

Mirror
of
Perfection

by
Br. Leo of Assisi

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Sebastian Evans, trans.



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Part I

Here Beginneth the Mirror of Perfection of the State of a Brother Minor, to wit, of the Blessed Francis

Chapter I

How the Blessed Francis made answer unto the ministers that would not be bound to the obseruance of the Rule that he made

THE Blessed Francis made three Rules, to wit, the one that Pope Innocent did confirm unto him without a Bull; afterward he made another, briefer, and this was lost; afterward the one that Pope Honorius did confirm with a Bull, out of the which Rule were many things taken out by the ministers against the will of the Blessed Francis. But after the second Rule that the Blessed Francis made was lost, he went up into a certain mountain with brother Leo of Assisi and brother Bonyzo of Bologna, that he might make another Rule the which by Christ's teaching he made be written. But the greater part of the ministers, assembling together unto brother Elias, who was vicar of the Blessed Francis, said unto him: "We have heard that this brother Francis maketh a new Rule, but we are afraid lest he should make it too harsh, in such sort that we cannot observe it. Wherefore, we wish that thou go unto him and tell him that we will not be bound unto that Rule. Let him make it for himself and not for us."

Unto whom brother Elias made answer that he would not go without them, whereupon they all of them did go together. And when brother Elias was nigh the place where the Blessed Francis was standing, brother Elias called unto him. Making answer, and beholding the ministers aforesaid, the Blessed Francis said: "What would these brethren?" And saith brother Elias: "They be ministers that have heard how thou makest a new Rule, and being afraid lest thou make it too harsh, do say and protest that they will not be bound thereunto. Make it for thyself and not for them." Thereupon the Blessed

Francis did turn his face towards Heaven, and spoke unto Christ in this way: “Lord, said I not well when I told Thee they would not believe me?” Then all did hear the voice of Christ that made answer in the air: “Francis, nought is there of thine own in the Rule, but whatsoever is therein is all Mine own, and My will it is that thus shall the Rule be observed to the letter, to the letter, to the letter, without gloss, without gloss, without gloss!” He added moreover: “I know how much the weakness of men can do, and I have right good will to help them. Let them that are unwilling to keep it, therefore, depart from the Order!” Then the Blessed Francis turned him towards those brethren and said unto them: “Ye have heard! Ye have heard! Will ye that I should make you again be spoken unto?” Then the ministers, rebuking themselves, went away confounded and afraid.

Part II

The Second Part, of the Perfection of Poverty

Chapter II

And first, in what wise the Blessed Francis declared the will and intention which he had from the beginning to the end as regards the observance of poverty

BROTHER Richer of the March, noble of lineage and noble by his holiness, whom the Blessed Francis did love with great affection, on a certain day visited the Blessed Francis in the Bishop's palace of Assisi, and among other things whereof he spoke with him as concerning the state of the Religion and the observance of the Rule, he made question specially of this: "Tell me, Father, the intention that thou hadst from the beginning when thou didst begin to have brethren, and the intention that thou now hast and lookest to have even unto the day of thy death, so as that I may be able to bear witness to thy intention and to thy first will and thy last; to wit, whether we clergy-brethren that have so many books can in truth have them, albeit we say that they be the books of the Religion?" The Blessed Francis made answer unto him: "Brother, I say unto thee that this was and is my first intention and my last will, if only the brethren would have believed me, that no brother ought to have anything save his habit as our Rule alloweth, with girdle and hosen."

But if any brother may be minded to say: "Why, then, did not the Blessed Francis in his own time make his Rule and the poverty thereby enjoined to be so strictly observed by the brethren as he said unto brother Richer, nor commanded it thus to be observed?" we that were with him make answer unto this according as we have heard from his own mouth, inasmuch as he himself said these and many other things to the brethren, and even made many things be written in the Rule, the which, with earnest prayer and meditation, he besought of the Lord as being useful to the Religion, affirming the same

to be altogether according to the will of God; nevertheless, after he showed them unto the brethren, they seemed unto them heavy and not to be borne, seeing that they knew not what things should come to pass in the Religion after his death. And for that he was sore afraid of scandal, both as concerning himself as well as the brethren, he was not minded to contend with them, but did unwillingly condescend unto their wishes, and did excuse himself thereof before the Lord.

