrong, for I ought to have known that none of my affairs is a matter of indifference to you; and this was a matter in which I was most interested, as

<sup>1</sup> "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

## The Way of the Heart

belonging to the Master's service. What will please you is to know that the Master was really served by it. Christian truth thereby received honour amongst men, and strength in men's souls; and charity also did good business at it. Excellent country priests, learned and pious, but narrow and intolerant, full of prejudice *against us*, went home with minds enlarged and with hearts set free from the suspicions and anathemas with which they were filled.

There was not one of those at the Congress, layman or priest, who did not go away with a lively desire to come back again and do better in three years' time. This is more than one needs to sing a *Te Deum*.

122

April 30, 1888.

*Sancta Catharina Senensis, ora pro nobis.* Yes, my child, both you and I will do well to invoke this Saint; I, to ask her how one can find God on the highroad and amidst the rush of business; you, amidst the obscurities and silence of a *tête-à-tête* with oneself. Happy indeed were those Saints of yore, who had not to waste their energies in barren analyses of subtle thought, but poured them all out in fruitful work and ardent love. But we no more choose our age than our character or our health. The differences that seem to us so great must appear very small to Him beneath whose eyes the centuries unfold. Nothing is so like one man as is his fellow. These doubts, these contradictions between our thoughts and our desires, this impossibility of either

## Letter 122

doing without God or of attaining to Him, this difficulty of the acceptance of Christianity in its naïveté and of living apart from its sublimity, all that has been known, gone through, and experienced by many souls which are to-day in the place of *refreshment, light, and peace*. There they perceive the reasons God had for treating us as at the same time children and heroes; and for asking of us two kinds of sacrifices, those that seem to diminish us, and those that raise us above ourselves. Those reasons we shall one day see; to-day it is enough for us to adore and to submit to them.

I am of opinion it would be well for you to recommence the Bible from Tobias (inclusively) to the end of the Old Testament; read too the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospels.

Give me a little place in your prayers, my child. My soul feels much need of God, and my life is so ordered that I can only give Him His proper portion in the morning before Mass; but on the other hand, my poor beast of burden<sup>1</sup> is overwhelmed in the morning, and in all this there are contradictory claims which it is very hard to reconcile. I am waiting for the holidays to start a prayer-cure. Meanwhile, I say: *Anima mea sicut terra sine aqua tibi.*<sup>2</sup> And I put my hope in the truth of this word: *Desiderium pauperum exaudivit Dominus; praeparationem cordis eorum audivit auris tua.*<sup>3</sup> I have just seen my sister; she is truly faithful and

<sup>1</sup> "Brother ass" of St. Francis.

<sup>2</sup> "My soul is unto Thee as a land without water" (Ps. cxlii. 6).

<sup>3</sup> "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart" (Ps. ix. 17).

## The Way of the Heart

settled in the Master's intimacy. My consolation is to point her out to the good God, when I feel inclined to hide away from Him.

123

*June 3, 1888.*

I shall bid you always satisfy Him who calls upon you. I know you will often inevitably fail to do so ; but provided that it is not done on purpose, what does it matter ! . . . He will take what is good, and wait for the rest.

Our moral work is compared by St. Paul to a building of gold and iron, wood and straw. The fire breaks out and destroys what is not durable. The iron is faith ; the gold is love. Let us put as much as possible of both into our structure, especially of the second. . . . Let us try to find the paths that lead to the Master, the Guide, the Friend, the Consoler, the Repairer, the Mediator. All these names are good ; all of them express some reality and some relationship. The unity of all is to be found in the Eucharist. The unity of the Eucharist and of all the others is in Love. The truth of Love arises from the very concept of it. We have invented and created nothing ; all we have conceived was before us, and remains above us.

To-day the heat is oppressive, and wrongs one's devotion. Poor imprisoned soul ! how little is needed to cast it down !



## Letter 124

124

July 10, 1888.

. . . One thing would interest you, though its name would annoy you as it does myself: the *Eucharistic Congress*, which as a matter of fact gave rise to admirable manifestations of faith and love towards the Most Holy Sacrament, and provoked such an amount of prayer as I never saw before. I will tell you all about it at. . . .

I am as thoroughly satisfied with you as you may be dissatisfied with me. Your last letter is so good, so excellent, that, were I selfish, I should be thankful for your bad days, since they make you think and speak thus. . . . I have no claim to speak to you like Bossuet, but I am entirely of opinion that you are of those to whom he might have written the words you quote. Since it is *He* who directs everything, it is only right to think that it is *He* who is controlling your health. Had *He* promised to make you well, you might then find *Him* at fault. But *He* has only promised to lead you on to *love eternal*, and apparently a headache may do that. This is, again, a hard thing to understand; for it is an infirmity that stupefies, and it is a queer preparation for any sublime acts of the human soul. But what can be said? His method is His own method, and we cannot change it. In myself, I have to fight against a too tender fatherly feeling, which is grieved by suffering and which would be quite ready to advise the good God not to demand so much of you. But it is clear that my advice would be wanting in all common

## The Way of the Heart

sense, were I to offer it to Him and not to you, so I have nothing to do but put up with it.

If you only knew how I like your fondness for Holy Scripture! A few days ago I came across the following fine expression in a passage of Roger Bacon. Speaking of the theological teaching of his time, he complains that too much is assigned to the Commentary *of the text of the Sentences* (Theology) and to that *of the text of the Decrees* (Canon Law), and that they neglect *the text of God* (the Bible). "The text of God!" That is just it! What *human* speech, uttered several thousand years ago, gives expression to our thoughts, our feelings, and, in expressing them, reinforces them, uplifts them, and illumines them?

125

August 9, 1888.

I found myself as it were borne off in a dream from the calm peace of . . . into the austere activity of a very important retreat. At half-past five in the morning I was beginning the spoken meditation; at ten o'clock, my first sermon. There are here no religious or outside priests to hear confessions. Hence the preacher, being the only bird of passage, has to listen to all the sorrowful confidences. A few grand souls there are amidst the great sinners, thinking that he who speaks to them of our Lord's Love may be able to help them in their holy desires. Would to God it might be so! In short, I have a hard and anxious piece of ministration, but after all it is very consoling. It is wonderful to see how grace transformssouls, making them humble, little, trustful.

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## Letters 126 and 127

126

August 22, 1888.

I am quite at peace so far as you are concerned, my child. I have no doubt but that *we* have done the will of God and established your life in the right way. If this way is hard, you will have all eternity to rest in, and to congratulate yourself on having walked in it. To encourage yourself in bare fidelity, read over again the beginning of the book of Ecclesiasticus ; read it over in Latin : you will find it in your Breviary in the lessons of the day of the fourth Sunday of August. . . .

127

August 30, 1888.

. . . And now, *avanti figlia!* Do you like yesterday's feast, the Beheading of St. John Baptist? It is one of my favourite feasts! What a model of faithful and disinterested love! Living for Christ and dying for Christ, and yet never to have lived with Him! To close the Old Testament, and to begin the New, by being martyred in the service of truth and love! What a destiny! And what an encouragement for the souls the Master wishes to keep in the way of dryness and desolation! You know what this way means, do you not indeed?

Then all is well. I bless you, my daughter.

## The Way of the Heart

128

MY DAUGHTER,

September 9, 1888.

Your silence was beginning to seem very long indeed. Your long letter received yesterday was a true compensation. It is full of excellent things, which delight me greatly. . . . Nothing in the way of change has occurred in your trials, but they have lost the power of upsetting you. I should have liked to see you just now in the church at Louville while I was speaking to our good folks of the blessed Virgin as the "*Cause of our Joy.*" She is that by birth and condition, and by announcing to us another birth which brings us salvation. But to see a sign of joy in all this, one must look with the eyes of faith. The worldly man finds his joys and sorrows elsewhere than the Christian. He is grieved with the ills of this life, without seeing that they are the consequences of the very sin which procures him the pleasures he most appreciates. Hence we have great need of Mary to give us light ; but if she gave us that only, the benefit would be too hard for us. Light alone is a pitiless thing. To make it endurable, a ray of hope and a ray of love must blend with it !

129

October 22, 1888.

It is the first day of my retreat, not the last, as you suppose. . . . I am here till Saturday next, your sorrowful day.

Thank you for thinking of my twenty-three years

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## Letter 129

of the priesthood. The 15th of October, 1865, at Chartres remains a centre of light in my life. I shall never recover the deep and ineffable joys of that day, of that afternoon of my ordination. I spent it almost entirely in the cathedral, going from the Blessed Sacrament chapel to the altar of Notre-Dame du Pihier. Our Lord poured Himself out with prodigality that day upon him whom He was about to ask to be poured out with prodigality for Him all the rest of his life, and who has held but ill indeed to the conditions of mutual exchange. Yet that far-off day fills me with no regret. The joys we enjoy in this world, even if they come from heaven, are not worth dwelling upon. They are a cordial for the traveller to drink on his journey. The end lies ahead ; and I should prefer my forty-seven years to the twenty-four, if I could say to myself that I had done what I ought to have done with the last twenty-three.

Here I am again with my beloved *Exercises* . . . and I cannot tell you how glad I am to see that you understand and relish them so well. All you write is just what I have always felt myself in doing them. This way of understanding all the mysteries of Jesus as so many calls—*Magister adest et vocat te*<sup>1</sup>—is just what has always attracted and gripped me in these contemplations. This is because there, as you see, we actually touch the living God. The other day I heard the Abbé de Broglie say : “ The God of Rousseau and of J. Simon seems like ours ; but in reality He is not the same. He stands between the God of Cousin and ours ; just as Cousin’s

<sup>1</sup> “ The Master is come and calleth thee ” (John xi. 28).

## The Way of the Heart

stands between Vacherot's God and J. Simon's." But the defect of all these deities is that they are abstractions, beings of logic, and hence without life. Reason leads us to them after a number of calculations, but then we are seized with giddiness, and are tempted to think that these deities are our own handiwork, and that it is madness to adore our own creations.

Quite other is the God of Christians. He is indeed the mainstay of all things, and, on this ground, the term of all seeking for causes, but He is above all the soul of all things, and very specially the soul of our soul. When one would find Him we must above all look, listen, pray, and love, in the very depths of ourselves, in the most mysterious and sublime part of our human being. Then there is a moment as sudden and bright as a flash of lightning, when one sees and feels, and when one gives oneself up and is sure of being right in having done so. A few such flashes of fire are enough to determine a life. That is what has determined ours, is it not ?

From the *Exercises* to the Rosary is but a single step. In reality they are the same thing. The Rosary is the meditation of the simple, and when used by the educated it is the meditation for their hours of trouble, when they are not their own. It is an easy way of being initiated into the contemplation of the *mysteries* which show us *the living God* in action. So love your Rosary, and repeat : *Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fortem, vivum.*<sup>1</sup> Lastly, admit that there is something in the Church which is not

<sup>1</sup> "My soul is athirst for the strong and living God" (Ps. xli. 3).

## Letter 130

of man—these quite simple institutions and very popular adaptations of things most great and high ! No philosophy has ever achieved anything of the kind, and analogous practices, which are shown us in other religions, such as Buddhism, lose all meaning and power to become material and soulless superstitions as soon as they pass into the hands of the people ; whilst I have known very ignorant poor folks who said their Rosary in a way that was sublime. Note also, that as soon as people turn Protestant or Jansenist they get a distaste for the Rosary, and laugh at it, and are scandalized by it. One must belong to the household to understand what comes from the Master of the house.

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DEAR MADAME,

*October 23, 1888.*

. . . It is now four years ago, unless I am mistaken, and the time is both too long and too short. The time seems too long without those one loves, and nevertheless life appears to get focussed entirely on the years one lived with them, and the rest hardly seems to count. This power of loving which is in us, and which engrosses everything, cannot be used up altogether in a brief happiness or in long regrets. Since it survives the former, and since the latter do not wear it out, it cannot have fulfilled its function, and must have a future. Hence, what is best in us carries us beyond this sad world and directs us towards a country where we shall find that we are rich enough to love for ever.

## The Way of the Heart

This is what is suggested to us by faith, the mother of hope. It also tells us that those who had not received enough of faith's light here below, but who followed such light as they had, will find a path through infinite mercy to attain to the clearness of the light eternal. If on earth they believed less than ourselves, now they see that whereof we are still ignorant. It is they who urge us to entrust all our thoughts and desires to the teaching and promises of God, and whilst a too human way of fostering their memory might perhaps induce us to entertain some misgivings in our dealings with the invisible, the true union of their soul with ours engages us day by day still further in our mysterious commerce with the hereafter.

My Sunday Mass will be for *him* and for all of you, especially for you two.

131

November 24, 1888.

... The accident to the workroom is indeed hard. B—— must have thought the fire very clever, and the opening of a lay workroom through this terrible opportunity now creates a formidable opposition.

Don't you think that when it pours calamities on all sides, and when both within and without one is sore in every part, it gets easier to ascend in love by way of adoration? Your way being cut off on all sides, only the way right upwards is left, the way of great ascents, and you take it. At certain seasons, I have felt that when I was about to give way under my load, an additional weight falling on me helped to raise me up, *non è?*



## Letter 132

Yes, a thousand times over, the trial is only another reason for committing yourself to Him whom you know. *Scio cui credidi.*<sup>1</sup> . . . To-day the precentor of the Obscure Night must be the patron of your spiritual life. St. John of the Cross seems to me to be just the patron you want. Go on giving *totum pro toto*, and repeating in the midst of the darkest shadows : *Qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris.*<sup>2</sup> . . . And I shall go on crying out to you : *Filioli, nunc filii Dei sumus, sed nondum apparuit quid erimus ; cui benefacitis attendentes tanquam lucernae lucenti in caliginoso loco, donec dies elucescat et lucifer oriatur in cordibus nostris.*<sup>3</sup>

## 132

December 20, 1888.

. . . You have now only to look upon yourself as the workshop where the Master is working, the field which He is tilling, the stuff He is shaping, and to say to Him with St. Paul : shall the clay ask the potter to return an account ? Only in your case we have to do with a lump of clay which was first of all taken by force, but afterwards gave itself up and voluntarily subjected itself to the operations of Him who is kneading it.

<sup>1</sup> " I know whom I have believed " (2 Tim. i. 12).

<sup>2</sup> " He who followeth Me doth not walk in darkness " (John viii. 12).

<sup>3</sup> " Little children, we are now the sons of God ; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be : whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your hearts " (1 John iii. 2 and 2 Pet. i. 19).

## The Way of the Heart

Therefore, hope and love ! All your life lies in that. The rest does not concern you.

I leave you to Isaias, with the O's, those burning apostrophes that call upon the Saviour to come into the world. I leave your soul with *the key of David, quae claudit et nemo aperit, aperit et nemo claudit.*<sup>1</sup>

. . . The love of God in eternity, the love of true friends on earth, nothing else is any good.

133

April 28, 1889.

. . . To-day I ran through the churches of Bologna, was present at the Stations of the Cross and at Benediction at San Petronio, and prayed at the tomb of St. Dominic. How I love the simplicity of the Italians with their naïve and trustful prayers ! The sky is summer blue, it is very hot, and nature is keeping holiday. My soul is rather taken by surprise by these impressions, for it is not prepared for them and only half unfolds. I have lately spent a great deal of time in regions illumined by the Cross, and I am not ready to welcome the pleasant things of this world.

Before leaving Paris I carried the good God to the poor sick woman you know. Had you only been able to see her confusion, and her real humility, once amounting to grief and terror, and even making her exclaim : " It is impossible ! He could never come to me ! " and then the calm and peace, amidst one of the most sorrowful situations in the world !

<sup>1</sup> " Which shutteth and no man openeth, openeth and no man shutteth " (Apoc. iii. 7).

## Letter 134

Those who have never restored God to a soul know not what such a resurrection means; and they cannot believe in it. I believe in it, because I have seen it.

This is only a foreword. Write soon.

### 134

MY CHILD,

May 25, 1889.

Your letter reached me at Rome the day before I left. In it you gave me an account of the *combat* which my last *demand* stirred within you. I was very satisfied with the result of the combat. . . .

Yes, I am back in the furnace again, and it is burning more fiercely than ever. It is enough to make anyone lose his head, and, as a matter of fact, I am losing mine to some extent. There is no room left in my brain, and a heap of things find their way into it every day, and hence I have to let go a great many others. If you happen to hear that I have been put under Dr. Blanche's care, you will pray for a poor man who only wanted to keep his reason, but who had been driven out of his wits by the public. Should such an event be postponed, you will see me once more at — in two months' time, and we will do our best together to prevent its occurrence. *Dio mio!* how fine will it be in Paradise! *Requiem aeternam, lux perpetua!* Here, it is just the opposite: *labor aeternus, nox perpetua.* Happily the perpetuity does not last long!

*Figlia mia!* if memory disappears, if the mind gets outworn, the heart ages not. I know that if I had my time over again I should give myself to

## The Way of the Heart

the same Master. Only I should try to serve Him better. And what would you do? Let us help one another to devote to Him the rest of our powers and of our life! Alas! how badly is He staffed with servants! Your last letters lead me to suspect fresh scandals in your district. And then, what is perhaps worse is the lukewarmness, the frivolity, the little generosity of the majority. That tells so strongly in favour of those who say it is all a matter of trade with us! There have always been such in the Church, and the sum-total of evil has often been worse. Only then there were saints. Since evil has not abdicated, why should not those who love agree to provide at their own expense the compensation which love gives to God by way of sanctity? And to do this it is not necessary to perform this or that work, but it is enough to follow the inner call, whatever it be. For this reason, your life may be full, my child, not with the things which in the eyes of men appear to fill it, and which furnish its external *raison d'être*, but with those the secret of which and the direction of which is in my keeping. Is it not so?

135

June 23, 1889.

MY CHILD, *In solemnitate Corporis Christi.*

I know you are patient, and I know too that I have exceeded the limit, and our Master knows that I am not to blame. Do you not think it is much sweeter and easier for me to hold con-

## Letter 135

verse with your soul than to struggle through the fray and to let myself be devoured piecemeal? The month of June is one continual assault; and I know not which way to turn. Constantly my heart leans towards you: have you never come across it? But it goes on its way by itself and invisibly, and my pen cannot follow it. All the time you are suffering in isolation, your body is in distress, your soul is in darkness, and the hand of your friend cannot be felt. Close to you is He who suffices of Himself alone. Yet it is He who wishes me to come to you as soon as I can get breathing-space; I have been trying to get it since my little note on Tuesday; and I have only just got it to-day, between our two processions at the Carmelites and at the hospital.

. . . Just now, as I was carrying *Him*, I could no more see my way clear than you can, and I felt myself drawn towards one thing only: annihilation. I was looking at the foot of the monstrance, not daring to raise my eyes any higher, and a strong feeling swept over me beneath the hornbeams in our garden: the happiness of thus serving Him amidst the darkness, of loving Him while feeling my way after Him, of offering Him the homage of my impotence, and then I felt the certainty that arises from trusting Him generously while He conceals Himself; I understood that this life is given us for such an exercise, and that the rest is His business; it is His to repay with light His children's fidelity to Him amidst the darkness.

. . . I am not at all of your opinion in not seeing anything to lay hold of in the Trinity beyond an

## The Way of the Heart

abstract formula. As for myself, I find in It,—and in a sense more than in the Eucharist,—or rather, I find in It the source from which the Eucharist draws what it conveys to us, that is to say : *the life of God, et vita manifestata est, quae erat apud Patrem et apparuit nobis.*<sup>1</sup> When I am able to recollect myself a little, I experience an unspeakable joy in adoring from a distance in God, and close by in the Sacrament, that original life which will also be our final goal, the ocean in which the river of our desires will lose itself. All natural and human philosophy cries out, as I hear it, that there must be a first principle and a final end ; but the dogma of the Trinity alone enables me to see this principle and this end otherwise than as an abstraction : It is a *life*, the model and the source of mine ; It will be the final satisfaction, the only real fulfilment of mine. Then I like to do as Moses did, to adore the burning bush from afar. What do I say ? I like doing this. Alas ! I wish I could, but I cannot. The rush carries me off, and I live on regrets and desires buried beneath the dust of the things of this world.

At Brides, you will have time to pray. Do so for yourself and for me. The further I go, the more I feel that prayer is the bread of the soul : *Dulcique mentem pabulo orationis nutriens.*<sup>2</sup> It is through neglect of this that so many priests die or fall below the level of their vocation, *ideoque multi infirmi et imbecilles et dormiunt multi.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "And the life was manifested, which was with the Father, and hath appeared to us" (1 John i. 2).

<sup>2</sup> Feeding the mind with the sweet food of prayer.

<sup>3</sup> "And therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 30).

## Letter 136

This time, I have spoken more to you of Him and of myself than of yourself ; that is because I have let your two last letters get mouldy. It is now for you to enable me to resume the dialogue.

I bless you, my daughter.

### 136

*July 17, 1889.*

. . . I should be vexed and anxious, only I am beginning to know the vanity of worrying about the future in this world. Things almost always turn out otherwise than one anticipates. One is, however, not disappointed, if one expects to meet with many troubles and contrarities, and still less disappointing is it to receive them as coming from Him who sends them. The good God has given me many graces through life ; but the one I esteem the most in comparison with what I see around me and in my ministry is the readiness He has given me of accepting His will without understanding it, and without asking Him to give me any account of it. I have no merit of doing this ; it happens quite of itself ; but I feel how right it is, and from what storms it protects me. The opposite disposition is one of the most common characteristics of to-day. " What can the good God be thinking of, if He does not help me as I desire ?" This is everybody's first exclamation. " If the Sovereign Lord of all things is not my most humble servant, or if, in His way of doing me good, He forgets to consult my likings or to explain His designs, He is lacking in all His duties, and, to tell the truth, there is considerable doubt as

## The Way of the Heart

to whether He exists." I cannot tell you how absurd this way of speaking seems to me. It would irritate me even, unless I thought that people do not suggest such notions to themselves, and that those who get them from their nature rather need pity and consolation and gentle restoration than scoldings.

. . . I must talk to my true daughter as a true father. If she only knew how linked is her soul to mine! Is it not true that what we settled on, apparently against human wisdom, never ceases to seem to us more and more true in that region where there are reasons which are above reason? That region, say what one will, is the higher region. Let us compare man's action a little with its model, God's action. In God, reason means the "how," why things are, their possibility, their order, their manner of being; but where are we to look for the motive of their existence, for what determined their creation? where, unless it be in love? Very well: the question was how to create your life for time and for eternity. We went to ask for its determining impulse from the love of the Sovereign Good. I tell you this: we did divinely well, and if anyone wants to make me regret it, he will not succeed. But who would wish to do so? Others know nothing of it; and as for you, my daughter, you don't want me to feel any regret, do you?