But that the word which the Lord did put into his mouth for the benefit of the brethren might not return unto Him empty, he willed to fulfil the same in himself, that he might thereby earn his wages of the Lord, and at the end his spirit did herein find rest and comfort.

Chapter III

How he made answer to a minister that would faine have books by his licence, and how the ministers without his knowledge made the clause concerning the prohibition of the Gospel be removed from the Rule

NOW, on a time, when the Blessed Francis had come back from the parts beyond sea, a certain minister did hold talk with him as concerning the clause of poverty, wishing to know his will and understanding thereupon, and the more for that a certain clause was at that time written in the Rule as concerning the prohibitions of the Holy Gospel, to wit: "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves nor scrip, neither bread, neither money, neither have two coats apiece." And the Blessed Francis made answer: "I understand it thus, that the brethren ought to have nothing save their garments with a cord and hosen as the Rule saith, and if they are compelled by necessity, they may wear shoes."

And the minister said unto him: "What shall I do, that have so many books as that they be worth more than forty pounds?" But this he said for that he was minded to have them with a clear conscience, inasmuch as it went against his conscience to have so many books knowing how strictly the Blessed Francis did understand the clause of poverty. And the Blessed Francis saith unto him: "I will not, nor I ought not, nor I cannot go against my conscience and the fulfillment of the Holy Scripture that we have professed." And when he heard this the minister was sorrowful. But the Blessed Francis, seeing him

thus troubled, with much fervency of spirit spoke unto him in the person of all the brethren: “Ye would fain appear before men as brethren Minor and be called observants of the Holy Gospel, but in your works would ye fain have treasure-chests!”

Nevertheless, albeit the ministers knew that according to the Rule the brethren were held to the observance of the Holy Gospel, yet nevertheless did they make be removed from the Rule that clause: “Take nothing for your journey,” and the rest, believing that thereby they should not be held to observe the fulfilment of the Gospel. Wherefore, when the Blessed Francis by the Holy Spirit had knowledge thereof, he spoke in the presence of certain of the brethren, saying: “The brethren-ministers think to deceive the Lord and me, yea, albeit they know that all the brethren be bound to observe the fulfilment of the Holy Gospel. It is my will that it be written both at the beginning and at the end of the Rule that the brethren are bound firmly to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and that the brethren may be evermore without excuse from such time as I have announced unto them and do announce those things that for my salvation and theirs the Lord hath put into my mouth, it is my will that they do show forth those things in their works before God, and by His help do observe them forever.” Hence was it that he himself did observe all the Holy Gospel to the letter, from the very outset of the time he began to have brethren even unto the day of his death.

Chapter IV

Of the novice that would fain have a psalter by his licence

AT another time, moreover, a certain brother, a novice that knew how to read a psalter, albeit not very well, did nevertheless obtain from the Minister-General a licence to have one; yet for that he heard how the Blessed Francis was minded that his brethren should not be desirous of knowledge and books, he was not content to have it without the leave of the Blessed Francis. What time, therefore, the Blessed Francis was come to the place where that novice was, the novice said: “Father, a great solace would it be to me to have a psalter, but albeit the General hath allowed it unto me, I would fain have it with thy knowledge and approval.” Unto whom the Blessed Francis made answer: “Charles the Emperor, Roland and Oliver, and all the paladins and puissant men that were mighty in war, pursuing the paynims with sore sweat and travail even to the death, did achieve a victory over them