## Letters 137 and 138

### 137

*July 24, 1889.*

. . . Your last letter was entirely to my liking.

I think you well understand your destiny, which consists in being possessed by the Unknown One, urged by an unperceived power towards an unseen end, and to put into the acceptance of such dependence, which seems to annihilate the will, the maximum of will-power the human soul is capable of under the embrace of Love. You must be diligent in fulfilling this destiny by being at once both very definite and very broad : definite in obeying interior orders ; broad in taking up the Master's interests in all ways ; knowing how to serve Him in others as well as in yourself ; in suffering as well as in action ; in darkness as well as in the light.

### 138

*August 21, 1889.*

Yesterday, during my thanksgiving, I was very sweetly occupied in thinking of St. Bernard and of you. In him I saw a serene soul, drawn to God by power and sweetness ; in you, a soul taken by force, temporarily prepossessed by the divine sweetness, and then flung into a rough and dark road. I watched your two souls journeying side by side in parallel lines ; the two roads unconnected with each other ; but the goal of both was the same ; and I felt a great peace and security so far as you are concerned. This morning the thought of you recurred to me of its own accord along with that of St. Jeanne

## The Way of the Heart

de Chantal. Here the analogy went further, for hers was no life of consolations, her temptations against the faith lasted more than twenty years, the dominant note of her virtue was courage, and she had to exercise a great deal of it to remain faithful. Are not these good patrons for your self-immolation? . . . If resignation is no longer sufficient for the state of your soul, go on to self-sacrifice, as at the end of the *Contemplation of the Kingdom* or of that of the *Two Standards*. Put yourself at His disposal to drink a still more bitter chalice, and to wear a still harder bond, *if it be His good pleasure*.

. . . I too read Renan in the train after leaving you. I found him *in extenso* in the *Temps*. If I had not just got two retreats, I should be already in the act of writing a reply. . . . I think you have made the best of this piece of writing, and I like your commentary.

That sort of poison does you no harm. Havet's would do so, and quite uselessly. My retreat is going on well; I say my Rosary daily at the feet of Notre Dame du Pilier, which is full of sweetness to me. And there I do not forget you. . . . After my stay, I took away with me much joy in thinking I had been working for the good of souls at your request. You had told me, *Vinum non habent*<sup>1</sup>; and it was my duty to serve it round to them. That was very good.

<sup>1</sup> They have no wine.

## Letter 139

139

September 5, 1889.

Do you know that while I was reading the first part of your letter I was mentally making the same reply to it that I found *in extenso* in the second part, and especially in the third? The storm of temptation must have turned your head for you not to perceive what is so clear: that the gifts of God, even His extraordinary gifts, are by no means a reward, and therefore are not always, nor even often, proportioned to preceding merits, to virtues acquired.

Consequently, even after receiving such gifts, much remains to be done in the way of acquiring essential virtues. In a *chosen* soul, this elementary work runs on in parallel lines with the sublime work. The two are interlaced like the threads of a web. To infer that, because there are some holes in our virtue, therefore all our higher attractions are vain, is the most fallacious of reasoning; to say the truth, it is falling into the clumsiest of traps.

I am charmed with the life of St. Teresa. What think you?

You have done well indeed to enrol Mme. — in the Adoration. We must do like the good God: take souls as they are, carry them further on, and use gentleness, charity, respect, and patience in doing so. Bitter, eager, and disdainful zeal only does harm to other souls, and still more to the person they animate.

## The Way of the Heart

140

September 13, 1889.

. . . Thank you for sending me the *Life*. The second volume will please you still more. In it you will see how we must suffer to be *among His friends*; and suffer *from the good* even more than from the bad, or from things.

I am now reading the life of St. John of the Cross, because I have to preach his panegyric this year. His personality is much less attractive, and the style of the narrative is detestable. This is indeed painful reading after the charm of the other. Still the hero of the book is a true hero, and a master to make the acquaintance of. But without the assistance of St. Teresa he would have achieved nothing of consequence towards the reform. And this proves that natural gifts have in holiness a place at the disposal of grace. You are indeed quite right in saying that the procedure of the Master is the same in all ages. But you will never be sufficiently convinced that to recognize in our wretched selves the *itinerary* followed by the saints, or rather by the action of God in them, is no reason for thinking that we are in a state of illusion. It proves that sanctity has been *offered* to us, and has He not the right to offer it to us? It unfortunately does not prove that we have accepted the offer!

I share your tastes as to coming feasts.

## Letter 141

141

September 20, 1889.

I found your letter in Paris, where I had been to attend the death-bed of, and then to bury, an old and very dear friend, the Abbé de Courcy. Oh, how I wish you could have been with me to see his death, so radiant with faith and hope and love! *Recordare Jesu pie*, he cried—and all the rest! "I once feared I was going to get well," he said on his last day. Those who could treat all this confidence and hope as an illusion would nevertheless be forced to admit that there is no philosophic certainty as beautiful, as encouraging, and as consoling as such an illusion. But, truth to tell, the notion of an illusion is the very last that could occur to anyone when face to face with such a closing scene.

Just where the proud-minded only see a black hole, a dark enigma, how can we decide against a doctrine which makes the light to shine, and kindles all the ardours of love?

And now I return to you . . . I am more and more satisfied. . . . What gladness, what assurance, what happiness, in the reply of Him who conceals Himself, but who reveals Himself by means of His own darkness! Yes, certainly this service is to be preferred to all others, you must decide in favour of the old sufferer from gangrene. And then the Stations of the Cross! Why regret it? Why this afterthought of human respect? Do you not perceive that He is putting you in the path of childhood, and that His direction is only one with mine? You know well I am no lover of what is extraordinary.

## The Way of the Heart

I have read Fouillée. His book is full of truths misunderstood by him who utters them. He thought he was turning his back on Christianity, and reverts to it without knowing he is doing so, and he only rebuilds it imperfectly. I will write an article about it in the *Correspondant*.

142

September 30, 1889.

. . . Sunday I will give your mother as much as ever she wants. But tell her not to ask me for anything amiss, for I don't know what would happen then. I worship mothers, for they remind me of my own; not all of them do so, but this one does, oh, very much! I am indeed very fond of her. If that makes her feel older, never mind! Then, why does she show such maternal care about me?

. . . I am very pleased with your letter. . . . A very important phase of your spiritual life is now beginning. The good God is underpinning the wall. Your unbelieving and proud spirit could not fail to be taken by the sweetness and nobleness of love. That is why He first drew you on by the charm of His intercourse, and then, after consolation was over, by the beauty of reparation. He began *at the end* with you, because you were not willing to accept the beginning. Now that He holds you fast, He makes you go through the lower lessons which were omitted; He means to make an end of your pride, and that, in doing so, I should be the interpreter of His will. . . . This is why I cannot give way to you.

## Letter 143

. . . But, my daughter, do not say that He is hard, and that I am so too. All this is to beat down the wall that separates you from the union which you must reach. If all must be sold to buy the pearl of great price, why is the pride of one's mind to be excepted from the sale? . . . Only it is true that you must allow your heart to rest on pleasanter prospects. Mary offers them you with her delightful Rosary. Often have recourse to it. A proof of the Master's love to you is that He is sending you to His Mother.

143

*October 9, 1889.*

Oh yes, my child, the Master will always be more strict and more exacting than I, that I can well believe; and infinitely so, since He is infinitely sweeter with a sweetness that is infinitely infinite! He is everything in excess, because He has no limits, and His masterpiece of sweetness is to take hold of a soul that was turning its back upon Him, which was not thinking of Him, or only thinking of Him to despise Him, and to lead it, bewildered, blind, and perhaps resisting, to His feet, to communicate Himself to it, to make it desire Him above all things, and then, when He holds it, to show it that it has done nothing so far, that everything must begin again with suffering, in obscurity and mortification all round, in the closest subjection conceivable, and finally, without consoling it, without diminishing the bitterness in which He leaves it, making it understand nevertheless that this state is the most enviable, that it constitutes a rare and excellent privi-

## The Way of the Heart

lege, and that it contains delightful promises both for time and for eternity.

Do you know a soul to which all this has happened? I know at least one such.

How I liked what you said about the *Exercises*! I read it to my sister, who also much appreciated it. She was just coming out of a retreat as I was going to begin one, and I had just been reading your letter before I went to see her. There was indeed a real *unison* between our three souls.

144

October 27, 1889.

. . . And now for us two, my child. Do you think your disclosures shake my confidence? Not in the least. I persist in thinking that all is going on very well. You are passing through the obscure night. Is it the first, that of the senses, or the second, that of the mind? Perhaps both at once. The categories and classifications of spiritual writers do not bind Him who is our Master. . . .

I am late with your letters, since I have written you nothing from the time of our farewell in the porch in the Rue d'Ulm. With regard to that, you were saying that you asked my permission to hold your peace as to an entirely personal impression concerning myself. I shall respect your silence, if you persist in it, but I am anxious that you should know that all your confidence, even where I am concerned, will be welcome. I have no fear of your leaving your *rôle* of "daughter," and I do not think you would be leaving it, if you were to confide to me in



## Letter 144

all simplicity your impressions about me personally or as to my spiritual life.

So far as you are concerned, you are in the right in thinking that your troubles, your inner sufferings, your heart-rendings and combats, are due especially to this : that all is demanded of you, and that having surrendered everything at once, you are now hesitating about giving up all in detail, and that therein certainly may be found enough to vex your Master and Friend. But be sure that He is very reasonable, He knows how difficult such a fidelity from day to day is, He does not expect it to be complete all of a sudden, and therefore He does not let a day go by without demanding it, in order to set over against your daily shortcomings the daily call which invites the soul to make reparation for the failures of the day before. This gentle, patient, and invincible perseverance should be a pattern of the action which we exercise on ourselves. We must make use of it in the same way as God does of His : without vexation and without being discouraged, taking up and resuming every moment the work just where our weakness made us leave it off, not inquiring too nicely whether to-day's point is ahead of, or behind, yesterday's. The present is what we are asked for, because it is the only time that belongs to us. Though I will not scold you much, I cannot approve of your tearing up the sheet which had a cry of anguish on it. . . . I read and listen to you with eyes and ears that are not mine, I feel, indeed, that in dealing with your affairs I am not myself, and that in me there is something of the divine constancy.

If there be any internal evidence, it is plain that

## The Way of the Heart

God has committed your soul to my hands. So let yourself be carried like a six months' child. You cannot do better.

I commend my souls to you and bless you !

145

November 19, 1889.

(Amidst these various and manifold occupations) I reproached myself bitterly for not finding time to say to you, were it only in a note, how much I hoped you would go to St. Martin's. And you had been there ! Certainly the Master's will in the case of us both manifests itself on parallel lines, so much so that when I say anything to you, or regret not saying it, you have already understood me !

. . . What you saw and understood in the presence of the tabernacle, *surrounded with those in adoration*, as to the gradual ascent followed during the many years past, was indeed the truth. Cleave to this guidance, as sure as it is obscure, as sweet and patient as it is strong and persevering. Put at the same time a great deal of passivity in letting yourself be dealt with, and of energy into your self-surrender. Above all be full of confidence, and repeat *Scio cui credidi*.<sup>1</sup> I will send you the panegyric on St. John of the Cross as soon as it is written, which will probably not be until it has been delivered. Just now I am devouring the new life of St. Francis of Sales, with which you will be delighted.

<sup>1</sup> I know whom I have believed.

## Letters 146 and 147

146

January 16, 1890.

. . . I doubt not, my daughter, your keen and *deep* interest in the *deep* ministry I am fulfilling here. This little group of priests is entering heart and soul into the *Exercises*. I am doing my best to give them the key of these, to give them a taste and appreciation of them, for more than four or five days are required if one is to get to the bottom of them. But the work I have to do to extract the pith of them and to make it acceptable is very useful and salutary to myself. It is an advantageous halt, and yet it does not lead me to forget the weariness and anxieties of the journey; the daily post fulfils the office of recalling them. This morning I have heard three bad pieces of news, the death of one of our most distinguished professors, and two unfortunate affairs. This is my daily bread. It is very true to say that this bread is strengthening: *Meus cibus est ut faciam voluntatem Patris*.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, we are certainly on the way to the best, towards the greatest light. If I were only made and put into the world to certify you of this, I think I should still have my *raison d'être* for being here.

I bless you, my child.

147

Holy Monday, 2890.

Yet it is quite clear. There are obligations of conscience and obligations of heart.

<sup>1</sup> "My meat is to do the will (of the Father)" (John iv. 34).

## The Way of the Heart

The difference between the good and the best concerns the former obligations. This difference is needed to give play to Love, for Love takes its pleasure in doing more than the good, in seeking the best.

If the best were a *duty*, Love would have no margin left for its *excesses*.

At the tribunal of Penance, the *confessor* only judges of sins against *duty*.

The *director* enters into the views of the Bridegroom, and grieves with Him about acts which are contrary to the finer sense of *Love*.

But he must not command where Jesus Himself is satisfied with attracting.

148

April 11, 1890.

. . . I much like that desire of *reparation* which came to you yesterday at the *pillar*. All that does not come from you, it is the Master's action, who is working as if He were at home. And, indeed, He was at home, was He not ?

I have a fresh soul to commend to you : it is striving against evil with a very honest heart and a very weak will. Yesterday I had a letter composed of tears, which could not but bring tears to the eyes that read it. When a soul groans over its slavery in this way, how can one not think its groaning will pierce the skies ? Oh ! how much to be pitied are the prisoners of sin !

I return to Paris to-morrow. The whirlwind will carry me off again. Tell your mother that I feel

## Letter 149

more and more filially towards her, and more and more paternally towards you, and more and more fraternally towards you both.

149

*April 23, 1890.*

I don't think I ever had a letter from you that gave me as much joy as yours of this morning. Everything in it is good, the sermons you make to —, those you address to yourself, the news of the work of reparation, and those of the blessed death of the poor child. I was not able to hit the mark so nicely in what I wrote to your mother. Ah! that is indeed a work which belongs to God alone!

From —'s antecedents, from his physical and moral nature, and from his conduct, to deduce the death of one of the predestined! To transform into privileges for eternity all the marks of inferiority which branded this child of sin! And they still will try to din into our ears all the inevitable consequences of heredity! Yes, such destinies exist; but mercy and love disport amidst them, and make a way for happiness through them.

I am tempted to copy out and send you back your first page. You often need such preaching, and I thank God that it has at last found a way to your brain: "supernatural gifts do not bring with them acquired virtues; they do not dispense with our acquisition of these, the absence of such acquisition proves nothing against the reality of the gifts, but only against the fidelity of him who has received

## The Way of the Heart

them. Lastly, this absence of fidelity ought not to discourage one, it is never too late nor too soon to set about pleasing God." There, in four propositions, you have a great and important chapter of spiritual doctrine.

150

May 28, 1890.

The ink here (Sheen House) is bad, and I have nothing but quills. But I have what I could not get during the last ten days, a quarter of an hour to write to you. . . . I have been here since Monday evening. I think the happy time for visiting earth's great ones is when they are in trouble, and here they are so in several ways all at once; but as always happens with souls of good-will, trial is beneficial and improving. With the master of the house I have relations such as he has with no other person, and which enable me to see in his great soul things of great beauty and wonderful progress. That is why, *entre nous*, I often come here : he often needs me, and the Master's service is involved.

Still, that is no reason for forgetting my child of — : and who of those here below can be more mine than she ? Surely, no one.

Your grief over the memory of —, your mental troubles in the arrangement of your father's books, your sorrow of both heart and mind as to the *hardness of heart* of —'s children as to certain scandals, all these things, my child, have stirred me deeply. But all of this implies an amount of grace which sometimes detaches, sometimes humbles sometimes exhorts and uplifts, and always brings you nearer,

## Letter 151

either sensibly or insensibly (especially insensibly), to Him who is our all. . . .

Here are the feasts of Pentecost, the Blessed Trinity, the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart.

Pentecost : *regnum Dei intra vos est. Spiritum nolite extinguere ; nolite contristare Spiritum !*<sup>1</sup>

The Blessed Trinity : the unfathomable abyss in which we must lose ourselves and find ourselves again one day for ever. *O beata Trinitas !*<sup>2</sup>

The Blessed Sacrament : *Se nascens dedit socium, convescens in edulium.*<sup>3</sup>

The Sacred Heart : love, the hidden cause of all the rest : *Sic Deus dilexit mundum.*<sup>4</sup>

Let us enter into all these mysteries, and remain in them as much as ever we can : we shall only leave them too quickly behind us. I bless you, my child.

151

June 5, 1890.

*Figlia buona*, very great hindrances were needed to prevent me from writing back to you on the impulse of the moment directly I had read your letter, or what I might call the cry of your soul. Oh ! how well I understand your anguish ! To love above everything the One only amiable, and in this love to find a reason for doubting His word, because it seems to you irreconcilable with Love Himself,

<sup>1</sup> The kingdom of God is within you. Quench not the Spirit ; grieve not the Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> O Blessed Trinity !

<sup>3</sup> By birth He became our Companion, by living with us, our food.

<sup>4</sup> God so loved the world.

## The Way of the Heart

what torture this must be! And what am I to say? I cannot change a single iota of the Gospel, where Hell fills so much room, and where Love fills up the whole! We can only fly to Love Himself to harmonize what seems to us mutually exclusive. He has infinite means of doing it, and if He is pleased to make use of such as we do not suspect, and such as the letter of dogma apparently does not admit of, let us leave it to Him. How many believers will owe their salvation to their belief in hell! As to those whom this belief troubles, God only asks them to fling themselves into His love.

I have only a minute to-day, so I confine myself to this minimum reply.

Here is Corpus Christi: *dedit fragilibus corporis ferculum, dedit et tristibus sanguinis poculum*.<sup>1</sup> If you are among the *tristes*, take deep draughts of this consoling beverage.

152

July 7, 1890.

I am not yet back at Louville for good. I came for yesterday's First Communion, and I am leaving again to-night, to return finally on Saturday. But it seemed better to write to you from here, where I now always find something of you mingled with the memories of so many others who are dear to me. I also want to tell you something of yesterday's impressions. At first I hardly expected anything more than a pious routine duty, and yet here was awaiting me the visit of Him whom I received for

<sup>1</sup> He gave the frail His flesh as food,  
He gave the sad to drink His blood.



## Letter 152

the first time in this church thirty-eight years ago. Yes, my heart found Him again in a way in which it has not done for ever so long, and I felt both the power and the sweetness of prayer, and a steadfast confidence in the goodness of the *heart of Jesus*. Oh, how much I needed and still need this confidence, for I have immense things to win for souls, and some desperate business which I commend to you, my child.

In the evening, after the ceremony, which was indeed beautiful and touching, I received the children and all the people as usual. The congratulatory address, read by a child, but very well composed by the parish priest, I believe, struck a tender chord in recalling the time-honoured links between the inhabitants and the manor-house. My niece and her daughter were by my side. In replying, I was deeply moved and could not conceal it, but I was happy, in returning thanks for this homage paid to the past, to be able to set before these good folks the future.

Saturday's downpour gave way to mild weather yesterday, and the evening turned out splendidly fine. When everyone was gone, I went into the park to say my breviary, and then indulged my fancy all alone, lulled by the infinite sweetness of the air, the charm of a brightening sky, and the magic of past memories.

I felt my own dear ones about me, without regretting that I could see them no more, thinking that they were better off where they are, and that I was on the way to rejoin them. And while I was enjoying this consolation, which God approves,

## The Way of the Heart

methinks, your memory came back to my heart, and I planned confiding to you the record of one of the best days of my life, coming after many others of much sadness during these last few weeks. I know well you will not think it egoism on my part to speak to you 'hus of myself, since I do it to give you a share of what is good. When will you have an hour of joy and light? If it depended on me, you would not have to wait long. But how much better is it that this does not depend upon me! He on whom it depends not only loves infinitely more, He loves infinitely better; and if He makes us wait, it is to repay us with usury.

. . . I bless you, my child.

153

July 29, 1890.

. . . Probably I shall come to you on the afternoon of the 6th. . . . Something strongly attracts me to —, and I do not at all want to give it up. Will a day come when you will be tired of receiving me? I am not very afraid of it; but that would be needed to keep me away.

*Poverina!* Your style of philosophy perhaps rather slices up reason. It is not true that all our knowledge is purely *relative*. this is the great *rational* heresy of the day. But if instead of *relative* you say incomplete, partial, inadequate, and obscure, you will be quite right, and all the rest of your fine thesis holds good. With our intelligence we only attain truth by stripping, dissecting, and killing it; with our heart, we seize it tentatively, but as an

## Letter 154

entire whole, living, real, active ; hence this is best for all of us ; for you, it is the one thing to do.

Be on your guard against regretting the dispersion of your life. Since God does not ask you to do any work which is hindered by it, you have only to let yourself feed. Therein are treasures of renunciation, of inward humiliation, of the spending of oneself in charity ; it means sanctification, reparation, love, which find their food ready cooked, and have only to feed on it.

Write soon, and then writing will be followed by speech. That will be a good thing, and no time will be lost, is it not so ?

154

August 14, 1890.

I had no time at Chartres to write to you as I did to your mother. And yet my heart was quite full : full of your anxieties, full of the graces of Lourdes and of Chartres, which will always be very great (even though I may obtain none of the things I so earnestly prayed for), for they have given me much for my soul, which is above all full of the deep and intimate sacrifice demanded of you. . . . And it is in vain that my friendship of heart makes me shudder for you ; I approve of that sacrifice, and am not cruel in doing so, for I know that you will be eternally glad in heaven for having made it. And I thank God for enabling me to see along with you these hidden things. . . . The *unity* of your life comes out more clearly in my eyes from year to year in these progressively increasing demands upon you. This morning was the Mass of the Octave of

## The Way of the Heart

St. Laurence, and in reading the Epistle over again I saw your whole story in it, in spite of myself. If you would not reap sparingly, you must not spare the seed. If you have promised (*destinavit in corde suo*) you must pay joyfully with a magnanimous heart (*hilarem datorem*). And this surrender of all one's interests is a good investment (*potens est enim Deus omnem gratiam abundare facere in nobis*<sup>1</sup>), and I saw beforehand the riches of grace reserved for you by this fresh renunciation: *multiplicabit semen vestrum et augebit incrementa frugum justitiæ vestræ.*" Oh! read the Epistle over again. . . .

Once more, my child, my heart is full of your anguish, full of the sojourn which was indeed really willed by God. I commend to you all the anxieties of others which I went to Lourdes and Chartres to offer, and I take on myself to do the same for yours.

155

August 20, 1890.

I feel more and more obliged, my child, to embrace a life of austerity myself; since I so often plunge you into more absolute austerity of life, ask for me to obtain this grace. I have great difficulties in reconciling my inward with my outward duties, not only in reconciling the life of prayer with the life of service, but austerity with kindness. Oh! what delicate problems there are in a life vowed to God

<sup>1</sup> "God is able to make all grace abound in you" (2 Cor. ix. 8).

<sup>2</sup> "He will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice" (from the *Epistle* of the Feast of St. Laurence).

## Letters 156 and 157

while devoted to men ! When I am reminding my brethren of the priesthood of their sacred obligations, and when I am labouring to dress their spiritual wounds, then it is that I most feel my own.

### 156

August 23, 1890.

Oh ! you have indeed suffered, and I am not complaining of it. But I rather begrudge your reproaching yourself for this suffering. What ! you have to make the most intimate of sacrifices, and you expect to feel no anguish ? Is it to pass like a letter in transit ? But then it would not be really serious. Did not the Master know such anguish when *His hour came ? Et quid dicam ? Pater salvifica Me ex hac hora ? Sed propterea veni in horam hanc.*<sup>1</sup> Come, come, we must not be Jansenists. When the Master means to immolate a heart, He first of all looks for a heart which has something to immolate. And if you had not trembled, it would have been because there was nothing to immolate.

I expect to be alone at Louville, where they say there is an epidemic of typhoid, which I dread for my relatives.

### 157

September 6, 1890.

You have spoken to me only of myself, and I have listened with gratitude to what came from your heart. Now we must resume our real correspondence. My health is excellent, and the general

<sup>1</sup> " And what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour ? But therefore came I to this hour " (John xii. 27).

## The Way of the Heart

position is stationary, with a tendency to improve. There are no fresh cases, and several of the sick seem to be on the way to recover.

Your word from St. Angela's did me good ; the last few days my soul has been deeply stirred. Like you, I felt that God was asking a great deal of me after showering gifts on me to an infinite extent. I caught a glimpse of a great sacrifice ; like you, I shuddered ; like you, I ended by making *the offers of great price of the Contemplation of the Kingdom*, and it helped me to hear you say : " Not for nothing have I been loved and chosen." I am now quite calm again, and have set to work afresh.

158

September 10, 1890.

Why should you think my cares make your disclosures of soul any less interesting to me ? Have you indeed forgotten what I often tell you, that everything of yours is good for me, everything helps me, even when you ask for my help ? Be sure, that never will an echo coming from you find me too busy, or unwilling, to receive it.

. . . The text that struck you : *Intellectum tibi dabo*,<sup>1</sup> had often attracted my attention, and I had used it in my retreats. But the *firmabo super te oculos meos*<sup>2</sup> explained to you better than I could have done the Master's will as to yourself. It is a look of mercy, of love, of predilection, but into which there enters an urgency, a firmness, a constancy, in the design He has formed of emptying you of

<sup>1</sup> " I will give thee understanding " (Ps. xxxi. 8).

<sup>2</sup> " I will fasten mine eyes upon thee " (*ibid.*)

## Letter 159

self, and of devoting you to a work that is not yours. This text is completed by another of Ps. cxxxviii: *Tu formasti me, et posuisti super me manum tuam.*<sup>1</sup> After having fixed His look upon you, that is to say, His choice, the Master laid His hand upon you, that is to say, His power, and He led you where you would not: *et ducet quo tu non vis.*<sup>2</sup> And He is now waiting for you to tell Him that you really do want Him. . . .

. . . And what about Louville? We are hardly making any headway. . . . I took the parish priest's place while he was away for a day and a half. I visited all the sick, and heard several confessions. The people were pleased. I much wonder at the feeling of latent faith to be found at bottom in these poor souls. This plague will do them real good. I should like to carry matters further this winter by arranging for a mission. You will help me, won't you? by recommending this delicate affair to Him whom it concerns.

159

September 17, 1890.

. . . I have been quite alone . . . but I shall soon cease to be so. One friend is coming this evening . . . another on Monday . . . I shall be glad to see each of these friends for his own sake. But I am almost sorry my solitude is about to end, though the anticipation of it, when I first heard of the epidemic, seemed depressing. This is not only because one

<sup>1</sup> "Thou hast formed me, and hast laid Thy hand upon me" (verse 5).

<sup>2</sup> "And He shall lead thee whither thou wouldst not" (John xxi. 18).

## The Way of the Heart

gets accustomed to anything, and that custom brings one to like it ; it is especially because the solitude was full of God and things divine, and I would not change it to-day for the most joyful of family meetings. You can now tell " mother " the epidemic is over. We have now only *eight sick cases* (we had as many as 34 at once, at least 50 were attacked, and 10 are dead). Even the eight are much better, and by the end of the week I hope they will all be convalescent.

Did I tell you that I have got the parish priest to have a public novena to the Sacred Heart and to St. Roch for the twofold purpose of supplication and reparation ? We began it the day before yesterday. All who are well, and are not kept back by having to tend the sick, come to it. After the evening prayers, I give an instruction on the great truths of salvation, then the prayers of reparation are sung, and Benediction follows. It is a real mission in a small way, and fills me with joy. I end by thinking myself the happiest of men, and I should gladly subscribe myself as parish priest of Louville, or still better of ——. But such desires are those *of nature*, and we must bear the load God puts on our shoulders and no other.

On Monday you will pass by Angerville twice. On your journey each way send your guardian angel towards Louville. Mine and the Angel of Louville will go to meet him, and, as the children say, they will *exchange all friendly greetings for us both*, will they not ? Is not a friendship knit by God a good thing ? Father and friend, I feel that I am indeed both to you.



## Letters 160 and 161

### 160

September 27, 1890.

You have finished your retreat at —, and we have done our novena at Louville, the supernatural success of which has risen *crescendo* to the end. One of these days I shall send you the act of honourable amends which was the epilogue. It summed up all the instructions I had given.

Unfortunately, circumstances did not admit of a general clearing the decks with confessions. I propose, with the assent of the parish priest, going over the ground afresh this winter with a three weeks' Redemptorist mission. Already there is one man who declares that he will never again miss Mass on Sunday, and he went to communion last Sunday.

If you only knew how much I like the concord, "the pre-established harmony," between — and Louville. It is the outward reproduction in a practical way of the inner harmony which you know so well as existing between two souls.

I shall begin my retreat on the 9th, and end it at Chartres on the 25th, the anniversary of my ordination.

### 161

October 12, 1890.

A week ago I was sending you a farewell from Louville. Louville, Chartres, —, there are three rendezvous of our hearts and souls: I forgot to put Clamart on the list, and that was quite a mistake.

I went there on Thursday after the ceremony at

## The Way of the Heart

Marly, from which I took away a sorrowful impression. . . .

Well, now we are going on with our discussion. You persist in thinking you can do no good because you have no "assurance and sense of faith." But what if you have Love? Is not that enough? There are other ways of explaining want of success. In the South, I knew a saintly priest who had the simplicity of a St. Francis and many of his virtues. He was sixty years in charge of the parish of Maraussan, from his twenty-ninth year until his death at eighty-four. His parish was Christian when he began; he witnessed the wasting away and extinction of religion, owing to political, economic, and moral causes, with which he had nothing to do. Everyone venerated him, even the communards of the place. But the girls he had brought up no longer came to confession after marriage. Our Lord Himself willed to experience the suffering of a barren ministry; He was never able to do anything with the people of Capernaum. The mystery of the dispensing of grace is a thing no one can see through. Our Master does not ask you to succeed, but to toil in His service; and the less we succeed the more we toil. Lastly, He Himself has said: one soweth, and another reapeth. *Ergo* you are wrong.

The retreat goes on in great calmness, with no *emotion*, and yet it is entirely dominated by the thought of Love. All the meditations inevitably return to that. After twenty-five years I see clearly that it was an adorable caprice on the part of Him, who is accountable to no man, to take me for His instrument, and to retain His predilections for me

## Letter 162

in spite of all my inconstancy and resistance, etc. :  
I feel that this divine caprice will outlast my life,  
and I infer that it is high time to decide in His  
favour and to satisfy His desires. And this reason-  
ing applies to you as well, is it not so ?

162

DEAR MADAME,

*October 27, 1890.*

I reproach myself for not thinking yesterday that the 26th of October, a day of no particular significance to me, was the eve of another day which reminds me of your great sorrow. Anyhow, I would not have this day go by without sending you a word of sincere and affectionate sympathy. How long must these six years have seemed to you ! How distant must your past happiness appear ! If you have suffered much in the meantime, God has given you great graces ; He has been constantly taking a larger place in your life. It has drawn you nearer in spirit to your beloved daughter, who already had all your heart ; He has associated you with all her charitable works, and inspired you to help her with a great generosity both of heart and purse. None of it all is lost, either for yourself or for her, or, I am sure, for him you mourn. No one was ever nearer to the Gospel in goodness and in heart ; he was so near it, that he was within it without knowing it. God must have shown him this ! Yours with all affection and respect.

## The Way of the Heart

163

April 24, 1891.

After ten days in Rome, one cannot write as one would, nor when one would. . . . I shall leave in time for Paris on Wednesday. I shall have two hard months of overwork before resuming a life of recollection and of spiritual, intellectual, and physical renovation at Louville. But amidst all that, we will keep *touch*—shall we not? I am as much in earnest about it as you are.

The passage of St. John of the Cross you quote is a capital programme which it is no one's business to lay down for another, but which the inward Master proposes to whomsoever He pleases, without having any regard to their precedent merits or preparation. And the peculiarity of the programme is that, as soon as it is proposed, it is also imposed on one; it goes on of itself through all inward and outward events; it drags its victim along with it and does not allow him to stop at a form of spiritual life which suffices for others, and which he would get on with much more comfortably.

164

May 20, 1891.

Yes, *vado ad Patrem*<sup>1</sup> is a formula of the right stamp, which you may be satisfied with; it implied this other, *exivi a Patre*. "I came from the Father"—that means faith. "I go to the Father"—that means love. He who says the second unconsciously possesses the substance of the first. . . .

I give you the Holy Ghost as master and guide

<sup>1</sup> I go to the Father.

## Letter 165

with all my heart. I am only restoring to Him what He has made for me. Was it not He who willed you to find a guide in one who knows not how to guide himself? Only, I should not be faithful, if, on the pretext of allowing Him to act, I were not to intervene at all myself.

One shivers, and this wretched weather is enough to give one the blues. But at the bottom of one's heart is a corner where it is never altogether dark or cold; and there I greet and bless you.

165

*Figlia mia,*

August 8, 1891.

The wretched article took me all day yesterday, and I begrudge it all the more because, though it has caused delay, it is not worth much. I was led to write it from a desire to be useful, but the subject was too vague and ill-defined. I should have done better to give it up, and to speak to you out of the abundance of my heart. What I say to you is never wasted. He who gave me your soul allows my words, without my being aware of it, to achieve what is needed. This feeling of mutual adaptation between us was never keener than now, *non é?* This visit was marked by the making of no notable confidence; nothing remarkable took place, and yet was not the bond between us really stronger and sweeter when we parted than when we met? This, you see, was because there are no more *jerks* required for your progress, and you have only to be gently established in the path laid down, and that is work which goes on unperceived.

## The Way of the Heart

Certainly, you have a heart made for the ample enjoyment of human affection, but it is capable of much better things. Hence, if anyone tries to make use of your capacity for loving against your vocation, he understands nothing of inward matters, and he shares the worldly prejudice which makes the exclusive love of the sovereign Good a last resource to compensate for the withered fruit of earthly love. On such grounds, St. Teresa would have been *beneath* the rôle of an earthly bride, and, for want of being able to aspire to such a position, must have fallen back upon the *hunger-cheat*, called union with God. Those who think and speak thus blaspheme what they are ignorant of. And do not tell me St. Teresa was St. Teresa, and such an one is just what she is. I reply, it is no question of what we are worth, but of what God works within us, and of what He wills of us.

Come, here we are back to our give and take once more : do not let the matter drop for want of practice. I bless you, *figlia*.

166

*Figlia mia,*

August 13. 1891.

You do well to begin writing again as soon as anything comes into your head or heart.

What a pity I was not there to read Brunetière with you ! I have indeed read him with the most lively interest. As you say, he touches on everything, but here and there he strikes a note by the way which sends a chill to one's heart.

I do not quite see how the God of Descartes makes it difficult to conceive original sin. Generally the

## Letter 166

uninitiated speak of original sin without knowing what they are talking about. It is only a privation of the gratuitous gift of sanctifying grace. Adam lost grace by his actual sin ; his descendants are born without inheriting such grace, *because of that sin* ; and because they were intended to have it, and a sin has deprived them of it, there is the mark of sin on their origin, that is all. As for miracles, the idea of grace, and the idea of Providence, I cannot see how Descartes excludes them, all the more so seeing that he himself believed in them. It is indeed true that his *mechanical system of nature* has put modern intellects in the way of an absolute determinism which excludes such ideas ; but Descartes, starting with "*I think, therefore I exist,*" was very far from such a tendency.

Where Brunetière is more dangerous and more deceptive (perhaps in all innocence) is where he opposes Bossuet to Richard Simon and takes sides with Bossuet. Bossuet, whose genius was entirely conservative, looked unfavourably on the Biblical criticism that arose with Richard Simon. He gave it a knock-down blow which crushed it among Catholics for two centuries, and left it no chance of developing except in the enemy's ranks. This is what Brunetière rejoices in, because he thinks one must choose either blind belief or destructive criticism. This is not my view, and I am sorry to see poor Richard Simon so badly used. Had he been brought up by more Richard-Simonist Sulpicians, Renan might perhaps have kept the faith. And the work, at which I am collaborating with my brethren of the Catholic Institute and of the Scientific

## The Way of the Heart

Congress, is just that which Brunetière congratulates Bossuet with having crushed in the germ.

Here we are having an intellectual exchange for once. I am quite ready to go on when you are. . . . Do you know that when I read your reflections on the Transfiguration I was once more full of joy on remarking the wonderful sympathy there is between our minds? I always prefer St. Luke's text just for the same reason as you do, because of the words: *facta est, dum oraret, species vultus ejus altera*.<sup>1</sup> And I also feel the same preference for good St. Peter as you do, and for the same motive.

Mgr. X——'s words momentarily grieved me a little. It always goes against the grain to note that many people attribute feelings of selfish umbrage and self-interested disappointment to me. But, pooh! what do men's judgements matter? They will never be as hard upon us as we deserve. If they blame us for faults we are free from, they do not know a great many which are too truly ours. *Nec major es si laudaris, nec minor si vituperaris*.<sup>2</sup>

Poor, or rather happy, Mother X——. Her simple soul now sees all that we are ignorant about. But she loves naught but what we love.

I bless you.

167

August 30, 1891.

You will be unfaithful, if you do not make use of the help which God Himself has provided you with

<sup>1</sup> "And whilst He prayed, the shape of His countenance was altered" (Luke ix. 29).

<sup>2</sup> Nor art thou greater for being praised, nor less for being abused.



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by putting you in the way He obliges you to walk in without consulting you. . . . You must not resist this grace, but abandon yourself to it ; only if, in this interior agony, *appareat tibi Angelus confortans*,<sup>1</sup> you must no more repel him than Jesus repelled His at Gethsemani. The same verse of St. Luke's tells us, *factus in agonia prolixius orabat*.<sup>2</sup> Let us give to this word "agony" its widest sense, as well as to the word "prayed," and they provide you with a complete programme. The more intense the interior agony becomes, the more we must enter into the interior and supernatural life of which prayer is the conscious form—in all this, trust to the voice of him who speaks to you in the name of the Bridegroom, and says : *Beata quae credidisti quoniam perficientur ea quae dicta sunt tibi a Domino*.<sup>3</sup>

Goodbye for the present. I bless you.

168

September 27, 1891.

I must justify my words : "do all the harm you can to the enemy." I said this, and here is the sense in which I said it. Everyone understands me.

I was speaking of our free Universities in France ; I said that under the Ferry laws our adversaries had done us all the harm they could, and I did not blame them for it ; for, if one believes an influence to be

<sup>1</sup> A comforting angel appear.

<sup>2</sup> "Being in an agony, He prayed the longer" (Luke xxii. 43).

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed art thou who hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (Luke i. 45).

## The Way of the Heart

bad, one ought to do all one can to destroy it ; in doctrinal wars as in national wars the question is how to do the enemy as much harm as possible. If our enemies think our schools hurtful to the country, they are right in trying to destroy them ; as for me, I am thoroughly determined to do as much against theirs, if occasion offers. But in reality, the harm they have done us is slight, and it is from our friends that we suffer most, from their indifference, etc. You see it had nothing to do with hatred of individuals. But the *liberal* journalists found fault with my words, because they must find fault with something.

You made out you had nothing to write, and you have proved the opposite in what you have written me. In it I found a great deal of trouble, but the radical fidelity of a soul which has surrendered itself and will not take back the gift.

169

October 2, 1891.

I received your very sad letter yesterday. . . . I ask, Where is most confidence to be found, in walking in full daylight along a well-known road, or in jumping over a precipice into the darkness, relying on someone who says to you : lose yourself in it, and I will come and find you again ? And if your confidence is greater, so too is your love ; for one honours Love only by trusting Him. Write to me soon, even while I am in retreat. Yes, use the Rosary as your weapon.

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## Letter 170

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October 9, 1891.

It grieves me to think, my child, that I am growing fat at your expense, and that here I am finding all the benefits you wish me, while you are becoming more and more fleeced. I am doing all I can not to send in urgent complaints about it to our common Master. I will, however, all that He wills, for you as well as for myself ; but I catch myself muttering at His feet that, were I in His place, I would wish otherwise than He. It is well for a time, I tell Him, to try a poor soul who has made every sacrifice for Thee ; but really, it lasts too long, and Thou forgettest. Then, what does He answer ? My daughter, I must acknowledge that He makes no answer at all, but He fills me with a strange increase of confidence so far as you are concerned, and words such as these come to my mind : *In fide vivo Filii Dei qui dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me.*<sup>1</sup> And these are the two interpretations I give them. The first concerns myself : yes, it is very true that, like all those of my time, I know the difficulty of believing, and the gusts of pagan naturalism or of idealist criticism which come to the brain all of a sudden on any sort of pretext and make one see the world and life and self from an angle which is quite different from that of Christianity. But it is no less true that when it occurs my moral being protests, and my heart and my conscience feel that they are injured along with my faith ; and it is still more true that never,

<sup>1</sup> "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

## The Way of the Heart

never, have I drawn nearer to God with a greater amount of recollection, with a more immediate contact, without feeling that the life of faith pervaded and inundated me, carrying along with it an invasion of love. This, which is the story of all my retreats, is very particularly that of my present one, and from the depths of my being arises the cry : " I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me." Then my vocation, my ministry, the Catholic Institute, Notre-Dame—all that, seems to me to be the logical development of these words, and I willingly repeat with St. Paul : *Vae mihi si non evangelizavero!*<sup>1</sup>

And now for the second interpretation : down by the borders of —— I have a very dear daughter, a true child of my soul, and I know she is being consumed, and is dying away, with not feeling that she believes, and with feeling as if she did not. But, at the same time, I remember that God so loved her as to call her when she was afar off, when she laughed at Him ; so loved her as to draw her into His net and to uplift her with no preliminaries, without any initiation, into the intimacy of commerce with Himself ; I remember too that, amidst the sweetness of that first love, this soul understood the lesson of sacrifice, and surrendered everything, abdicated everything, into the hands of the invisible Bridegroom, and that, from year to year, she has gained an increasing comprehension of what must be given up.

And then, it is God, the Master, the Bridegroom, I hear ; it is He who repeats His Apostles' words, and

<sup>1</sup> " Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel " (1 Cor. ix. 16).

## Letter 171

repeats them speaking of my daughter who is His own. He says them, changing the order of the thoughts: She has loved Me, and given up all for Me; therefore she lives, whatever she may think, she lives really *in the faith of the Son of God*. Faith is believing in things which appear not as yet: *sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium*.<sup>1</sup> Amongst these hidden things that shall appear one day is your faith, my child. While waiting for its appearance, believe me when I say that faith is in you, as I believe and see it, I who am sent to you as the father and shepherd of your soul.

171

November 6, 1891.

*Figlia*, it is indeed an unhappy coincidence that the state in which you are should come about just at this season of the year. You know what November means to me, how overcharged my life is, and just now your trial is wrought up to a paroxysm. . . . *Amen dico tibi*, never was the Master nearer you. . . . As for myself, I have gone through a strange month of October: quite full of the felt and fortifying action of God, and with a succession of sharp sorrows within and without. It has now diminished, but still goes on. I believe it will still be prolonged, and that it must last this year. My retreat prepared me for it, and I no more wish to say *no* to my trial than you do to yours. It is hard for me to tell you in what it consists: it is manifold,

<sup>1</sup> "The substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (Heb. xi. 1).

## The Way of the Heart

connected with my office,<sup>m</sup> with my ministry, with the secrets of several souls, and with my own. We shall be linked together, if each of us carries our own end of the Cross.

172

November 28, 1891.

St. John of the Cross should teach us that the "obscure night" is not an obstacle to separate us from the Sovereign Good, but the road to lead thereto. You must feel what you feel in order to complete your detachment from self, and to lose what little confidence you have in your own strength; but you must not allow that to take away your confidence in God, which should gain by all that the other loses.

While the good God is making your road more rugged than ever, He is smoothing my path, not that my life has become any easier or more cheerful. On the contrary, this year began with bitter sorrows which are now somewhat dispelled, and it goes on with overwhelming work which always leaves me in a strait betwixt incompatible duties, some of which I cannot fulfil without sacrificing others; a hard exercise for the will, and well fitted to keep me from all pride, by making it impossible for me to satisfy myself. But I never felt the influence of my retreat last with such persistence. It is not consolation and spiritual joy, but peace and a feeling of plenitude, that sustain me. I still catch myself sketching out a scheme of reproaches to address to the Divine Master, who helps me too much, and appears to find pleasure in leaving you to row alone through the dark whirl.

## Letter 173

Thank your dear mother warmly for her thanks. She really reads what I write with a mother's eyes.

173

December 17, 1891.

Your last letter was more than consoling, it was almost a gleam of joy for me. I wanted to reply at once. . . . Will my letter find the little twinkle gone, and your soul once more in darkness? Even if it were so, I should not doubt but that amid the night which surrounds it, it is plunged and bathed in true light.

Have you read Loti's book of *Pity and Death*? I have just read it, because he has sent it to me. He sent it me because he came to see me about a priest in whom he is interested, and he wished to thank me, not for what I had done, for I had done nothing, but for my good intentions.