worthy of all remembrance, and at the last did themselves die in battle, holy martyrs for the faith of Christ; yet now be there many that would fain receive honor and the praise of men for only telling the tale of the deeds they did. In like manner, even amongst ourselves many there be that are fain to receive praise and honor only by rehearsing and preaching the works that the saints did themselves achieve”; as who should say: “Pay not heed unto books and knowledge, but unto godly works, for knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” But after some days, when the Blessed Francis was sitting at the fire, the same novice did again speak to him about the psalter. And the Blessed Francis saith unto him: “After that thou shalt have had the psalter, thou wilt be covetous and desire to have a breviary also. And after thou hast gotten a breviary, thou wilt sit in a chair like a great prelate and wilt say unto thy brother, ‘Fetch me the breviary!’”

And while he spoke thus, the Blessed Francis with great fervency of spirit did take of the ashes and set upon his own head, and drawing his hand in a compass over his head as he that should wash his head, said: “I a breviary! I a breviary!” And thus many times did he repeat the same, drawing his hand over his head. And that brother was amazed and ashamed. Afterwards the Blessed Francis said unto him: “Brother, I in likewise have been tempted to have books, but whilst I still knew not the will of God therein, I took a book wherein were written the Lord’s Gospels, and I prayed unto the Lord that in the first opening of the book, He would show me of this matter. And when I had made an end of praying, on the first opening of the book I lighted on that Word of the Holy Gospel: ‘Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but unto others in parables.’” And he saith: “So many be there that do willingly raise them up unto knowledge, that blessed shall he be that shall make him barren for the love of our Lord God.”

But after many months had gone by, when the Blessed Francis was at the place of S. Mary of the Little Portion, nigh the cell beyond the house in the street, the aforesaid brother did again speak to him about the psalter. To whom the Blessed Francis said: “Go and do herein as thy minister shall tell thee.” And when he heard this, the brother began to return by the way that he had come. But the Blessed Francis bided in the way, and began to think upon that which he had said to the brother, and straightway called out after him saying: “Wait for me, brother, wait!” And he went up to him, and saith unto him: “Turn back with me, brother, and show me the place where I said unto thee that thou shouldst do as thy minister should tell thee in the matter of the

psalter.” When therefore they had come as far as the place, the Blessed Francis bent his knee before that brother and said: “Mine is the fault, brother, mine is the fault! for whosoever will be brother Minor ought to have nothing save his habit as the Rule alloweth him and a cord and hosen, and shoes for them that are compelled of manifest necessity.” Hence it came to pass that when sundry of the brethren came to him to take counsel on matters of this kind, it was on this wise that he made answer unto them. And therefore did he say oftentimes: “As much knowledge hath a man as he doth work, and a Religious only preacheth well insomuch as he worketh well, for the doer is known by his fruits.”

Chapter V

Of maintaining poverty in books, beds, buildings, and appliances

THE most Blessed Father taught the brethren as for books, to look to their inwardness, not to their price; to the edification to be found therein, not to their outward adornments. He willed that such as they had should be few and in common, and those such as were suitable to the necessities of the brethren. In beds and beddings a plentiful poverty did so abound that he who had a tattered rag over his straw did hold the same for a feather-bed.

He taught his brethren, moreover, to make their dwellings after a sorry sort, and would that their cabins should be of wood, not stone, and these constructed and built after a mean pattern; and not only did he hate arrogance in their houses, but he did exceedingly abhor much or choice furnishing thereof. He had no liking for aught in tables or vessels that was of worldly seeming, and whereby remembrance of the world might be recalled; so as that all things might point toward poverty as their end and intent, and all things chant songs of pilgrimage and exile.

Chapter VJ

How he made all the brethren go out of a certain house that was said to belong to the brethren

NOW when he was passing through Bologna, he heard that the house of the brethren there had been newly built. Straightway, as soon as he heard how that house was said to be the house of the brethren, he turned back on his steps and went out of the city, and strictly commanded that all the brethren should depart thereout in haste and should in nowise thenceforward dwell therein. Whereupon all the brethren went out in such wise that not even the sick remained therein, but were turned out with the others, until such time as Ugolino, Lord Bishop of Ostia and Legate in Lombardy, did publicly declare the said house to be his own. And a brother that lay sick and was turned out of the house at that time beareth witness to these things and did write this.