The book seemed to me deplorably empty and childish, in spite of the magic of its style; one feels that it hides a heart that loves, and a soul in desperation at believing in nothing at all; and there it is touching. But how far above the author is his own *Aunt Claire*, who cries so naïvely! Certainly it gives a good position to believers. But the stories of the tabby-cats are ridiculous, and there is not the least bit of philosophy in them. Doubt comes out in the book just for what it is—a disease, not a science; a weakness, not a triumph of mind.

Yours is of another kind; it is a trial: the condition, either permitted or intended, of your self-surrender; your love has to tend towards the harbour

## The Way of the Heart

of the Sovereign Good across its tossing waves. Steer with your will steadfastly towards this supreme end, and let the ship tack from side to side till it draws near the lighthouse.

I know not what more to say about being so behindhand. Hasten to renew the freshness of your soul's portrait which is always before me.

174

January 1, 1892.

. . . I must end with a word of intimate friendship for my daughter, who is indisposed in body, and with her soul in the darkness. Yet I know this soul is always visited by the sweet peace promised to goodwill. And I really think her will is good, but I also believe it might be better, still more faithful, still more resolute in the direction of absolute submission. And this is the austere wish I make for her, and offer God for her with my blessing, asking her to pray that in these special circumstances I may do the pure will of our common Master.

175

January 7, 1892.

*Figlia mia*, your illness seems to linger on. . . .

. . . Nothing is settled so far. . . . It is thought that Mgr. Freppel's presence in Parliament, which was at first of doubtful value, is now becoming necessary, on account of the great problems which no layman is competent to discuss. Hence the question is confined to a choice of persons, and in



## Letter 176

our ranks there is so great a penury of men that no other is found save your humble servant. That is so true, that the only candidate who has any chance of being preferred to myself is deplorable from certain points of view. And if he has any chance, it is because he is being pressed upon the clergy by Cassagnac. In these circumstances, I am utterly divided. When I think of myself, my wishes are like yours; I feel the same apprehensions and the same repugnance. When I consider the matter in itself, I desire the exclusion of the only candidate who can be brought against me.

. . . The prolongation of this uncertainty is indeed painful, and I want my *true friends* to pray for me. I may add that, if I am elected, I should only intervene rarely, and solely in religious questions. I should avoid instead of seeking lobby companionships, and might hope not to compromise the official position the dignity of which is so dear to you.

I owed it to your friendship to give you an explanation which will enable you better to understand the situation in which I am, and my inability to modify it of my own free will.

This letter is for you both, because I know your two hearts are but as one where your friend is concerned.

176

February 6. 1892.

If you are waiting to surrender for a sign from me you will wait until the end of my life or of yours, according to the order in which we may be called to go where there will be no more separation. . . .

## The Way of the Heart

... My child, this new form of the trial of your health is indeed the last thing you would have chosen. *He* has chosen it for you! Remember what I told you: to me it is clear that the Master, who is beginning your training over again from *below*, because He commenced it from above, is now reaching the point of laying the *fundamentum humilitatis*<sup>1</sup> of which St. Augustine speaks in one of the Homilies of the breviary. *Cogitas magnam fabricam construere celsitudinis? de fundamento prius cogita humilitatis. Et quantam quisque vult et disponit superimponere molem aedificii tanto altius fodit fundamentum.*<sup>2</sup> Now, this is a hard lesson, my daughter, but it has to be learnt. One only gains humility by taking advantage of the grace of humiliation. Yes, it is a hard lesson, but love will pervade it with sweetness. . . .

... Here at Louville I have found what I was looking for, leisure and inspiration for work, and also recollection of soul. I never felt more aloof from all I have to face, and I hope God will give me the grace to remain almost as aloof, even when I am amidst the furnace. Just now, and until to-morrow evening, I shall not think about it at all. A few lines addressed to Brest will be very welcome.

<sup>1</sup> The foundation of humility.

<sup>2</sup> From the *Commune Abbatum*. Do you think of building up a great and lofty structure? First of all, think of the foundation of humility. The greater the mass anyone wishes and plans to put upon it, the deeper he digs the foundations.

## Letter 177

177

MY DAUGHTER,

*April 20, 1892.*

You are never an obstacle between God and me, you are a link. You need therefore never use discretion about writing to me. What you write adds, if possible, to the confidence I have as to the issue of your trials. The love of the Sovereign Good will have the last word. He will find a way of justifying your hope, however weak it may seem : it is firm at bottom. It is based upon the sacrifice you have made to it of all that is not His. No, our faculties will not disappear until they have attained their sole object. The ideal that draws us on is no lure, there is no irony at the root of things, there is an order which is sure, although latent, and though its results may be delayed, they are none the less certain.

Your illness, too, will come to an end, and you will get back the strength to serve Him again in outward action. Meanwhile serve Him with patience, with humble and expectant resignation, with steadfast, discreet, and faithful love. Thus you will complete your purification and detachment, and will stablish His reign in your heart.

As for myself, I feel the relaxation caused by rest after excess of activity. I am dull, and cannot get much out of myself. But that does not disquiet me, and I know that God is not far away.

## The Way of the Heart

178

May, 1892.

It would have been more perfect to surrender at once, but physics teaches us that every force acts in time, that no action is instantaneous, and that duration, other things being equal, is proportioned to the resistance to be overcome. Now this law finds its application in morals. The soul does not turn right round without friction, and it requires a certain amount of time to overcome resistance; this time, long or short, can only be curtailed by perfect fidelity, which cannot altogether do away with it. Our Lord gives us an example of this in His agony. . . .

I am quite of the same mind as you as to the difference between the treatment of the *Father* and that of the *Bridegroom*. The latter is much harder and more exacting. But the hour of sweetness will come, and it will be ineffable, perhaps in this world. I say *perhaps*, but I think *probably*.

179

May 22, 1892.

I admire the constancy of God's action with regard to you. On the occasion of each fresh requirement you dread the burden, and you are shown a help; you prepare your offering, and just when you are about to present it, it is taken from you as it were by force, and the Master acts with a high hand. He draws you on, and then withdraws. He takes away everything from you, and seems to conceal Himself from you, and yet you are entirely

## Letter 180

possessed by Him ; and, while more plunged in the darkness than ever, you cannot doubt but that you have been taken possession of ; *amicus sponsi stat et audit eum ; gaudio gaudet propter vocem sponsi!*<sup>1</sup> Yes, I thrill with joy for you, my child, even when you are left in desolation.

I shall be passing not far off on my way to Ligugé. Our angels and our souls will meet.

## 180

June 6, 1892.

I hope your stay at Lourdes will leave a better impression on your mind than your first visit did. Only, let us make matters clear between us. There is no perfection in finding perfection in what is imperfect, beauty in ugliness, worth in the commonplace, the ridiculous, and the mean. If, therefore, you are shocked by more than one person and one thing at Lourdes, do not reproach yourself for feeling thus. Confine yourself to not extending this inward fault-finding to all the devotion, and to all that is connected with the pilgrimages, of the place : on the contrary, look for the Master in all sincerity amidst all these things. Further, shun giving needless expression to criticism, except so far as it may do your companion good to see you are not on the side of stupidity.

And then, my child, cultivate intimacy with *dulcis hospes animae*. The feast of Pentecost is the feast of the inner man, of interior religion, of the

<sup>1</sup> " The friend of the Bridegroom standeth and heareth Him ; he rejoiceth with great joy because of the Bridegroom's voice " (John iii. 29).

## The Way of the Heart

soul of Christianity. The body of Christianity has its wounds, its languors, and its deformities ; it has had them at all times. What is admirable in the saints, who often lived at the worst periods of relaxation and corruption, is that the deformities of the body did not hinder their believing in the sanctity of the soul. S. Gregory VII believed in the virginity of the priesthood, though face to face with a clergy almost universally given up to concubinage ; St. Francis believed in poverty and charity, when face to face with the great ecclesiastical feudatories, as wealthy as they were hard-hearted ; St. Ignatius and St. Teresa believed in contemplative and active love, when face to face with the temporal ambitions of the Papacy and all the relaxations of the Renaissance. They believed, because they looked within rather than without, listened to God rather than men, conversed rather with the Friend who hides than with those who put themselves forward, considered rather what God demands than what the world is ready to concede to Him. Therein, my daughter, lies the great exercise of our faith, which is also the great exercise of our love. The more mankind in the mass refuses the demands of God, the more His chosen friends must dread that they are not giving enough. They must offer more every day. The Master we serve is so extraordinary that in His eyes an act of subtle considerateness done in the secrecy of the heart compensates for heaps of abuses and sins. This is why the action of God on your soul, which is so certain and visible, is the joy of my life. I have wasted many divine treasures, I have refused much to God, but I have given Him

## Letters 181 and 182

you, and when I see how he is taking possession of you I feel unequalled consolation in having done at least that for Him, and in never having doubted the holy destiny He was keeping for you.

I bless you, my child.

### 181

June 11, 1892.

... At last, my child, you are coming to understand that the mystery of the life of God is your concern, and that *His business is yours*. This is as true in the order of contemplation as in that of action: *mea omnia tua sunt, et tua mea sunt*.<sup>1</sup> Therefore: let us firmly lay hold of God's interests in our life, and He will associate us with His in His life.

### 182

June 29, 1892.

... *Bene omnia fecit*.<sup>2</sup> At the same time as He is laying a closer hold on you daily, the Master wishes to give you a wider freedom: *Dominus solvit compeditos*.<sup>3</sup> It is self-love that is our real chain. It is the love of God that sets us free. On this feast of *Love*, let us freely surrender ourselves to the servitude that sets souls free, free to love, and makes them potent by means of love through shaking off their selfishness. I am glad of your stay amidst the mountains, where the serenity of nature reflects God.

<sup>1</sup> "All Mine are thine, and thine are Mine" (John xvii. 10).

<sup>2</sup> "He hath done all things well" (Mark vii. 37).

<sup>3</sup> "The Lord looseth them that are fettered" (Ps. cxiv. 7).

## The Way of the Heart

Yes, it would certainly be good to be together in all those lovely places, but He does not wish to draw our bonds closer by means of such human joys ; we must be satisfied with prose, the amiable prose of . . .

183

August 6, 1892.

How confidently I was reckoning on your letter, and how joyfully I received it ! There is no need for me to tell you this, is there ? But it brought me a new, unexpected, and much greater gladness ! It was that of seeing how the Master's Spirit inspires my dear daughter with just the feelings I desire her to have, and does not allow her to see an obstacle and a wall *hiding God*, just where she ought only to find a chain, a ring attaching her to God, what the doctors call a conductor, and not an insulator. Tell me no more that the beginning of your letter is not " nice," not " amiable " : it is what makes the most exquisite beginning you could think of for the resumption of our correspondence.

Thank you for the parcel : the *Novum Testamentum* is the one I had at the Seminary. It introduced me to the Gospels and to St. Paul, and we have always been good friends ever since. It is now thirty-three years ago.

I bless you.

184

August 12, 1892.

*Sancta Clara, o.p.n.*

Do you suppose, *figlia*, that they were much better times than our own when Francis cut off the tresses

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## Letter 185

of Clara of Assisi and shut her up in St. Damian's ? The families of both saints, the citizens, the peasants, the clergy, the monks, the cardinals, the Popes, gathered around these radiant figures, make an unattractive framework, with but a few fine exceptions, very much as in our own days. The difference, though this is not our fault, is that the rascals were naïve fellows in those days, and when a fair wind blew they all came back straight to the Gospel, while our poor old world is sceptical, and it is no end of a business to get it to believe in anything. Your district, like that of the Beauce, and perhaps even more so, suffers from the evil you know so well, from inability to believe, and unfortunately it is hardly tormented in the least with that other evil which you know no less well, that of the inability of not loving what one can only believe with an effort. Well, since you suffer from both evils, the good and the bad, use the good to make reparation for the bad. I, for my part, will ask God to fill your life with His choice graces, with His most powerful invitations, and also with the sweetest, if He please, and above all to give you a *cor docile*.

I bless you.

185

August 22, 1892.

*Figlia*, how good is our God, and what joys He sends me through you ! It is perhaps very selfish of me to relish such joys, which are the purest and best of my life, when she through whom they come to me is walking so often along a rougher and rougher road, and when it is I who have been so

## The Way of the Heart

unkind as to set her on it. Yet no; I do not reproach myself about it, for what gladdens me is not seeing you suffer, but seeing you taken in hand by the Sovereign Good. Some day, though you doubt it, but some day I am sure that you, my specially favourite child, will be infinitely happy, and your happiness will be made up of your renunciations, of your sacrifices, of your long tramps through the darkness, of the growing demands upon you accepted without felt reward, of your confidence in giving when you seemed to receive nothing in return, and in carrying on your monologues in the darkness, or in hearing by way of answer nothing but new invitations to self-immolation. I shall be looking on at this happiness from my own little corner, and it will make me happy too. Am I then forbidden to rejoice in it beforehand?

Certainly, I did not write that part of Mme. Louise's panegyric for you. But I agree you could not have a better programme for yourself. It is the one assigned you by the Master. When you adopt it, do not forget that you must always tend towards it, even if you never attain to it either completely or constantly. But to be constantly making a fresh start is also a form of fidelity and perseverance. You want me to speak to you of our Master, and I, too, am fond of speaking to you of Him. I am busy with Him at present, preparing my Retreat sermons, and I have more than once recovered the feeling that animated me while I was uttering them. Two ideas seem to me to govern our relations with Him. He is infinitely good, and infinitely obscure to us here below. If we would illumine His obscurity, we only

## Letter 186

thicken the mystery, just as one tangles a skein when one wishes to unravel it. Love does not need to see, but proves to itself the reality of its object by giving itself up thereto. That is true, even of the humblest degree of the spiritual life, at the very threshold of one's conversion ; it becomes truer as one advances ; it is the whole of the formula of the life of perfection.

A Protestant of Geneva, led by his study of the Fathers to doubt his Protestant principles, confirmed in this disposition by the unsatisfactory or evasive replies of his ministers, wrote to tell me of his Catholic leanings, and to inform me of his latest difficulties, which had to do with certain passages of the Fathers. Being unable to reply myself, I forwarded his letter to Père Largent, who sent me an answer in outline. Here I worked out the answer carefully. God permitted it to strike home, and my correspondent writes that he is about to become a Catholic, and probably a priest. You see one can do good work at — and at Louville.

186

*September 18, 1892.*

*In festo Transfixionis B.V.M.*

I know you are fond of September 14, but do you not also like to-day's feast? If Christ crucified draws all men to His Cross, is not His Mother one of the best attractions, when she is found at the foot of the Cross and there shows herself to be our mother? A mother's love standing on the edge of

## The Way of the Heart

an abyss of sacrifice, was not that an idea such as only the Maker of our hearts, who knows them to their deepest depths, could have thought of ?

This morning was the fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, and the Gospel was that of the widow of Naim. In preaching to the people of Louville I was struck by the contrast between the two stories which the liturgy happened to unite on the same day. On the one hand, Jesus restores a son to his mother, and, on the other, the same Jesus obliges His Mother to unite in, and be present at, the immolation of her Son. And I thought that, by the bier of Naim, the Master was exercising the beginning of His mercy, the mercy by which He attracts souls by consoling them in their sorrows ; and that at the foot of the Cross He was exercising the mercy He shows midway, the mercy by which He teaches souls to wish for and to love their sorrows ; and that, lastly, a day will come when He will exercise His final mercy, the mercy by which He transforms all sorrows into joy. And these three types of mercy, which are so unlike in their effects, are only one in their cause, which is Love eternal. How do you like this ?

You would have been wrong, in fact, to give up your journey to Paris because I was not there, when you had a reason in charity for making it. How good is God to teach you as He is doing ! And is not this the most striking proof that He has accepted your offering ? . . . I have been brought near you to lead you in the way of great and increasing detachment.

Therefore, (1) my individuality must never be

## Letters 187 and 188

an obstacle to detachment; (2) my direction will always be a help towards detachment; (3) the Master, who is as gentle as He is hard, and this is saying a great deal, always finds room for affection amidst austerity, since this affection is also His work.

### 187

September 27, 1892.

. . . I am now reading the Commentary of St. John of the Cross on his Spiritual Canticle. It is sometimes lengthy and sometimes over subtle, but it is very fine and very suggestive, and well calculated to encourage you in your way. Have you read it? I will lend it you. It must be taken in quite small doses. One strophe at a time with its commentary.

### 188

October 2, 1892.

. . . I want to take advantage of my spare time this afternoon to answer your cry of distress. *Foris pugnac, intus timores.*<sup>1</sup> St. Paul said that before your day, and you see it did not turn out so badly for him. It did not prevent him from uttering his great challenge: *Quis nos separabit a caritate Christi?*<sup>2</sup> And it appears as if this challenge ought to be your answer to all assaults from within or without. Just now I was reading a conversation in a newspaper between a Belgian Socialist and a Catholic. The former said to the latter: "You are the only adver-

<sup>1</sup> "Fightings without, fears within" (2 Co., vii. 5).

<sup>2</sup> "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 35).

## The Way of the Heart

saries we think anything of. In many things you are promoting the work of social justice, and we will allow you in that respect to carry on our business for us. But when you have swept away all other schools, we shall attack you, and one side or the other will have to go under." "Why so, if we agree together to ameliorate the people's lot?" "Because you will always remain the teacher of the Invisible, because you put man's last end beyond this life, because when you have done all that can be done on earth you pull us up, and preach resignation and hope. But resignation is a bad thing, and hope is deceptive. We have to progress unceasingly on earth, to win for the greatest possible number the greatest amount of happiness; and if effort is to have all possible strength given to it, it must look for nothing from the world hereafter." Why did this dialogue make me think of you, my child? Perhaps, because everything turns my thoughts towards you, but also because you are a living example of the conquering power of the Invisible. He did not ask you for your opinion before clasping you in His arms, before snatching you away from the joys and hopes and loves of this world, to exchange all these things very often for suffering and privation. He does not even allow you to complain nor to think secretly that your lot is too rigorous; He does not allow you to doubt that it is better than any other; He forces you to sing: *funes ceciderunt mihi in praeclaris*.<sup>1</sup> In darkness and in sorrow, He associates you with His work of conquest. He sets you as a sentinel to testify to His reality and

<sup>1</sup> "The lines have fallen to me in excellent places" (Ps. xv. 6).

## Letter 188a

power over man's heart, to cry out to the children of men, that eating and drinking, enjoyment, and even loving, according to the fashion of this world, fall short of man's destiny. And if you have no opportunities of crying out to men, you will yet cry out to God in their name by your sufferings, by your desolation, and this speech will be understood and accepted. *Figlia mia*, at Gethsemani the Saviour was left by His friends alone with His sorrow; but the angel came to strengthen Him. How? by assuaging His grief? by taking the cup from Him? No; by offering it Him as from His Father. I think I have to be such a messenger. I will not remove the cup from your lips, but, in taking it from my hand, you will be still more sure that it is offered you by the hand of God.

## 188a

October 10, 1892.

. . . Yes, the God of Clamart is good indeed. He hides a little, lets Himself be sought after in aridity, amidst the slumber of the soul and body, the will only remaining awake; and then He allows Himself to be approached. It is the will above all that He responds to, kindling it by degrees, and moving it strongly. What is certain is this, that on the evening of the fourth day one is quite different from what one was at the beginning, and one hopes not to become for many a long day what one was before.

I am very fond of your St. Bernard, and I put you in both categories, not among the *errantibus*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Those who are astray.

## The Way of the Heart

and *viam nescientibus*,<sup>1</sup> far from it, but among the *dubitantibus*<sup>2</sup> at the same time as among the *ascendentibus*<sup>3</sup>: you will say, I only feel one thing, that is, *lassesco*.<sup>4</sup> And I reply *lassescis quia ascendis. Et si mente dubitas, corde crede, corde spera, corde teipsam da. . .*<sup>5</sup>

189

October 26, 1892.

The main letter to-day is for your mother, my child, and I do not think she will show it you, and she must not be asked to do so. . . . You, indeed, seem to be more and more in the spirit of the *Deus meus, quare me derelinquisti?*<sup>6</sup> These are not the trials one would wish for oneself or for others; but when God sends them, we must believe, as unyielding as iron, that they are a proof of His love, a means of sanctification, a gain, in fact! And then, such trials are more quickly over than others, and they prepare the way for great graces. So, accept this one with all the train of spiritual privations that accompany your illness. Do not try to anticipate, either by force or by fraud, the time for getting rid of it. Communicate spiritually with Jesus forsaken on the Cross. Let that be your chosen mystery. It is the great exercise of disinterested love, of which it is the better part, at least for a time.

<sup>1</sup> Those who know not the way.

<sup>2</sup> Those who are in doubt.

<sup>3</sup> Those who are ascending.

<sup>4</sup> I am growing weary.

<sup>5</sup> Thou growest weary, because thou art ascending. And if thou doubttest in thy mind, believe in thy heart, hope in thy heart, give thyself in heart.

<sup>6</sup> My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?



## Letters 190 and 191

### 190

MY DAUGHTER,

November 9, 1892.

Here are days of *crisis* back once more until after the Bishops' meeting. . . . Yet I would not have you think your last cry of distress found no echo in my soul. . . . I know God is satisfied with you as you are now, and He will be all the more so if you are brave enough to tell Him that you too are satisfied, and that all is well.

*Figlia*, your Father, and your friend, are neither absent nor asleep; they are quite busy with the thought of you in the thick of all their engrossment with others. . . .

You have said nothing about my "Renan." I was anxious to have your opinion. Do you think I cannot tolerate any criticism?

### 191

November 20, 1892.

Thank God for the news of your speedy return, *figlia*. You will see that your father is neither lost nor changed, that his nature has not been altered by politics, and that his heart is still wide open to welcome the soul which the Master has entrusted to him. *Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur*.<sup>1</sup> If you were in irons for the Master's service, we should have to rejoice for your sake, even if, and especially if, your wrists were wounded. Why should we rejoice less, if your suffering arises from a chain which you accept through love?

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are they who suffer persecution.

## The Way of the Heart

. . . I assure you that the further I go, the broader I am with regard to the mind, and the more strict I am as to the heart. I believe God approves of our thoughts expanding, and of our hearts being His vassals. Everything that binds us sets us more at liberty.

To-day I met with a consolation. A holy priest, whom I was slightly acquainted with, but esteemed much, having lost his director, came to ask me to take his place. I felt I was very unworthy to do so, but I consented, because I think it a duty not to repulse anyone whose confidence is inspired by God. And I found a secret joy in thinking that the poor scattered and torn-asunder individual I feel myself to be could be the object of such a confidence.

I may soon be called upon for a *great* speech ! It may come off in ten days' or a fortnight's time. I want to deal with the attitude of the government and the majority towards Catholics, and *vice versa*. The day before yesterday Pichon and Lavy attacked me on the subject, and I asked to be allowed to speak, but was closed. It was all for the best.

192

December 4, 1892.

. . . When you scratch beneath the surface of your negations you are not slow to find the affirmation of the presence of God, manifested by His demands and by the strength of the tie that binds you to Him. . . . When one has given all, one is always in safety, because all that happens expresses, in unforeseen ways, the acceptance of the giver ;

## Letter 193

because nothing is then useless in life ; because everything has a purpose, an effect, a fruitfulness ; because the unseen world, which is, even in physics, the soul and motive power of the visible world, is guided by latent actions in which the agent knows not what he is doing ; but when the agent is loving and free, he wills and loves what he is doing, without knowing it. I defy you to tell me this is untrue.

### 193

MY CHILD,

February 16, 1893.

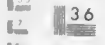
I am often more right than I think, when I tell you what to do. Balaam's ass prophesies. I have often noticed this, and nothing is a greater consolation to me, because nothing proves more clearly that the Master desires His will to reach you through me.

The way, *which is not fatal*, but which is singularly steep and rocky, grows brighter, however, at least at every step to be taken, with a light that *shineth amidst the darkness* without dispelling it, and enables one to see quite clearly where to plant one's foot. Whenever *He* guides you, that is because *He* is good. He would not take the trouble to guide you in order to lead you to destruction. Now this feeling of the certainty of being guided is not less well founded in you than the impression of being abandoned. So say with confidence : *Scio enim quia hoc mihi proveniet ad salutem per vestram orationem et subministrationem Spiritus Jesu Christi ; secundum expectationem et spem meam quia in nullo confundar, sed in omni fiducia, sicut semper nunc magnificabitur*



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## The Way of the Heart

*Christus in corpore meo, sive per vitam, sive per mortem.*<sup>1</sup> When it seems to you to be dark and cold enough for death itself: remember, *sive per vitam, sive per mortem*. These are only means. The end is this: *magnificetur Christus in te*. And when it has been fully attained, then *mors ultra non erit*, and it will go on in the life eternal.

194

May 21, 1893.

. . . So then, *poverina*, you are always having dull and dry times. Yet the rain is beginning to make the fields revive. Has heaven no dew for souls, especially for those who have given up looking for anything from earth? Or, is it not rather that, because they desire God only, they are answered beyond their desires and stripped apparently beyond their strength, but in reality adopted and reared on the dry and strengthening bread of unfelt faith and of love which is unconscious and self-surrendering?

That, indeed, believe me, is the true explanation.

. . . Besides, I have been very anxious about our Institute, and I am also surrounded with friends who are sorely tried, and whose sufferings make my heart bleed. Add to all this an extraordinary excess of work, and you have an account of the four weeks I have just gone through, while I was silent in

<sup>1</sup> "For I know that this shall fall out to me unto salvation, through your prayers, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my expectation and hope; that in nothing I shall be confounded, but with all confidence, as always, so now also shall Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. i. 19, 20).

## Letters 195 and 196

reference to you. Are you not called to co-operate with all that by your suffering of soul? I can hardly doubt it.

195

June 8, 1893.

I received the Josephus in capital condition, and your letters give me news of a sorrowful heart, but of a soul which is in better health than it thinks.

The further I go, the more I am persuaded that the whole rationale of this life, the whole secret of trial, the whole of the essence of virtue, consist in entrusting oneself to the Invisible One, and in giving Him this supreme proof of appreciation, relying upon what looks like a shadow without getting any guarantee against the apparent inconsistency of the absolute. Confidence and generosity are only one. To expect all from God, to give all to God, these are the same thing. It takes a long time to be persuaded of this; when one has got hold of it, one is sound; it is the whole of the explanation of your destiny, the whole of the substance of your vocation, the whole of the reason of your obscurity and of the calls that come to you through it. *Hoc fac, hoc crede et vives.*<sup>1</sup>

I wish you to write to me from Lourdes.

196

June 19, 1893.

*Figlia*, how sad and sorrowful was your last letter from —, but how pleasant to read is your long

<sup>1</sup> This do, this believe, and thou shalt live.

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letter from Lourdes ! Truly the Blessed Virgin has done things well, and if she has not dispelled the shadows, nor got rid of the thorns from your path, it seems clear that she has renewed your inward strength to enable you to pass through the shadows and to walk over the thorns.

Yes, it is indeed certain, that this absolute isolation, this *void*, in which you are forced to live, is the means intended by God to keep you in your way, and if that way is rough it is also wonderfully simple : *abstine et sustine*. You have, both of you, been making a real retreat at Lourdes. You cannot know how happy I am about the attraction that calls and keeps you both near Mary's sanctuary ! Surely, each of you does not find the same thing there, but each one finds what she wants, and this is one more proof that Mary is the gate of entrance to her divine Son.

197

August 5, 1893.

*Figlia*, I am very shocked, yes, very shocked indeed, at your sending me the stamp. I ought to send it back, but I think it *better style* not to follow your example in that line ! Come, come !

Nevertheless, I confess I am quite in merry mood over your letter. As for the letter, it is really a good letter, and as for my good child, the writer is really a good child ; at least, so it seems to me. It is true that the physical and moral trial was not slow to claim its rights ; but a brightness shone, a warmth radiated ; and the Master has made His presence felt by His strange and perhaps stern embrace, an



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embrace, however, which was sweet because it made you recognize it, and say : *Dominus est*.

“Henriette Renan” was my travelling companion. He is really charming. What a pity that his soul and talent have wandered so far astray !

I bless you, my child.

198

August 11, 1893.

I quite entered into your feelings at the death-bed, and I am pleased to have seen the poor and happy child myself. . . . Tell the good grandmother I will pray for her little one, and especially for herself now deprived of “his dear company.” How easy must it be for such a simple Christian as she is to live henceforward altogether in the love eternal !

The suffocating heat has come back once more. I am worrying about all you have to do. After the prize-day you must have some real rest, do you understand ? not to irritate your nerves. Everything is not nerves, and nerves are not everything, but they are instruments of everything. The piano is not the pianist. Still, without a piano there is no music ; and if the instrument is broken, the artist is no good. *Ha capito ? . . .*

As for myself, I am very well.

Do you not like this feast of St. Laurence ? What story is more authentic or wonderful ? It is a tale of the omnipotence of love.

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199

September 9, 1893.

. . . Will you wonder at my saying that I am *very* satisfied with your letter? Perhaps. Still, that is the truth. Not that I am satisfied at seeing you suffer so much. Your *Father's* heart is too *motherly* not to wish humanly your ills to come to an end. But I think you are behaving yourself well under them. . . .

This morning I was meditating on the feast of St. Bernard in the train with true joy. It was transferred till to-day. Yesterday I found nothing to say to the Blessed Virgin, and to-day her faithful servant led me to her by the hand. Will you believe me when I say that, in spite of myself, I did not offer much resistance! I had to finish my meditation with my child of — who is a true daughter of St. Bernard.

200

MY CHILD,

September 14, 1893.

I think to-day is our common feast, and this morning I feel myself irresistibly drawn to say Mass for you and for myself. I was dying to ask for a little sweetness and joy for you. I did not dare to do so, and I confined myself to saying to the Master: "If I were Thou, I would give her some; but, if I were Thou, Thou wouldst not signify much, and it is better after all to depend upon Thee; only love her." One must admit that the way in which He speaks to you is indeed austere. . . . I yearn for you to have solitude and repose. As for myself, just now

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## Letter 201

I have both, and I feel that I am nearer God. I am grieved to enjoy such good when I think of your lacking it. But I like to imagine that the Master will give poor Madeleine what He is refusing you, and that she will have to owe you her reconciliation with death.

And now, my true daughter, let us speak only of Him who is lifted up from the earth to draw all unto Himself. Let us be drawn ourselves, let us urge Him to draw us, and, if we seem not to have left the earth yet, let us cry out to Him incessantly to raise us from it. We shall rise without knowing it, and the less we are aware of it the more shall we rise: hence we must not be discouraged at finding ourselves still so low. It is true that we are low, but if we were less so we should see how low we are all the plainer, because we should more clearly discern the distance between Him and ourselves. This distance can only be bridged on His part by mercy, and on our part by confidence. This confidence, which is so sweet to the heart when it is sensible, so hard but so generous and beautiful when it is only willed, is the all of the spiritual life. *Etiam si occiderit me, in ipso sperabo.*<sup>1</sup> Let this be our motto.

201

September 19, 1893.

Yes, you have indeed discovered the reason of the perpetual *frustrations* which your pursuit encounters. He *wills* you in all things to make an act of reparation for yourself and others. *Qui ambulat in tenebris*

<sup>1</sup> "Though He kill me, I will hope in Him" (Job xiii. 15).

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*nescit quo vadat.*<sup>1</sup> This is not the case with you, because there is no question of this darkness being yours. *Your* darkness is the absence of light that consoles. The darkness of sin and of forgetting God is of quite another kind, and it is of such darkness that the Master is speaking. When one is in *your* kind of darkness, one knows quite well where one is going. One goes towards Him, because it is He who has put one there, and there one is along with Him.

202

September 26, 1893.

Believe me, when I tell you your suffering is pleasing to the Master, that it is a proof of the acceptance of your gift, that it is the work of your vocation, *par excellence*, that it purifies you, detaches you, and attaches you to His service better than all your intentional and deliberate efforts. If this certainty, *which you must possess*, does not give you joy, it should give you peace, the only good promised *on earth* to those of good will.

I am getting a great deal of commendation for my speech, but I can't help thinking that I owe this expression of opinion to Grandlieu's article. I have done many things of quite as much or greater worth, and they have passed unnoticed—they have not even disarmed malevolence; whence I conclude that human opinion is vain, and that it is not the thing to labour for. You will have the speech soon. I shall leave before I have *written out* my conferences;

<sup>1</sup> "He who walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John xii. 35).

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it is more than I can manage ; I cannot set coolly to work so far from the enthusiasm of the moment. This will surprise those who say I am a block of ice ; yet it is a fact. But I have made my plan ; the idea of it is working in my head ; I refer all that I read to it, and do not cease thinking it all out. I feel it will be a success.

203

MY DAUGHTER,

September 30, 1893.

You well know that in Hebrew the future and the past are continually taken for one another. Therefore delight in the most comforting applications of these beautiful passages of Isaias.

How could you be *heretical* in showing your respect for the divine goodness of Him who lives within you ? Are we not shrines, or even living chalices of the Eucharist ? Is not He who possesses you, without so far wishing you to enjoy His presence, indeed the Master who can make others profit by it ? and that, although you cannot seriously maintain that the child does not love you ? She loves you, just in the same way as a delightful naval officer loves me. He has written me from Tahiti such a sad, touching, beautiful, pure, and tender letter, that it made me weep to read it. I will read it to you in Paris. Until then, pray for him. You see I am giving you a great many commissions for prayer ! do them as well as you can, but you must do them.

I was meditating before the Blessed Sacrament on the feast of St. Michael, after getting your letter. While I was thinking over the question, which is

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the name of the Archangel. *Quis ut Deus?*<sup>1</sup> the thought it contains seized me by the throat: "O my God, who is like unto Thee?" Of a truth, no one. But what art Thou for the majority of men? less than nothing! And I was overwhelmed to see how little God is both to the wicked and the good, to the ignorant, the impious, and the faithful. How many ways there are of making nothing of Him, of counting Him as if He were nothing! And I was tempted to ask Him reproachfully to give some explanation of this, and to say to Him: "Thou shouldst not allow Thyself to be thus neglected! How canst Thou expect us to consider Thee of some account, and of all importance, when Thou keepest Thyself entirely in the background?" And then I seemed not to hear, but to catch a suggestion, as it were, in the shadow before me, of the answer: "I do not show Myself in the way in which thou expectest. I act as I will, when I will, and always by love. Love revealed Me to the saints, love it is that has revealed Me to My friends of to-day, and love it is that will reveal me to those who know Me not or speak ill of Me. Seek not to understand, but to love; give Me your pledges, take up My interests, do My work, speak to Me, even if I am deaf; look towards Me when I am concealing Myself; My answer and My light will find other ways of reaching thee than those thou expectest. Give all thou canst, and know that nothing is lost!"

I send you this reply for what it is worth. I believe it is a very good one, and think it comes from Him.

I bless you.

<sup>1</sup> Who is like unto God?

## Letter 204

204

MY CHILD,

October 13, 1893.

Your letter reached me just as I was leaving Chartres. There I took you with me to Notre-Dame of the Pillar, and to Notre-Dame of the Crypt. But then came a rush. . . . Such is my story since I last wrote.

Here I am in Paradise with my saintly friend Dom Gréa. How I wish I could change you into a fly or an ant to let you pass into the enclosure and assist at the choir-offices and at the meals of the community! There all is innocence, joy, serenity, and angelic ardour! There are children, young people, grown men, and all have such a happy look in their life of austerity; fasting strictly, rising every night at midnight, singing God's praises at all times, working, praying, loving. There is a broad-minded spirit here; they study seriously; they feed on the marrow of lions, on the traditions of the earlier ages. Yes, indeed, you would say: "God is indeed served and loved in some places!" for I know you, *figlia*, all this would please you.

But amidst all this I am doing my exercises in silence, in perfect freedom, with no other distraction except brief talks with my saintly friend. I am trying to lay up good and ample stores for the winter, and I will loan them out to you, and, in case of need, we will go shares.

What a beautiful death was that of the poor little Madeleine! This morning I said Mass for her, and also for her parents; tell her mother this. Oh! how comforting it is to console and love the poor!



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My daughter, I believe the good God must have indeed spoken by His ass, and that you did a good work in this house of mourning. But why must you have such another busy month of October? I am so anxious for you to have some rest! But it cannot be. Always to be toiling, and running about, and torn asunder, and giving up self, and repressing oneself, and in poor health! Well, yes; if it be God's will.

Oh! how glad I was to get your furtive admission that in spite of your gloom you are happy in the happiness of God: it is a sign of His reign over you, it is the chosen justification of His severity in your case. *Bene omnia fecit.*<sup>1</sup>

Yes, I promise for you the same things as I promise for myself. I do not surrender myself without surrendering you. I do not pledge myself to go to Him by the way of self-abandonment and self-sacrifice, without pledging myself to lead you to them. And on all occasions, especially on such as are hard, we will say together: *Voluntarie sacrificabo tibi et confitebor nomini tuo Domine, quoniam bonum est.*<sup>2</sup> *Figlia*, how good would it be to have a talk now! If you were only in a certain convent of *Antonines* down in the valley! we would have a confabulation in the parlour! Unfortunately, we must wait till December, and then we shall have cooled down again.

Kind regards to your mother, best wishes to all, the Father's blessing for yourself.

<sup>1</sup> He hath done all things well.

<sup>2</sup> "Gladly will I sacrifice unto Thee and give thanks unto Thy name, O Lord, for it is good" (Ps. liii. 8).



## Letter 205

205

MY CHILD,

November 22, 1893.

I am writing to you from the Charing Cross Hotel. But my letter will travel with me and only be posted in Paris. . . . I reached Stowe at ten this morning, and left at three for London, where I am dining on my way to Dover for the crossing. It is a long journey for such a short stay. I need only tell you that it is for the service of our common Master.

Your last letter, my child, gave me much joy, not that I did not share the tortures of Tantalus with you at that excellent evening party where we were unable to exchange any talk, but because I perceive in your letter, or rather I feel in it, that though there is a lack of brightness, yet there is a gleam of pure faith, which makes it plain that you now are coming to have only one need, to serve God, and that the rest has no value apart from that ; and that, if He cuts off all the rest, it is because being deprived of it is better for you at the time than being assisted. Yes, this is the point of view of pure faith, and I would gladly say to you : *Beata es quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi ; sed Pater noster qui in coelis est.*<sup>1</sup> And the proof that this gleam in you is not the result of any illusion is this, that it enables you to do without the help of pure consolation when it is taken from you, and at the same time shows you the use of the real help of direction when it is given you ! This propriety and proportion are the mark

<sup>1</sup> Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee ; but our Father who is in heaven (*cf.* Matt. xvi. 17).

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of *His* mind, not of yours. So then, *figlia*, abandon yourself to this guidance, and let your generosity consist in increasing confidence. All virtue and perfection lie for you in the *scio cui credidi*.<sup>1</sup> As partings and meetings are ordered by His Providence, we can and ought to rejoice in meeting, just as we acquiesce in parting, and say with St. Paul, who certainly thought of everything : *scio esurire, scio et abundare*.<sup>2</sup>

And now I must leave you. I will close my letter in Paris. I may intervene in Jaurès' interpellation. Between the funeral and the Parliament I should never have the time to write, if I had not already done so from here.

I am opening my letter in the House. I am not going to speak. I had a very good journey, and a good rest by going to bed at three o'clock.

206

January 5, 1894.

. . . I own the Biblical affair is not so pleasing. But that is now happily over. I know, not only from the Pope's letter, but from my correspondents at Rome, that the Holy Father was very satisfied with our address, and that we are, thanks to his paternal resistance to the efforts of our enemies, safe from any condemnation.

And if you tell me I purchased this security by a disavowal of myself, I reply that, even if it were so,

<sup>1</sup> " I know whom I have believed " (2 Tim. i. 12).

<sup>2</sup> I know how to be hungry, I know how to abound (cf. Phil. iv. 12).

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it never dishonours a son to acknowledge himself in the wrong to his father. But, in reality, I add that, if I regret that we are prevented from using in the defence of the Holy Scriptures certain expressions that are convenient for apologetic purposes, such as saying that, in matters *not religious*, there may be errors in the Bible, I do not see that the case for the sacred cause, which is so dear to me, is by any means lost. The encyclical allows us full latitude in the *interpretation* of difficult passages in Holy Writ, and, with such interpretations as it gives examples of itself, one can, if not as conveniently at any rate as effectively, grant science its just rights.

To tell the truth, that is all that seems to me of importance, for to hinder the malicious from exploiting the pontifical document against me appears to be a matter of little interest, as also it is impossible. *Nec major si laudaris, nec minor si vituperaris*<sup>1</sup>: this is, and must be more and more, my motto.

I am not one who is persecuted by the Church. I am her child, and happy in being so. Dogmatic authority is a strength and security far more than a hindrance. Without it, what would remain of Christendom? Orthodox Protestantism itself lives to-day on what we have preserved for it. But having nothing but a dead letter to confirm it in its faith, it is obliged to understand it in a much narrower sense than we do, otherwise everything would crumble away. As for *liberal* Protestantism, it has come to be free thought. And the day the Roman sentinel ceases to watch from the top of his

<sup>1</sup> Thou art not the greater for being praised, nor the less for being blamed.

## The Way of the Heart

tower, Christianity will soon be reduced to the vague aspirations and hollow idealism of Paul Desjardins. If we need the Gospel with its gentle and sublime ideal, and you, *figlia*, are not one to deny the need, we must acknowledge that it is dogma alone, and the living dogma of the Church, that preserves it to us. So all is well.

As for yourself, my child, I am not afraid of your darkness. The future will show you you have been a good Catholic, because you have sought God in such ways as were open to you ; and because, as to the rest, you placed yourself in the hands of a guide given you by *Him*.

207

February 7, 1894.

. . . So I am not going to tell you not to think this, not to feel that, for that would be impossible for you ; but I shall tell you, in spite of what you think and feel, not to leave off tending towards Him who must be your all. Do not voluntarily put out any gleam of light, do not voluntarily silence any attraction you may feel. Lastly, pray. There seems to me to be some one of whom you have scarcely thought during this crisis, I mean the Mother of Mercy. I wish you would one day call upon her for me at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and show her your soul in its sick state (though less seriously ill than you think). . . . All that I say to you does not at all hinder me from keenly feeling the difficulties of belief, and from having much ease in entering into the whole of the current of modern scientific thought, so far as it is opposed to revelation

## Letter 207

and to all positive religion. But I also feel very acutely that that is a *temptation*. Why? Because I could not follow this declivity without sacrificing my conscience. The state of mind of your dear father, the spirit of Cousin and of Rousseau, cannot be our state of mind. If science is applied with strictness, submitting everything to *evolution*, morality must go along with all the rest. This, too, is what the new heads of the school say, and Renan quite agreed with them. I have just read Dr. Letourneau's false and odious book on the evolution of marriage: what clearly comes out in it is that his philosophic and scientific method does not leave a *single* axiom of morality still standing. He is perfectly logical, and all those who stop halfway are not so. If, then, I ceased to believe in the Gospel, I should give up believing in God and in duty next day, or the very same day. I cannot admit that this would be a good thing. Then, I do well to believe. *I do well*; that means voluntary and meritorious action. For an act to be reasonable, I must have good reasons for believing; and for it to be an act of morality and of merit, I must make an effort to do it, and have a difficulty to overcome. The difficulty specially arises from the fact that, from one point of view, some of our dogmas seem to be somewhat childish. In the light of the hereafter, we shall see them under another aspect. Then, all will be great and worthy of God. But here below, this form was required for religion to be popular; otherwise God would have had to make two revelations, one for the simple, the other for the learned; and a third for grocers and members of Parliament.

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I am inclined to push symbolism as far as the Church allows, no further ; and where the literal sense is binding, I adhere to it, even if it be sometimes rather difficult, because I feel that I should betray the whole cause of the good, of duty, and of virtue, if I were to break the sole strong bond which can unite us to God here below, I mean, the Christian faith.

This is exactly my state of mind. It seems to me sincere, and it leaves me full liberty to preach the doctrine of my Master Jesus Christ in all sincerity.

208

June 12, 1894.

What a trial your dear mother's illness must be !

... *Poverina!* That feeling of being chilled to the heart seizes you when your future isolation comes upon you as likely to occur possibly soon. Oh, how well I enter into it ! And that it is no reason for looking backwards and for reproaching the Master, there is the fact that it is one more proof that it is *He* who has taken possession of you. It is *He* who permits and who wills you to suffer. He does not hinder trouble from disturbing your soul superficially, nor obscurity from overshadowing it altogether, but He hides deep below the feeling *scio cui credidi*<sup>1</sup>; and if it is not sweet, it is strong, and it is enough to make peace rule deep down in these depths.

... For the last twenty years I have been led by the force of circumstances exactly in the opposite direction to what appeared to me to be reasonable

<sup>1</sup> " I know whom I have believed " (2 Tim. i. 12).

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and in conformity with the interests of my ministry. I have striven as well as I could, and I begin to tire of the useless struggle. . . . *Alius te cinget et ducet quo tu non vis.*<sup>1</sup> This text is your motto, your consolation, and why should it not be mine ?

209

DEAR MADAME,

August 6, 1894.

I must tell you once more how my stay with you seems to soothe me, how it gives me peace and repose, especially when you are good enough to understand that all I care to see is you two. When we read together in the evening, I fancy I am back once more with my mother and sister, whose needle plied its work on the frame, while I was giving them whole volumes to devour.

. . . The lieutenant was waiting for me at the station in full uniform ; he welcomed me with the simple joy of a child, and showed me his poker-work pictures on wood—they are wonderful—and then afterwards, innumerable photographs of his travels in Egypt. Then, after dinner, he played Beethoven wonderfully, and Schumann and Chopin, until he left. I told him of our musical evenings, and that he ought to come to see *us* next year, and he did not say no. He is the spoilt child of the Muses : musician, artist, philosopher, historian, chemist, and with all that not happy because he is omnivorous and gets to the bottom of everything.

. . . All these details can only interest a *mother*. I tell you, it is all your fault.

<sup>1</sup> "Another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not" (John xxi. 18).



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August 6, 1894.

In the service of such a Master, and when one has received such graces (for calls are graces : *Magister adest et vocat te*<sup>1</sup>), the least infidelities, if conscious and entertained, demand an expiation, and no one understands, as well as He, how to make one expiate. For this purpose He uses love itself, and in this it is that Purgatory consists. Now, Purgatory is as much on this side, as on the other, of death. Only on this side, it is much more merciful, since in making reparation we can also acquire merits.

. . . God means to be Master of your soul, Master of your senses by suffering, Master of your mind by obscurity, Master of your heart by anguish, Master of your will by the imperious character of His calls.

In intending all this, He looks as if He were hard, and He loves you infinitely, and will prove it to you.

211

September 1, 1894.

Are you going to fall into the sin of discretion once more ? It is a most unhandsome sin, and quite contrary to our agreement. So then, I am expecting news from —, and meanwhile I give you some from Stowe. It is a slow and sad death-struggle, which may last a few days and may end in a few hours. But it is an admirable closing scene. It is a death which has been faced *for several months and years*, with great natural regrets for life, as happens

<sup>1</sup> " The Master is here, and calleth for thee " (John xi. 28).



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in the case of simple and vigorous natures, and with cruel rendings of heart at the prospect of imminent partings ; but with a steadfastness of faith, a humbleness of submission, a serenity of courage, which border on holiness. I had long thought so, but I was glad to hear the English confessor who is here say : " He is a saint, and nobody knows it."

Since 1889 I had been in the secret as to his malady ; without being his confessor, I was his confidant. This is the explanation of my periodical journeys. People supposed that I came here as a friend and as a partisan. I came as a priest to bring comfort to a tried soul who could get none from any other than from him who knew all. I came from Brest on Tuesday evening ; I found news there which made me return to England by Wednesday morning. Yesterday I administered Extreme Unction and the Plenary Indulgence in the presence of all his family and household. The scene was one of the most beautiful. After the ceremony, he embraced each of his six children one after the other, giving each one words of advice for his own future ; and while they were all melted to tears, he was able to control himself to the last, without checking the flow of his affection. I shall wait till the end, and for the funeral. If possible, I shall take one day off in Brussels. I wish, unless I am forced to give it up, not to miss attending the Congress there and speaking at it.

I have time to spare here, and am resting thoroughly. I am also trying to serve the Master. There is good to be done amongst the members of the family, and I am doing what I can. . . .

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September 5, 1894.

I am sure of doing the Master's will in giving you what I can, and in demanding of you the opposite of what I call discretion. . . .

I think we are nearing the end. The issue was so imminent that I did not go to Brussels. . . .

I well understand your feeling about the unfortunate Abbé B. . . . In truth, he seems to have died a good death. In any case, he was brave. But how can one explain his denials up to the very last? It was either really a case of mistake, and, in fact, the arguments leave me in uncertainty, or else he went in for casuistry, saying to himself that one need never accuse oneself. That may be so, if one is not condemned. But when all hope of escaping punishment is gone, how is it that the value of an excellent sacrifice is not understood? No doubt because, in a nature which is wanting in elevation, it is a fruit of grace which the unfortunate man never merited. Nevertheless, he may have found mercy; and is not Purgatory, the adorable creation of love, there to transmute the lead slowly into gold?

St. Catherine of Siena is quite right: the death I am attending is indeed *the reward of life*. Being initiated five and a half years ago into the secret of his terrible disease, known even then to the sick man as incurable, I have been able to follow in each of my half-yearly visits the ascent of his soul, and to see how a perfectly honourable man, a faithful husband, a cold but submissive believer, was made by God, through the power of the Cross, a true disciple

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of the Gospel, a man of prayer, a loving soul, open to all the secrets of the Christian life, as full of candour as of simplicity and good will. And grace goes out from him to all about him. . . .

. . . Ah ! if only such as Sully Prudhomme and his fellows knew by experience what faith is, they would not speak of it as they do, like the blind who think they are men of insight ; they would not try to explain to us what they call the psychological mechanism of our belief ; they would not write the books which have done you harm ; they would understand that faith and love are the same thing, and that, in the fine words of the converted Augustin Thierry : " Between Christianity seen from within, and Christianity seen from without, there is the same difference as between the beautiful stained glass of a cathedral according to the side from which it is looked at ; from without, it appears a mass of dull spots, separated by the lead ; from within, one sees wonderful figures all aglow with light." But how can one put up with the impertinence of a criticism of art which claims that the first of these two methods of looking at things is the true and right method ?

*Apud me oratio Deo vitae meae.*<sup>1</sup> Mine is the living God, He is my life, and the prayer that unites me to Him, that makes me find and feel Him, is a secret hid within my lowest depths, *apud me*, hidden sometimes from myself ; but this secret is my treasure, and none can pluck it from me, if I do not lose it by my own fault : *secretum meum mihi,*<sup>2</sup> *dilectus meus mihi et ego illi.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " With me is prayer to the God of my life " (Ps. xli. 9).

<sup>2</sup> " My secret to myself " (Isa. xxiv. 16).

<sup>3</sup> " My beloved to me, and I to him " (Cant. ii. 16).

## The Way of the Heart

213

*September 9, 1894.*

Your letter of the 7th came this morning. As there is hardly any post on Sunday in England, my reply will only go to-morrow morning.

Yes, indeed, believing and loving are the same thing; the question is always, how to reach the Invisible: he who reaches it by faith may be behind-hand in respect of love; but he who reaches it by love, finds in love the necessary minimum of faith and a superabundant equivalent for the surplus that may be lacking. What you quote from Pascal does not contradict this; besides, it is wanting in precision; Pascal is a Christian genius, but he is far from being an authority in theology.

Our sick man died yesterday evening, after losing, for only a few hours, if not consciousness, at any rate the power to communicate with others. But the evening before, he was still glad to have the Litany of the Blessed Virgin recited. He had asked me to read it to him daily, and made a great sign of the Cross at the beginning and at the end.

About five in the morning, the end was imminent,—I spent the last night with him,—everyone was called, the Prince's children met in his room, and the other relations in the chapel. I recited the prayers for the dying at the bedside, and added his beloved litany once more; then I went into the chapel to repeat the prayers for the dying there. Then, the English priest said Mass; then all the family met in his room, and, after the last breath, first each of the children, then his brother, the old uncles and

## Letter 214

aunts, and the friends came to kneel and to kiss the dead man's hand ; then they rose and kissed the hand of the widow, who, standing upright and strong, made one think of the *Stabat Mater*.

... The funeral takes place at Weybridge on Wednesday. . . . God helping, I shall be back at Louville on the 15th, after three weeks' absence.

## 214

September 17, 1894.

Does not St. Ignatius teach us to compare the different movements of various spirits ? What is the direction but such comparison made impartially by one who has the grace and enlightenment to appreciate things ?

... If I am mistaken, you are not mistaken in obeying. . . .

... I was well united with your soul in these feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, and of the Stigmata of St. Francis. I never draw near to God without taking you with me, and it would be a great grief to me if you were to resist following me.

Yes, once again ; sorrow and sacrifice are, *in our fallen and redeemed state of nature*, the true form of love. In a state of innocence, love was enjoyment ; it will become so again in a transcendent degree, in the state of glory ; we are in the intermediate stage between innocence and beatitude ; and there is an indissoluble union between love and blood and tears. The vision of St. Francis was a vision of glory ; but the Seraph, who brought him the ecstasy, took the

## The Way of the Heart

form of one crucified, and the memory which he left behind of his visit was the stigmata. A little more fidelity and suffering, and then, without ceasing to suffer, you too will see joy enter into your sorrows, and make you relish both bitterness and sweetness at one and the same time.

215

September 26, 1894.

I must begin with something nice, first of all because I feel that way inclined, and that is the best of reasons, and also because I have to scold you well. Let us understand one another. It is not the *figlia* I am going to scold, but *the other one*. Oh, how refractory and incorrigible she is! If you only knew her! I am going to tell you her story. There was once a reasoner who was blamed for too much reasoning, and who was ordered not to reason. Do you know what she did? She began to reason about the order not to reason! She argued the point with you so well that she was at last persuaded that she was right in her reasoning. . . . *If you send me what I ask you for, I will go to see you in Paris next Monday. I shall arrive at two o'clock, and I shall see you at your home and at church. I was going to use the old formula: "How will that suit you?" But I give it up, and substitute for it this other: "It shall be thus."*

But I have done with this naughty person, and I find my true daughter again to tell her that since Sunday I have been living on the Gospel of the Marriage Feast. What is the meaning of the refusal of these invitations for the sake of business or pleasure,

## Letter 215

if it be not the history of mankind in all ages? And, of a truth, can the *King* wonder at these rebuffs when He offers us a feast which we are so incapable of enjoying and desiring?

This feast is none other than Himself; that is to say, the Invisible, and He offers it to the eyes of flesh; the Absolute, and He offers it to poor butterflies who can only flutter about in the relative; the Infinite and Perfect, and He offers it to those who are as it were nothingness; supreme and generous Love, and He offers it to poor egoists!

And He does not abate one jot of it. And behind the foreground of this world, before we get to the background of eternity, He has placed Purgatory between the two to make out of cripples, picked up at the cross-ways, apprentices for the life of heaven.

But He has those here below on whom His choice has already fallen, so that He may lead them to taste and enjoy His feast in advance. Oh! it is not because they are any better than the rest! It is His fancy to choose them. When they are taken, they must go through with it, and whilst others make excuses of their business or their pleasure, He means them to have no other business than His own, and no other pleasure than that of pleasing Him, even if it be through suffering. If they consent to seek no other joy, He gives them by way of recompense such a power over His heart, that even when they think they are far from Him, they obtain all they ask for. *Delectare in Domino, et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui.*<sup>1</sup> Do you know any of this kind?

<sup>1</sup> "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart" (Ps. xxxvi. 4).



## The Way of the Heart

216

October 24, 1894.

Among all the souls entrusted me by the Lord, a certain daughter is particularly dear to me, and, in great anxiety, I make a little sign of the Cross on her forehead. And this is to be a sure sign that the Lord has not forsaken her.

There it is. And now you must come to the same conclusion as "fra Rinieri," and be of *good comfort, or at least calm.*

*Figlia*, I am very pleased with your letter, and all the more so because it is such a long time since I have had such a letter.

It is now twenty years and more since your soul was put into my hands, and I can testify that I have often suffered with your sufferings, and yet you have never been a sorrow to me nor a burden, but a much-loved occupation, a most sweet solicitude, a great interest in my spiritual life, a joy of my priesthood, and that it will be thus more and more; because, if the work of immense transformation which I have been watching and co-operating in during the last twenty years is pursued so far as you are concerned in obscurity and bitterness, nevertheless it goes on, and this is the essential thing; and because the divine light illumines this beautiful work of grace in my eyes. If you do not believe in it, believe it on my word, for to you I am the *amicus sponsi qui stat et audit eum, et gaudio gaudet, propter vocem sponsi.*<sup>1</sup> If you decide to let Him do as He will,

<sup>1</sup> "The friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice" (John iii. 29).



## Letter 216

assigning to yourself no other *rôle* than self-surrender and *intentional* confidence, you will advance without knowing it, and when His hour is come for letting the light shine again, whether it be in this world, as I believe, or in the next, as I am sure, you will see that He has done all things well, and that nothing has been lost or useless in your trials.

As I was telling you after my return from la Lozère, I am making my retreat here by following the one Dom Gréa is giving to the seminarists. It is not without difficulty that I manage to get the necessary isolation, but I am getting it nevertheless, and I am, as usual, finding in it a powerful supply of grace.

Oh! my child, how good is the Saviour to His poor priest in always waiting for him, and in being ever ready to communicate Himself to him, when he comes back weary with the outward strife. *Veni seorsum*, He says to him, *et requiesce pusillum*.<sup>1</sup>

And there, the obscurities of faith are illumined in the light of love, and the astounding dispensation of Redemption appears more and more beautiful and radiant day by day, to such an extent that, were it not true, we should have to say that man's mind had conceived something that God could not do. But what a man then conceives, he feels sure he never found in himself, and it becomes evident that this view of things has been suggested to him by Him who has ordered such marvels.

Therefore, *figlia*, if you are expecting a sign for me to infer that you have been on the wrong track for the past twenty years, "in a fatal path," you

<sup>1</sup> "Come apart and rest a little" (Mark vi. 31).

## The Way of the Heart

will wait until eternity and even longer. I am with you in this way, which is not fatal, but blessed, and in which we have Eternal Love for our companion.

To-morrow I come out of the retreat, and go to the House of Parliament. I will soon send you my papers.

217

MY CHILD,

November 3, 1894.

This time I read your letter with the fullest joy, because I found you were absolutely in the right again; also I wish to expand your soul, and to make you participate in the very great happiness your letter gave me. But I must also exercise you in humility and submission, because you need it. . . . I want to get at your *pride* of mind. . . .

. . . During this Octave, steep yourself in the *Beatitudes*, especially in the first, the most fruitful and the richest of all. All is to be found in the *Beati pauperes spiritu*.<sup>1</sup> That means that God suffices, and that if it is a great misfortune not to know Him or to understand Him, it is blessed to learn this truth and to become permeated with it more and more every day.

That God suffices in Himself is an evident truth to the believer in Him. Either God does not exist, or else He suffices because He is all. If He is all in Himself, how can He be less than all to us? Is it not more for Him to be self-sufficing than to suffice us, since His own needs are infinite, and ours are limited? . . . One thing only could hinder Him from sufficing us, that is if He were inaccessible to

<sup>1</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. v. 3).

## Letter 217

us. Now, He is not so, not even to our natural reason, when it is properly guided. But especially is He not so to the regenerated soul who finds Jesus Christ as its intermediary in its flight towards God. However, this sufficiency of God is, with regard to us, only a possibility : to convert it into a reality a great work has to be done, and this is the whole work of the Christian life. We must separate ourselves from all the rest, and cast ourselves into the ocean of the fulness of God. We must close our eyes to false gleams to find His light ; to false joys to find His beatitude ; to selfish loves to find His sovereign love : and this exigency goes a long way, it envelops the whole of our human nature, it enters into it, seizes upon all its faculties, and takes tribute of all its actions. This task is never finished in this world ; it must be constantly resumed, the thread broken by our inconstancies has to be joined anew, fresh resistances of self-love and new calculations of cupidity have to be discovered and sacrificed. Life is well filled, if it be filled with this daily renunciation ; and no more than does the adorable patience of our God tire of waiting upon us should ours tire of starting the journey again.

You will find in the *Beati pauperes spiritu*<sup>1</sup> mortification of mind, senses, will, and heart ; and in the *quoniam ipsorum est regnum coelorum*,<sup>1</sup> the divine fulness which is the reward of these renunciations.

<sup>1</sup> " Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. v. 3).

## The Way of the Heart

218

November 18, 1894.

What a good letter, my daughter! and what a good workman is the Master! How wonderful is it to watch Him work! At last He has taken you out of your sphere of illusions, and, without giving you the gladness of light, He is giving you an assurance of His guidance. I am convinced that you must pass through the grace of *holy childhood*, and that your whole nature must be transformed from being that of the *intellectual woman* into a holocaust. I love this, not because it is my own tendency, for mine is rather the reverse, but because God's will is showing itself clearly. I ask you to pray to God to enlighten me as to my duty. I have some grave decisions to take as to the hospital, and I see at the same time both the necessity for action and objections telling equally against whatever course is taken. It is a great anxiety, and I need assistance. . . . *Figlia! Oportet illum regnare, donec ponat omnes inimicos sub pedibus ejus.*<sup>1</sup> You want *Him* to reign, do you not? to reign in you? Then you must agree to His putting all your inward foes under His feet: human respect, the spirit of independence and of argument, etc. You must agree to it and help Him in it, and think it well for me to help Him in it. Come down, then, from your tree in which pride is lodged, *O Zachæe! festinans descende*, says Jesus, *quia hoïe in domo*

<sup>1</sup> "He must reign, until He hath put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25).

## Letters 219 and 220

*tua oportet me manere.*<sup>1</sup> Since He wishes to dwell in you, in the deeper part of you, you must not stay outside looking on, you must, like the Magdalene, remain within to listen and adore. *Et excepit illum gaudens in domum suam.*<sup>2</sup>

### 219

MY CHILD,

December 16, 1894.

It is neither just, nor quite right, to govern your doings by mine. If you were more obedient, instead of *taking advantage* of my silence to hold your peace, you would make me start afresh, since that is what I asked you to do, and since you help me by doing it. I need this external stimulus to get beforehand with what is in arrears, and when you are concerned, my heart is in the reckoning. Instead of provoking me, a reminder pleases me, but you are making all this an occasion for shutting yourself up, and that is not well.

### 220

January 2, 1895.

Do not think that I am insensible of the roughness of the wilderness into which, all unknowingly, I did everything to make you enter. . . . When one is on one's way from the land of exile towards the fatherland, one would prefer a short way to a long one, an easy path to a rugged one, a sure road

<sup>1</sup> *Zacheus!* make haste and come down: for this day I must abide in thy house (*cf.* Luke xix. 5).

<sup>2</sup> He received Him with joy *into his house* (*cf.* Luke xix. 6, and also x. 38).

## The Way of the Heart

to one sown with dangers, a road made pleasant by the clemency of the climate, by good health, by cheerfulness, to one overcast with bad weather, sickness, and depression. But nevertheless, since this road leads *towards home*, it is to be preferred, such as it is, to the flowery path that runs in the opposite direction. This is why I am bold enough to rejoice when I see you shudder at entering into the desert. In your place, I should probably do no better, nor even as well as you. But it is you who are in question, and I can see much more clearly in your case than in my own. Hence, *let well alone*, no matter what is done to you, or with you.

221

February 28, 1895.

. . . God uses all things to make us enter into the desert of Horeb, where one sees nothing but Him when He shows Himself, and nothing at all when He hides. He works silently and powerfully upon the soul He has taken as His victim. The more you yield yourself freely to His austerity the less hard will it be, for its hardness comes from our resistance. The wind does not collide with any who offer it no resistance ; it bears and carries all others along with it. And this is above all true of the wind of the Spirit.

222

April 17, 1895.

I don't know what sort of letter I shall find tomorrow in Paris, but this morning's letter is so good, that it puts more gladness in my heart than

## Letter 223

there is enjoyment in my body of the restfulness, of the mildness of the air, and of the fragrance of the flowers which carpet the park at Louville. This morning I only want to send you a word of welcome to await your arrival at — I hope you will have seen the poor woman who is suffering from cancer, and that she will *bless* you. Does not the *Man of Sorrows* indwell such a being with quite a special presence? Yes, my child, you have much reason to be very thankful for the part assigned you. If you are cut off from the greater affections, if you are reduced to the small change of great duties, your part is the greater love, which will be here, almost until the last, great suffering, but which will end by being endlessly great Happiness.

223

April 21, 1895.

I found your letter in Paris, and read it between Avignon and Marseilles: I am answering it from Fréjus just as I am off to Rome. Is this not a picture of our fleeting life? But, amidst all this mobility, something remains firm, and it is indeed amongst such unchangeable things that we must put what God has brought about between ourselves.

Your lamentations over your district are almost an exact counterpart of the conversations on the way between Mgr. Mignot and myself. The air was as it were embalmed, the mountains charming, the sea enchanting, and yet we were sad, because we were passing in review the powers of good and evil, the resources of truth and error, because we



## The Way of the Heart

agreed in our recognition of the malady and in our hesitation as to the remedies for it. The prepotency and dryness of heart of the clergy are one of the great obstacles the action of the Church has to contend with ; what has been most of all forgotten by the successors of the Apostles is the apostolate.

Is not this one more reason for asking of St. Teresa what is lacking on the part of St. Francis Xavier ? Is this not an explanation of her own vocation for my child ? What there is no doubt about is this, that her interior life is pledged to a definite way, and that this way leads to light and happiness through darkness and suffering, and that this suffering is reparatory and assumes the shape of an apostolate.

224

June 22, 1895.

You did very wisely, my child, in answering at once, but another time you must not *check* what is on the point of breaking out.

. . . The unworthiness of those whom God employs in the holiest of works is the mystery of mysteries. We cannot resolve this enigma with the mind, but only by the impulse of a soul eager for reparation. In this respect you are amply provided with all that may be matter for reparation, whether inwardly or outwardly—I mean with suffering, which is the *wood* of the sacrifice. You can answer as Abraham did to Isaac, *Deus enim providebit*,<sup>1</sup> or rather *providit*.<sup>1</sup>—I give you a thought which

<sup>1</sup> "God will provide" (Gen. xxii. 8), or, rather, "has provided."



## Letter 225

came to me as to devotion to the Sacred Heart. It may be compared to the double circuit of the circulation of the blood. Love first of all starts from the heart of our Lord and comes to us to stimulate ours in return. *Sic Deus dilexit mundum.*<sup>1</sup> *Diligamus ergo Deum quoniam ipse prior dilexit nos.*<sup>2</sup> This is the first circuit. When our love has rejoined His, we learn to enter into His procedure, and start again with Him to go in search of our brethren, and to love them with the patience, the respect, the pity, the devotion, of which we have been ourselves the object, and we come back bringing our trophies with us to rest at last in the bosom of God. Is it not so ?

225

July 5, 1895.

. . . Yes, indeed ; what you say is quite true. "Suffering is to my soul what light is to plants," and I will even add that, as light vivifies plants, *so far as it is light*—although the plants do not see it,—so is suffering to certain souls an *obscure* and fruitful light, which is the true definition of faith, and explains to you how you have faith yourself. My child, as suffering is pregnant with happiness, so is your obscurity which is full of anguish pregnant for you with life-giving illumination. *You shall see, you shall see*, I guarantee you, and you will become inebriated with vision. It will be to you the great novelty. Love ! you will tell Him : I

<sup>1</sup> "God so loved the world" (John iii. 16).

<sup>2</sup> "Let us therefore love God, because God hath first loved us" (1 John iv. 19).

## The Way of the Heart

have long known Thee, but formerly Thou wert cruel and now Thou art full of sweetness. Why! Light! You will say to Him: Thou art He whom I sought so passionately, and I used to complain that Thou wert ever absent. Nevertheless, now I see that it was Thou who didst feed me and that Thou wast only one with my sorrow. Therefore let Him do as He will with you, and give up the notion of understanding at all, accepting as your motto the *non sibi placuit*.<sup>1</sup>

226

July 27, 1895.

Read Huysmans. He is your exact antithesis. He is the enemy of reason and science, but a brave heart like yours, who found God as best he could. Is not this what you also have done?

As to Yves Le Querdec, the two books are both worth reading. . . .

I am alarmed at your days, but when I ask myself what should be cut off, I stop short.

How right you are not to regret having escaped, even at the cost of much suffering, from the slavery of the heart. . . . It is very true that the Sovereign Good Alone is worthy of being loved in that way, *ex totis viribus, tota mente, toto corde*.<sup>2</sup> I said to myself, *optimam partem elegit quae non auferetur ab ea*.<sup>3</sup> And if she had chosen another part, perhaps it would have been taken away from her. . . .

<sup>1</sup> "He did not please Himself" (Rom. xv. 3).

<sup>2</sup> With all thy strength, with all thy mind, with all thy heart (*cf.* Luke x. 27).

<sup>3</sup> "She hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 42).

## Letter 227

227

August 6, 1895.

*Et nos audivimus vocem ejus de coelo allatam.*<sup>1</sup>

Your letter with its picture of your way of living astounds me.

You are more burdened than I am, though not with such a variety of things. It seems as if the Master wanted us both to be in the service of our neighbour with the "until death," which comes in the office for a perpetual profession. Only we must not try to hasten on death on purpose; therefore I ask you: (1) to avoid any fresh responsibility without some inevitable necessity; (2) to reduce your actual responsibilities to a minimum, not going to see your sick folk as often as it pleases them, but only so far as it is indispensable. . . . And then, when you have done what is reasonable—if the Master is pleased with what is not reasonable, you must think it well, and let yourself be mangled alive, not with resignation and patience, for that would be too hard, but with joy and love. . . .

You have many a time heard His voice, *vocem ejus de coelo allatam*,<sup>1</sup> and although it was *delapsa de coelo a magnifica gloria*,<sup>2</sup> it sounded in the sad and desolate desert of your soul, but yet, in spite of everything, it wrought a strong and deep work therein. What will it say to you this year? As for me, I think it will be a still more urgent invitation, not to act on the defensive, not to take sureties

<sup>1</sup> "And His voice we heard brought from heaven" (2 Pet. i. 18).

<sup>2</sup> "[This voice] coming down from the excellent glory" (2 Pet. i. 17).

## The Way of the Heart

against Him, not to be afraid of His carrying you away too far, or on too rugged and dark a path. Thus, it will mean self-surrender and confidence.

228

August 12, 1895.

Feast of St. Clare.

*Ne tradas bestiis, Domine, animas confidentes tibi, et animas pauperum tuorum, ne obliviscaris in finem.*<sup>1</sup> I wanted to write to you this morning, and said to myself: "Wait; a letter will come." Well, I am sorry. You would have seen that the Master, who is not only strong but faithful, knew how to manage better than I. This is what I was going to write to you this morning as I write now. I am invited by the Bishop of Poitiers, my old schoolfellow and companion of thirty years' standing, to go to see him. . . . I shall pass — twice. . . . There is no way of stopping at —, but it will be easy to go to hear your confession. . . . Well, is it not considerate of the Master to arrange for this confession?

My child, do not sow sparingly; do not give *ex tristitia aut ex necessitate*.<sup>2</sup> Be bold enough to be *hilaris dator*<sup>3</sup> amidst the inevitable sadness; and you will reap freely the blessings of the most generous of friends. This is what St. Laurence surely said to you, and is what I have been saying

<sup>1</sup> Deliver not up to beasts, O Lord, the souls that trust in Thee; and forget not to the end the souls of Thy poor (cf. Ps. lxxiii. 19).

<sup>2</sup> "Not grudgingly or of necessity" (2 Cor. ix. 7).

<sup>3</sup> "A cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7).

## Letter 229

to myself while thinking of him for three days. To-day St. Clare teaches you by the prayer she addresses to her Spouse, while the Saracens are threatening her convent with a fate more terrible than death. *Ne tradas bestiis.* Are not you in your obscurity an *anima confidens illi*? Yes, you declare and confess it, by persisting in thinking that He is good in spite of His rigour, that He hearkens to you in spite of His silence, and that He enriches and fills you to overflowing when He takes everything away. Therefore He cannot hand you over to the monsters of doubt and infidelity, and if He appears to forget you in your neediness, it will not be for ever, *animas pauperum tuorum, ne obliviscaris in finem.*<sup>1</sup>

### 229

August, 1895.

The great silence from beyond the grave only proves one thing, that our ears are not made on earth to catch what comes thence. But no, indeed no; this outcry of our faculties will not be in vain. Do you not perceive that it grows sharper and louder, the more we doubt whether it can be heard? This shows that the negative solution would be contrary to our nature and prove it to be utterly mistaken. But in nothing else does nature run counter to reality; the ends it pursues, the poor little secondary ends which can be faintly traced

<sup>1</sup> "And forget not to the end the souls of Thy poor" (Ps. lxxiii. 19).

## The Way of the Heart

in the structure of the plant, in the destination of an animal, even these little ends are always attained ; and is, then, the other, the great end, which dominates all things, never to be attained ? Hence, it will be attained ; but at what cost ? At the cost of persistent confidence, which we must maintain in it in spite of shadows and appearances which are the very condition of trial.

230

August 22, 1895.

*Figlia, in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*<sup>1</sup> A Hebraist tells me that "men of good-will" in the Semitic languages means *those to whom God wishes well*, the friends of God. To such He promises peace on earth, the peace which is compatible with bitterness, *in pace amaritudo mea amarissima.*<sup>2</sup> But He also promises them glory in heaven, *gloria in excelsis Deo,*<sup>3</sup> the glory that is God's, and which He will share with His friends. Now, you cannot doubt but that you are of *those to whom God wishes well*, since He went in search of you from so far, and since He has such a strong hold upon you.

My daughter, your prayer *with your face turned to the wall* was just the prayer you had to pray, and on His behalf I tell you He was moved by it.

<sup>1</sup> "On earth peace to men of good-will" (Luke ii. 14).

<sup>2</sup> "In peace is my bitterness most bitter" (Isa. xxxviii. 17).

<sup>3</sup> "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke ii. 14).

## Letter 231

231

MY DAUGHTER,

August 29, 1895.

I feel deep sympathy with you in the torment you must experience in not being able to stop so as to suffer, to pray, to weep, and to offer yourself in peace. You have to combine the interior life of a recluse with the work of a bus-horse. But suppose the bus-horse had a soul that knew God, would it not, on the Panthéon-to-Courcelles route, under lashes of the whip and the burning sun, under hail and rain, in weariness and exhaustion, be able to serve its master with more merit and love than when in the stable? I say this to you while I cannot unharness you, but whenever I can, I will rather cut the traces than defer your deliverance for a single hour.

And even now, in spite of the example of the Little Sisters of the Poor, you *must* try to prolong the ten minutes you take from time to time to recover yourself in fleeting solitude. This is necessary to ensure *His* service.

To-day's feast is very dear to me. I fancy the austere John the Baptist was as a very tender soul who suffered all his life from being separated from Him whom he loved, served, and made known and loved by others. But he loved His *will* even more than His *companionship*: He lived far from Him, and as a reward he had the happiness of dying for Him. Oh! how glad must he have been to greet a death that brought such good news with it, a death which was the means of longed-for reunion! The Church is right in applying to him in the

## The Way of the Heart

Offertory the verse of the Psalm: *Desiderium animae ejus tribuisti ei, et voluntate laborum ejus non fraudasti eum.*<sup>1</sup> Well now; would not this do for a programme? What say you?

Yes, my child, there are graces that cost dearer than others, because they are worth more than others: it matters not whether the embrace be harsh or gentle, it is an immense grace to feel it. One does not rely upon what *gives*, but on what *pulls*. It were a want of gratitude to refuse to look at anything but what is dark and painful in ourselves, when the Master is making His action plain. If there be no sweetness in it, His action is none the less a proof of the watchfulness of His love. To belong to God is the end; and His acting proves to us that it is attained, not in such a way that it ever ceases to be necessary for us to pursue it, but when God bears us towards it without the help of joy and sensible affection, it is a proof that such means are not necessary for our reaching it.

232

DEAR MADAME,

August 31, 1895.

The wine came with your letter. One would think it had come by telegraph. You are really . . . I was going to say, intolerable; but I shall better express my meaning by writing . . . too intolerably kind. Only you will make me determine to give you no more commissions, because your way of carrying them out is rather too peculiar. Yet, after

<sup>1</sup> "Thou hast given him his heart's desire: and hast not withholden from him the will of his lips" (Ps. xx. 2).



## Letter 233

all, it is perhaps just as well that this sort of quarrel between us should not die out too quickly, otherwise I wonder what we could find to quarrel about.

233

September 14, 1895.

Even if our correspondence had not been interrupted, I should have written to you on to-day's feast, when I feel myself more linked with you than on any other ; so much so that this morning, when I was saying Mass for your intentions, I could pray for you only.

But really the interruption has lasted too long. . . . I want to hear all about you, as all that takes place within you finds its echo within me.

*Quum exaltatus fuero a terra omnia traham ad meipsum!*<sup>1</sup> *Omnia!* Is this really true, O Master? see how few Thou drawest! and yet, can one say that *others* are not drawn, since they are constantly occupied with Thee, in warring against Thee? If Thou art nothing, as they say, why do they not leave Thee to Thy nothingness, and why are all the doings of the world so full of clamour against Thee? Did not the crucifix at — attract in its own way those who cast it down and broke it in pieces? Would they have done the same to a mere post? But this kind of attraction is for their own destruction, and that is why some souls must be drawn otherwise for their salvation, by expiation, by reparatory suffering, by the inward death of all the

<sup>1</sup> "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John xii. 32).

## The Way of the Heart

human, by joyless sacrifice which is without light but not without love; *ut inhabitet in eis virtus Christi*.<sup>1</sup> When a soul has been chosen for this hard mission, it must be brave enough to recognize therein a special grace, a privilege of the great love, of which eternity will be long enough to relish the sweetness, and of which time must not seem too long to taste the bitterness. Is this your way of thinking, my child? Write soon to tell me about it, and also of a number of other things.

Goodbye for the present. Let us make the best use of these last good weeks. I think of spending three or four of them here; then will come the retreat, and then: *offerent se totos ad laborem*.<sup>2</sup>

234

September 19, 1895.

. . . It is certainly easier to go away from the forbidden fruit than to touch it without eating it, but you well know that such sacrifices are a part of your vocation, and that He who draws all unto Himself is drawing you first of all, waiting until He has made the void, and then He undertakes to fill it. To say the truth, He fills it accordingly; for He takes the place of all we give up for Him. He does this insensibly, but in a real and powerful manner, which is shown in the awful and loving ascendancy He exercises over all our powers; by the jealousy which reproaches you for any satisfac-

<sup>1</sup> That the power of Christ may dwell in them (*cf.* 2 Cor. xii. 9).

<sup>2</sup> They will offer themselves wholly to the work.

## Letter 235

tion you enjoy outside of Him ; and which is also, and above all, a sign of His presence, of His action, and a proof of His love. Why, indeed, does He wish nothing to be anything to you apart from Him, unless it is that you are entirely His, and that He wishes to be entirely *yours* ? And how did you become entirely His, except by His choice ? And is not this choosing of His a wonder of His love ? Besides, you must not despair of finding a deep and hidden region of the soul, in which sweetness will reign amidst the night of the senses and the spirit, and in which you will be obliged to declare that He who crucifies you is infinitely amiable and infinitely loving. But you know all this better than I, and if I repeat it to you, it is that it may be said to you from without, were it only to reassure you as to its conformity with what you hear from within.

Good-bye for the present. Neglect no opportunity of writing. The dialogue between us always slackens too soon. There is no harm in its being rather more closely interwoven during these last good days.

## 235

MY CHILD,

You upset me. I don't like these barbarous blisters. I fear — will only think it a fine chance for using his beloved little surgeon's knife. Anyhow, let me hear from you. . . . Are you in much pain ? and laid up for long ? what does your mother say ? and how are you faring spiritually during your time of enforced interruption ?

## The Way of the Heart

I much like your good wishes for my feast-day. "A growing love to bear a growing suffering and to feed on it," this is just what a true daughter may wish her true father, so that his priesthood may not be barren.

Here I am at the end of my holidays ; I was going to say, of my good time, but I stop, for the best time is coming soon, the time of my retreat, and I feel very much drawn towards it. . . . On the morning of the ninth I am off to Clamart, to resume the yoke on the fifteenth by saying the Mass for St. Teresa at the Carmelite convent. A good way of beginning again, is it not, *figlia mia* ?

236

October 4, 1895.

*Franciscus pauper et humilis  
Coelum dives ingreditur  
Hymnis coelestibus honoratur.*

*Alleluia.*

Oh, these bad pastors ! they are the real sorrow ! I feel this as you do, and I feel it twofold, with a deep regret that is cousin german to remorse, since it is I who, believing that I was doing rightly, brought about the calamity. . . . Well, we must make reparation with the heart's tears, by fidelity, by patience, by deeper religion, and, above all, by love. We must make reparation through Mary, the Rosary, the Saints and by offering all their merits, their virtues, and their love. We must make reparation by our sorrows, by accepting our incapacities, our obscurities, our anguish, our weariness, our overwork,

## Letter 237

and say : " All that is well and good, I will it, none of it all overshoots the mark, it is better so, and better for me to be as the wood, if I cannot be the offerer, of the sacrifice ; if I cannot be a victim, it is better I should be the inert thing burnt by another and destroyed for God's glory !" It seems to me from this point of view that your *state* has something good in it, and that it is not difficult, though it is very hard, to make use of it by way of reparation. Are we well agreed ?

I wish you could go to Lourdes while I am at Clamart. Try to arrange it. And I too hope some day to go to Lourdes with you ; we will manage it this winter, perhaps next year. Meanwhile, give the Blessed Virgin as much room as possible in your relations with God. Put upon her all you cannot do yourself. I implore St. Francis to teach you how to enjoy his *Deus meus et omnia*, even when God conceals Himself, and when the *all* is so like nothing.

237

October 12, 1895.

Here is what I read in the life of M. Prévost. It is a letter he wrote as a young man, a layman and neophyte in the faith, to a tried friend :

" God is going on with His work in you with the same goodness and the same mercy. Do you, for your part, let Him act as He will without resisting. He is taking from you one by one all the things you thought your own. Thank Him, *the sublime Thief*, as Bossuet ventures to call Him. When He has taken all, and when you are at His mercy, in the

## The Way of the Heart

depths of your denudation you will see Him return with His hands full bringing everything back, but changed, purified, and sanctified ; faith, love, hope, fervour, strength, and light ; your soul will be filled to overflowing, and will exclaim : ' Enough, Lord ! ' If, then, your trial continues, if your wretchedness still increases, be at peace, smile softly to yourself and say : ' My God, I understand Thee ; Thou hidest Thyself in vain ; I know well Thou art not far off.' "

I was reading these words a week ago at Quimper ; they appeared to me to be written for you, and I made up my mind to copy them out for you.

Now we are both in retreat. Oh ! I do not deny that mine is infinitely sweeter than yours. But this is no doubt because I could not bear a harder one. As for you, doubt not that the Master has put you in retreat. What are we doing at Clamart ? We are praying ; and you can pray. We are trying to strip ourselves of self. Jesus Christ is undertaking to do this in your case. We are trying to find out His will as to ourselves. He makes it reign so powerfully and so evidently over you, that you have not to go in search of it. Lastly, we are endeavouring to rise in mind and in intention to *offers of greater cost*. But the object of such offers is humiliation and annihilation ; you have offered yourself, and you are humbled and annihilated. Yes, my child, I affirm it ; you are more really under God's action than you will perhaps be on Thursday next under the hands of the surgeon. You have confidence in the latter ; you know he will make you suffer to do you good. And the

## Letter 238

Other? *Scio cui credidi.*<sup>1</sup> I feel very acutely in this retreat that God is asking much from us this year, but that He will give us all He asks of us. *Nolite cogitare quomodo aut quid. . . . Spiritus Patris vestri loquitur [et operatur] in vobis.*<sup>2</sup> . . . So you will see that if my help is necessary, it will not be lacking to you in the most difficult seasons, or, if it should be wanting, God will make up for it. You are almost talking discouragement to me to-day. My answer to you is, confidence! *Certus sum quia potens est, quia benignus est, et fidelis, et verax.*<sup>3</sup>

I shall expect a letter as soon as anything is settled; and then, as soon as all is over, if your foot allows your hand to do anything.

## 238

October 14, 1895.

*Figlia*, I am leaving this holy place to-morrow with regret to go to say Mass for the daughters of St. Teresa, and then to return to the land of Egypt. On Wednesday, my heart and prayer will be present *at the affair*. Trust in God. it is the sweetest and strongest form of courage. *Nolite cogitare quomodo aut quid . . . dabit enim vobis Pater vester*<sup>4</sup> . . . always the same refrain. I am keenly hoping nothing will occur to upset your arrangements. It will be best

<sup>1</sup> I know whom I have believed.

<sup>2</sup> Take no thought how or what . . . the Spirit of your Father speaketh [and worketh] in you (*cf.* Matt. x. 19, 20).

<sup>3</sup> I am sure that He is mighty, and kind, and faithful, and true.

<sup>4</sup> Take no thought how or what . . . for your Father will give you . . . .

## The Way of the Heart

to have done with the infirmity. In a few days I shall be sending you something from my retreat ; now I can say to you : *Magnificate Dominum mecum et exaltemus nomen ejus in idipsum*.<sup>1</sup>

239

November 1, 1895.

. . . To-day I . . . fain to send you a ray of the *beata pacis visio*,<sup>2</sup> which the Church seeks to procure for her children. If I secure the ray, will it succeed in piercing your customary fogs? I think the words of Scripture and of the Liturgy are so luminous that they ought to triumph over all kinds of darkness. At any rate, such as they cannot succeed in piercing—in souls of good will—must be the sanctifying darkness which St. John of the Cross has described, and which, far from separating one from God, leads to Him and prepares the way for finding Him.

Yes, indeed, I think I can see this holy city ; the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven towards us to-day, adorned as a bride for her bridegroom. What can we call her except the city of the true, the just, and the good, where there is neither deception nor delusion, and where goodness is no longer separated from happiness ; where the more one forgets self in loving, the happier one becomes, where virtue is always assured of the verdict against sophisms and lies ; where the ideal is one with

<sup>1</sup> " O magnify the Lord with me ; and let us extol His name together " (Ps. xxxiii. 4).

<sup>2</sup> The blessed vision of peace.



## Letter 239

heaven itself ; where truth is seen in the light of God ; where the Good is loved with a love coming from God Himself ; where one is no longer busy with the work of denudation, but where one can freely grow rich ; where past tears form the substance of bliss : *tristitia vestra vertetur in gaudium*,<sup>1</sup> where there is no more sorrow nor death, because there is no more sin ; where each of the *quoniams*<sup>2</sup> of each of the Beatitudes is verified to the full : *quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram ; quoniam ipsi saturabuntur ; quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur ; quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt ; quoniam ipsorum est regnum coelorum*.<sup>3</sup>

It seems to me impossible to think of these things without getting a deep feeling of the certainty of their being true ; that Love, which is indisputably the best of all things, will not be for ever frustrated ; that the Good will not always be defeated ; and that, after seeking, we shall finally find, and that for ever ; what say you to this ?

I hope the final attack of pain in your foot is over. How is it that it is not so with your soul ? But you know I have more confidence in the Surgeon who inflicts suffering on the latter than in the one who saws bones. And you know I am right in this confidence.

<sup>1</sup> Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

<sup>2</sup> The *fors* of the Beatitudes.

<sup>3</sup> *For* they shall possess the land ; *for* they shall have their fill ; *for* they shall be called the children of God ; *for* they shall see God ; *for* theirs is the kingdom of heaven (*cf.* Matt. v. 3-9).

## The Way of the Heart

240

MY CHILD,

November 4, 1895.

I had lent these notes of my retreat to my sister, and they did not reach me until late. . . . How is it that one cannot get a little ray of brightness to enter into your dark cave? It must be because it is all the better for you at present to be as it is. It is your way of practising the poverty of the first beatitude. To have nothing apart from God, and to feel as if one had less even of God than of anything else, what denudation can be greater than that? But since this is the denudation given you by God—provided that it is wished for, you have only to wish for yours with at least a resigned, submissive, and trustful will, in order to be enriched at once with a hidden treasure which will be revealed hereafter.

241

November 11, 1895.

So then, my daughter, you are left all alone! You are in your *cell*. And you say the Master has nothing more for you to do. But He appears to me to be calling you to His intimacy, and to be taking you from the courtyard to the audience-chamber. I find it very hard to begrudge you your foot, because it makes people have to do without you . . . you will only go back to your old habits too quickly.

## Letters 242 and 243

242

December 8, 1895.

Here is a feast which might be called the feast of the *good pleasure of God*—a being who gave Him once and for ever all He expected of her, all she had received from Him. If she be a joy for Him to contemplate, is she not for us a vision of rest and hope? for she is our Mother, and she desires to go shares with us.

243

January 6, 1896.

*Apertis thesauris suis, obtulerunt ei munera.*<sup>1</sup>

*Figlia*, your note before I left, and your letter now to hand, are both very good, and both bear the right stamp. . . . After all, what is spiritual consolation but a sense of the presence of God, and of His help, and specially of His approval? . . . is there not something of all this in the *interior peace* of which we were speaking the other evening? Let us not be ungrateful; if God does not pamper us, that is because He wants us to be *strong*. Our decision this year must be that we have everything to gain by abandoning all to Him. So I leave you to God more than ever, being certain that I am choosing a good place for my security. *Scio cui credidi et certus sum.*<sup>2</sup> Let us leave everything in His hands. *Jacta super eum curam tuam.*<sup>3</sup> There you have everything.

<sup>1</sup> "And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts" (Matt. ii. 11).

<sup>2</sup> "I know whom I have believed, and am certain" (2 Tim. i. 12).

<sup>3</sup> Cast on Him thy care (*cf.* 1 Pet. v. 7).

## The Way of the Heart

244

February 18, 1896.

. . . From all this one may gather that you are intended to be in the *nocte obscura*<sup>1</sup> of St. John of the Cross. But then it must be accepted to the full, and we must believe that light will be found at the end of the tunnel, for it comes at the end of that of St. John of the Cross. And then, there are from time to time, even in tunnels, lights and air-shafts. So we shall neither be blinded nor stifled. You will go forward surely, and you will reach the land where love is no longer cruel, but becomes blessed. As to that, I feel *certain in your case*, as I am certain of His might and kindness, *quia potens est . . . et mitis*.<sup>2</sup>

Thank you for thinking of my February the 17th. The date no longer brings me any bitterness ; I no longer look back in the direction of separation, but forwards towards reunion. I no longer picture my much-loved brother in his definite and material outward appearance ; I see him gentle and smiling, speaking to me of his happiness and of my duty, and encouraging me to feel better fitted for action and for sacrifice. Is it not like a message to me telling of his happiness ?

The weather is magnificent, I have a splendid view, and my work is fruitful.

<sup>1</sup> The obscure night.

<sup>2</sup> For He is mighty . . . and gentle.

## Letters 245 and 246

### 245

MY CHILD,

February 21, 1896.

This will travel with me, but will reach you a few hours before I see you.

I want to tell you without delay that it is the *good Spirit* who leads you to look rather towards God than to yourself, not to reckon the fact that looking towards God gives us more light as to ourselves than *introspection*. So yield up all to Him, but specially yourself. Let Him do as He will, and approve of all He does. Seated in an express train, we travel faster and go farther than when we scamper on foot along the high-road . . . but we have to take the train.

### 246

April 22, 1896.

It is not you who grieve me, you are far too good, and too really a *daughter*, to do that. It is this terrible temptation, the unexpected and furious storm which has broken out upon your soul. . . . You appear to me to be like a poor bird enveloped in a whirl of smoke flying along with it. The poor little creature fancies the sun has gone out, and that it will be always dark. *Amicus autem sponsi qui stat*<sup>1</sup> outside of the whirl clearly sees that it is nothing of the sort, and he urgently prays the Lord of the sun and wind to drive away the smoke-cloud and to let the saving sun-beams shine again.

<sup>1</sup> "The friend of the Bridegroom who standeth . . ." (John iii. 29).

## The Way of the Heart

No, you have not taken the wrong road. . . . And does not this cruel trial itself involve also, and above all, a confirmation of your vocation, of your self-surrenders, of your immolation? When you *yielded* yourself up to suffering, you knew not suffering of this kind, at least in this form, or to this extent. But did you except it?

The time of separation has not yet begun; there, now! I am living with you as much as ever, and silence has not fallen upon us yet. This morning you were with me at the holy altar, and I commended you to God with a confidence that only increases with your trials.

247

*April 22, 1896.*

. . . Be sure, my poor child, that everything that tends to discourage you in virtue, makes effort seem useless, sacrifice wasted, and causes you to look backwards and have doubts as to God's choosing—all this is of the Evil One; and this alone proves that the truth lies in denying all that he affirms or insinuates, and in affirming all that he denies, disputes, or darkens. Apply this simple rule in good faith to your case, and tell me the result.

248

*April 27, 1896.*

Write daily, and send your budget very often, once a week: just now, that will not be too much. With a brisk interchange, my answers will be all

## Letter 249

the more useful from being shorter. So let the dialogue be unbroken. Do you quite agree? Why, certainly, since I wish it, and He wishes it too! I bless you.

249

ROUEN,  
May 3, 1896.

I am at Rouen for the day, and have more quiet here for answering you than in Paris.

. . . Yes, like you I love this feast,<sup>1</sup> and I think it was a good Invention, although . . . or because I should have never invented it myself. If God were according to my standard, I should think Him small indeed. This morning, I was thinking that God shows His predilection for two kinds of souls, those who have always been His, like St. John, and those, like the Magdalene, whom He goes in search of to the Antipodes, by the sovereign fancy of His love. Now, in the case of the latter, He makes great advances to begin with, and then He requires a long and rigorous penance: penance of the flesh, when the sin has been in the flesh, penance of the mind, when the evil has been in the mind. Had your obscurities and agonies no other cause, would not this have been enough? You are in the hands of the sculptor who works as He will, and your whole perfection at present consists in self-surrender.

<sup>1</sup> The feast of the Finding or Invention of the Holy Cross.

## The Way of the Heart

250

May 31, 1896.

*In festo Sanctae Trinitatis.*

*Figlia*, is not the austere programme you submit to me, not without some apprehension of my taking you at your word, the one I outlined in a page you know in the panegyric of Madame Louise of France? Oh! that page! I blush to the very ears when I read it again! I feel I am so far from all that, myself! And yet I cannot help thinking it was written for you.

But still I am unable to believe that, if you make it your programme, you will not soon be rewarded for it, if not by the sweetness that is denied you, at any rate by an increase of confidence and peace. Further, however unjustified one may seem in urging on others to a point one has not reached oneself, yet I declare that this is truly your way, and that your interest, as well as your perfection, lies in going forward in it. Does not to-day's feast tell us that our destiny is to attain the inaccessible, to live in the incomprehensible, to sacrifice everything to the invisible, and finally to find our rest in the possession of the incommunicable? All these contradictions, of which your spiritual vocation is made up, are contained in a simple sign of the Cross; but I find them expressed in a very incisive manner in the brief ejaculatory Antiphons of the Nocturns of Matins for to-day. *O beata Trinitas!* we keep on reiterating. And our human feeling replies: What has this Trinity which I don't understand, and its happiness which does not con-



## Letter 251

cern me, to do with me? Thou understandest it not, but thou shalt see it; and its happiness shall be thine. *O beata Trinitas!*

. . . I have certainly had a touch of influenza. . . . I am rather better, and as I am travelling very slowly for the sake of rest, I shall come back well. . . .

251

June 23, 1896.

. . . I am grieved at your suffering: you are clinging to my assurances and to your own promises, and I thank God for it. I want you to read a life of Père Chambellan which has just come out. He passed his life in a way which, if not identical, was nevertheless analogous, to yours. Everyone agrees in recognizing him as a great servant of God. The Master who chose us needs our fidelity, not our joy in the sense of possessing it. You know from experience that when you shut yourself up, because there is nothing to tell, you become impenetrable except to the enemy, who then enters *januis clausis*,<sup>1</sup> and does mischief in the sealed urn, while the walls keep on growing thicker, thus at the outset making the operation of an indispensable reopening more difficult and painful in the future. Therefore, let us go on being sensible on both sides for another month, and keep up our intercourse: thus we shall do good business *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

<sup>1</sup> When the doors are shut.

## The Way of the Heart

252

July 20, 1896.

No, my child, I am not going to tell you, you are mistaken ; but, after offering the holy Sacrifice for you and praying, I tell you there is a slight change to be made in the terms of your offering. Instead of wishing for suffering, you must wish for the surrender of your whole self to all He may desire of you. Why should you desire suffering more than anything else ? Why not suffering in the same way as anything else ? You do not want several things ; there is only one thing for you. There is the divine and sovereign will of Him who has taken possession of you. That He will *work for* His one thing by means of suffering is to be anticipated. But suffering is not the end He has in view, therefore it ought not to be your end. I think the form of your gift is to be looked for rather in the direction of greater confidence. This confidence implies *letting Him act as He will*, and therefore, *letting Him inflict suffering as He will*. It includes every fashion of God's will so far as you are concerned, and corresponds thereto by a *deliberate conviction* that such will issues from love and reverts to love, and that the end will be right.

Hence, there must be no resistance, at least of an intentional character, and therefore, no regret for having given too much hold to the divine requirements ; such is the *optima pars*<sup>1</sup> that Mary Magdalene<sup>2</sup> who received it intends for you : accept it.

<sup>1</sup> The best part.

<sup>2</sup> This letter would reach his correspondent on the eve of the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

## Letter 253

253

August 6, 1896.

. . . So much for my journey. And what about our fleeting encounter? It seems like a dream! How anxious was I, too, to have a little intimate talk with you Sunday evening! The Master did not permit it. His austere ways are to be respected: but we must not give up the fusion of our souls.

I keenly feel for your friends' grief. If only God could enter into their souls "through that gaping wound"! Alas! the contrary is too much to be feared. When one knows not the redemptive power of the Cross, it becomes a hateful torment of the slaves of fate.

I am anxious about your health. I hoped the change of air would clear your system. All that is within you seems intended to suffer at one and the same time, *a planta pedis usque ad verticem capitis non est in ea sanitas*,<sup>1</sup> and you are to be *mulier sciens infirmitatem*.<sup>2</sup>

It is hard, along with Him, to wish all that for you. It is as much as ever I can do. But I will not be a coward for my child's sake, since, at all costs, I will have her to be valiant. *Fiat voluntas ejus!*<sup>3</sup>

Here is Louville back again. If continued and intimate interchange of thought is a relief to your soul, it is not only a permitted, but an intended, relief.

<sup>1</sup> "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein" (Isa. i. 6).

<sup>2</sup> A woman who knoweth infirmity (cf. Luke xiii. 11).

<sup>3</sup> His will be done!

## The Way of the Heart

254

August 14, 1896.

MY DAUGHTER,

I have had visitors, and there is no time to write to your mother. I wish I could enter into her soul, and also be a help to her. While preaching the retreat, I saw how words of consolation found their way to her heart, though her religious training has been evidently dry and hard. To succeed in detaching her from too close a clinging to life and to earthly affections, the love of God and a religious and trustful affection are the sole secret, and she needs to be shown this. I shall do my best.

I have received a letter from — which proves that you have been doing good work with the Master, and that He is not as deaf as you think, when you pray. "For others," perhaps you will say, "but not for me." . . . *Figlia*, you have no need to pray for yourself. *Scit enim Pater vester quia his omnibus indigetis.*<sup>1</sup> The act of self-surrender makes up for everything else in your case. And I declare to you that He answers to it in a language you do not understand, but I understand it, and it is full of love. Let that suffice.

I leave you to Him, and again I find you in Him more than I ever did.

255

August 22, 1896.

To avoid crossing I waited for your letter received this morning. Yesterday I said Mass for you, and

<sup>1</sup> "But your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Luke xii. 30).

## Letter 255

I *offered* you ; I prayed for you to have fidelity, confidence, and peace ; the rest *superveniet te*<sup>1</sup> when He pleases.

But what can I say to my child when she preaches so well herself ? If only you had not written me all those things, they are just what I should have tried to write to you ; and that proves that there is only one Master, and that He is the sole teacher. But how I admired the ways of Providence in making you light upon such a beautiful passage of Ecclesiasticus, and one so well suited to you, and to this day !<sup>2</sup> Is it not touching to see in the Old Testament such anticipations of the spirit of the New ? *Subjice humerum tuum et porta illam,*<sup>3</sup> is not this an anticipation of *Tollite jugum meum super vos* ?<sup>3</sup> *Alligatura salutaris*<sup>4</sup>—*jugum meum suave est* ?<sup>4</sup> *In novissimis enim invenies requiem in ea*<sup>5</sup>—*Et invenietis requiem animabus vestris* ?<sup>5</sup> You see it ? “ Both pages,” *utraque pagina*, as St. Jerome says, —both pages of the Book promising you peace, if you bear the yoke ; and after peace, joy. That too is to be found in the sequel of both passages.

And then, thank you, *figlia*, for the request you have made on my behalf ! it is what I really need, and just now the great yearning of my soul. And

<sup>1</sup> Shall come upon thee.

<sup>2</sup> The Octave of the Feast of the Assumption.

<sup>3</sup> “ Bow down thy shoulder and bear her ” (Ecclus. vi. 26). “ Take up my yoke upon you ” (Matt. xi. 29).

<sup>4</sup> “ A healthful binding ” (Ecclus. vi. 31). “ My yoke is sweet.”

<sup>5</sup> “ For in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her ” (Ecclus. vi. 29). “ And you shall find rest for your souls ” (Matt. xi. 29).

## The Way of the Heart

then, since I have to thank God deeply for using me for a certain work you know of, I must sanctify myself to lead you closer to Him !

256

September 6, 1896.

*Figlia*, I am leading almost the same kind of life as in Paris ! Your last letter is dated the 27th, and I have since had a little fever, and an entire loss of strength and appetite. I could not do the least thing. . . . Without giving up all correspondence, I considerably slackened it, and you have had to pay your share.

. . . I was thinking of you just now, while reading the prayer of the Mass of the Fifteenth Sunday. You need only substitute your soul for the Church in it ; but what is the Church but the society of souls ?

*Ecclesiam tuam, Domine, miseratio continuata mundet et munit.*<sup>1</sup> God's action on our souls is continual mercy. It began the day of your conversion. Since then, it has not ceased to follow you up, varying the manner of its pursuit ; but for some time there has been scarcely any further variation. The note is always the same, but it echoes with an increasing intensity, and says to you : "*Sine Me non potes salva consistere.*"<sup>2</sup> No expedient, no help, apart from Me, can do anything for thee ; hence thou must let thyself be governed

<sup>1</sup> " May Thy continual pity, O Lord, cleanse and fortify Thy Church " (*Collect* for fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost).

<sup>2</sup> Without Me thou canst not stand fast in safety. Cf. the *Collect* already referred to.

## Letter 257

exclusively by what comes from Me, *meo semper munere gubernaris*.<sup>1</sup> And what is this gift? . . . It is what purifies thee, *mundet*, by means of *separation* from creatures; and what strengthens thee, *muniat*, by the communication of His love." And there is your programme.

My daughter, I have no fear of interposing between God and your soul. It was His will to use this means, and this makes it no dividing wall, but a connecting bond.

Tell me about your return, and do you, too, speak to me of Him.

### 257

DEAR MADAME,

September 12, 1896.

Your dear daughter informed me how severe have been your heart attacks since your return to —, and if I needed any experience of a personal kind to make me sympathize with you more keenly, I might find it in the rather enervated condition in which I have been for the last fortnight. . . . Your daughter is scolding me for imaginary indiscretions which I shall not commit. I have given up all idea of Rheims and the Dauphiné; and, if I go away, it will be to get a change of air to whet my appetite. And this I shall only do in such conditions as are advised, for I am, in spite of an undeserved reputation, the most reasonable of invalids.

Above all, I wish I could share my present great calmness with you; it comes of an experimental and deep conviction that God loves us more than

<sup>1</sup> Thou art ever governed by My favour (or gift). Cf. the *Collect* for fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

## The Way of the Heart

we love ourselves, and that He orders everything for the greatest good of those who trust in Him. Try to replace with this thought the disturbing *probings* of the future which do you so much harm. It is true that we know not whither we are going ; but we are walking beneath a Father's eyes, we are going where He leads us, and we shall end by falling into His arms.

Here I am, preaching again ! Forgive me for friendship's sake.

258

September 19, 1896.

You are wrong, my child, to be sorry that your departure for Lourdes has been postponed till October. I may possibly go there for a brief visit just then by the doctor's advice. At present, it is only a glimmer of hope. On Wednesday I am to get advice in Paris, and settle about it.

It is not my state of health, at any rate directly, which has put me behindhand with you ; but I have had a most helpful visit all the week from my old secretary, Abbé —, who got his rector to allow him to take a few days to assist me with my correspondence and work. . . . I was all in arrears, and too poorly to set to work by myself. . . . He is just gone, and my first act after his departure is writing to you.

It is true that all this proves I am not brilliant, so far. . . . That, I think, is quite enough about myself. . . . And you, then, are still living *in domo*



## Letters 259 and 260

*luctus*.<sup>1</sup> Your dear mother cannot swallow the extensive morals I preach to her. Add nothing intentionally to the sadness of your interior and external state, and retract none of your self-surrender, but try to expand yourself in it all, and to calm yourself beneath the eyes of the Master, by saying to Him with calmness and confidence, *Tua sum ego*.<sup>2</sup>

I bless you, my daughter.

### 259

MY DAUGHTER,

September 29, 1896.

I expect to reach Lourdes at 12.15 on Saturday, the 4th, though I am sorry to miss the Mass of St. Francis. I shall have faculties for confession, and I much wonder what could prevent your availing yourself of them. If I can be of any service to your friend, do not hesitate to tell her that I am at her disposal. How much I wish our meeting, which seemed impossible, may bring you a ray of sunshine!

Tell *la madre* that it is quite true that I am better; it is proved by my being able to eat; I eat, therefore I exist. On this reckoning, you scarcely exist at all, *povera!*

### 260

October 9, 1896.

Well, *figlia*, who is to begin? Here I am settled where you advised me, and I am staying on because I am comfortable, things are not dear,

<sup>1</sup> In the house of mourning.

<sup>2</sup> I am Thine.

## The Way of the Heart

and I have not to climb; and because the attendance and catering are very simple but hearty. They are capital people and homely. I am glad I did not bring my servant, as he would be no use to me. My health? It is neurasthenia, not at all grave, and the cure certain but slow; probably it means a two weeks' stay. . . . Probably this halt in my life is one of God's graces. I am quite ready to welcome it.

And now, how about your return? Were you depressed and disappointed on leaving Lourdes? Or, were you not more calm in blind acceptance of the way in which you have been *trist*? Come, let us begin to reopen our intercourse as in the palmiest days of Louville. I shall wait for you, so no more to-day. A thousand good wishes to your dear mother.

261

October 10, 1896.

—'s *cuisine* would be enough to make the dead eat; that is true, I should hotly dispute anyone's assertion that you could find any other to equal it. However, tell *la madre* that here we have excellent fish, capital oysters, fresh eggs, and the milk is first-rate, and along with all these things I find chicken, or quail, or partridge on every menu. Hence, you may infer I have not to partake of any bad cookery. *Figlia*, I forbid you to be gloomy about me. I am not so, and I am sure it is a special grace for me. I bless you.

## Letters 262 and 263

262

October 12, 1896.

*Figlia*, in your Saturday's letter there is something I don't understand, and yet it grieves me. What has proved a disappointment to you? What made you infer that you must shut yourself up and not trouble others with the tale of your sufferings, as if I were one of the *others*, and as if the tale would weary me? I know I told you to write as "in the palmy days of Louville." If that was an invitation to silence, or a sign of weariness, I don't understand anything about it.

It is fearful weather, and it does not brighten my exile: storms, wind, rain, and hail for the last thirty-six hours. All that makes me no brighter than I need be. Only *at home* can one genuinely say: *Suave mari magno*.<sup>1</sup> My soul, now held fast like my body, has nothing consoling to say to you, *figlia mia*. But it is more than ever wide open to all that concerns you, and desirous of remaining in communication with yours.

I bless you, *figlia*.

263

October 17, 1896.

*Figlia*, you will be glad to hear that Abbé — has unexpectedly arrived; he is writing my letters for me, taking me out for walks, and entertaining me. He will be here two or three weeks; it is capital.

I am not getting on rapidly. I am what I was when you saw me at Lourdes. Still, my appetite

<sup>1</sup> It is pleasant to look on at the storm.

## The Way of the Heart

is better, though, on the other hand, my enervation is more frequent and more painful.

Thank you for remembering me on the 16th. Yes, thirty-one years of the priesthood, thirty in the ministry, are already a great grace; and, if God thinks they are enough, I am quite ready to say *Amen*. Still, I don't expect that.

— is taking me to Hendaye, so I must cut short. Forgive me if this is too dry, but the sauce will come anon.

264

DEAR MADAME,

October 26, 1896.

To-morrow is your day of mourning. If you have no Mass at home, you will have my Mass. It will be for you as well as for him. I will specially ask God to grant you serenity, peace, and hope, the three best companions of sorrow.

It is now twelve years since your heart has been bleeding. These twelve years are taken from your days of trial, and shorten it to that extent. As to the goal which alarms you, and which is not a goal, but a passage, it is not so terrible as you think. Our Saviour has passed through it and softened its hardness, and turned it into a path of life.

What am I to say about myself? I am not getting on at all. I hardly believe in the doctors, as you know, but I obey them, because it is part of the order of things. I know my recovery is a work of time, and I don't much believe that localities do any good. As soon as my doctor approves of my departure, I shall be delighted to leave this coast. But I don't think my stay here has done me any harm.

## Letter 265

265

October 27, 1896.

*Figlia*, twelve years ago I was with you! We were very sad then! This year we are far from one another, and we are not much more cheerful. I am quite content to believe you as to medicine, since I believe in nothing less. But in practice, I follow the official guidance, which is that of the doctors. It is true my enervation has increased here; it would have probably increased anywhere else; my illness is taking its course. F—— will decide.

And you, too, are ill, and you take no care of yourself, and you are ruining yourself for fear of upsetting your mother by seeming to require looking after. I fear this perpetual self-repression may reduce you to the same state as I am in.

And then, your soul is always overcast. If it is not dark, at any rate it is chilly and gloomy weather in mine. But what does it matter? Let Him be glorified in our infirmities of body and soul, let Him increase at our expense! *Deus qui nos conspicis ex nostra infirmitate deficere*,<sup>1</sup> says the Collect. I love this prayer. Yes, we are failing, but we are so by *His* will, beneath His eyes, and with a desire to glorify Him by our humiliation. Then, is not all well? To speak to you better of Him, I should have to be less utterly spent. My head is empty of ideas. Only my heart is sure of its affection, sure of being God's, and yours in God. I think, indeed, that in making me feel His Cross in this new

<sup>1</sup> God, who seest that we fail through our own infirmity.

## The Way of the Heart

fashion, *He* wants to unite me more closely with a certain daughter of His who is also mine, and on whom He ever makes His Cross weigh heavily. Together let us bear this self-endearing Cross which teaches one how to love.

*La benedico, figlia.*

266

MY CHILD,

November 3,<sup>1</sup> 1896.

On the advice of all the Paris and Biarritz doctors, I am leaving Biarritz. I shall be in Paris on Thursday evening for a few days. Then I shall go where I am sent, probably to Montpellier. I should like to stop at ——, but I shall not be able to do so.

I bless you.

<sup>1</sup> Three days later, Mgr. d'Hulst was called to God.

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THE WAY OF THE HEART