Chapter VJJ

How he was fain to destroy a certain house that the folk of Assisi had made at S. Mary of the Little Portion

WHEN the time of the General Chapter that was held every year at S. Mary of the Little Portion drew nigh, the folk of Assisi, considering that the brethren day by day did multiply, and that all of them every year did there assemble together, forasmuch as they had not but one small cell thatched with straw whereof the walls were of wattle and dab, did hold their council, and within a few days, in much haste and with the greatest devotion, did make there a great house built of stones and mortar, without the consent of the Blessed Francis and in his absence. And when the Blessed Francis returned from a certain province and came thither to the Chapter, he marvelled greatly of the house that there was built, and fearing lest by occasion of this house that other brothers in the places wherein they sojourned or might thereafter sojourn should in like fashion cause great houses to be made, and for that he willed this place should be the pattern and example of all other places of the Order, before the Chapter was ended, he went up on to the roof of the house and bade the brethren go up also, and along with the brethren themselves did begin to throw down to the ground the tiles wherewith the

house was roofed, being minded to destroy the same even to the foundations. But certain soldiers of Assisi that were there to guard the place by reason of the number of burgesses that had come together to look on at the Chapter of the brethren, seeing how the Blessed Francis with the other brethren was minded to batter the house to pieces, straightway went unto him and said to him: "Brother, this house belongeth to the Community of Assisi, and we be here on behalf of the Community. Wherefore we warn thee that thou destroy not this house which is ours." Upon hearing this, the Blessed Francis said unto them: "If so be, then, that it is yours, I do not wish to touch it." And forthwith he and the other brethren came down therefrom. Wherefore from that time forward the people of the city of Assisi made a by-law that whosoever should be high-bailiff of the city should be bound to make it be repaired. And every year for a long time thereafter was this statute observed.

Chapter VIIII

How he chided his vicar for that he caused be made there a little house for saying the Office

AT another time, moreover, the vicar of the Blessed Francis began to make build in the same place a small house wherein the brethren might take their rest and say their Hours, for on account of the multitude of brethren that came unto that place, the brethren had not where to say the Office. For all the brethren of the Order did come together in that place, for that none was received into the Order save only there. And when the house was now already completed, the Blessed Francis returned to that place, and as he was abiding in his cell he heard talking of laborers there, and calling his companion, he asked what the brethren were at work upon. To whom the companion related all things as they were. But straightway he made his vicar be called, and saith unto him: "Brother, this place is the pattern and example of the whole Religion, and I would therefore that the brethren of this place should be the first to suffer tribulation and discomfort for the love of our Lord God, and that the other brethren which shall come hither shall carry back the good example of poverty to their own places; whereas if these should have their comforts in full, those others also might take example of building in their own places, saying, 'In this place of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion, which is the foremost place of the Order, are such and so great buildings made, wherefore may we also build the like in our own places.'"


Chapter III

How the Blessed Francis would not stay in a cell curiously wrought, or if it were said to be his own

A CERTAIN brother, right spiritual and greatly familiar with the Blessed Francis, did cause to be made in the hermitage wherein he sojourned a certain cell, a little distance away, wherein the Blessed Francis might stay and pray whensoever he should come thither. But when the Blessed Francis came to that place, the brother led him to the cell. To whom said the Blessed Francis: "Too fair is this cell!" albeit it were only of wood, shapen with adze and hatchet. "If, therefore, thou wouldst that I should abide there, let be made for it a covering within and without of wattles and branches of trees." For the sorrier seeming was house or cell, the more gladly did he sojourn therein. Which, when the brother had done, the Blessed Francis abode there several days. But on a certain day, when he had gone out of that cell, a certain brother went to look thereat, and afterwards came to the place where the Blessed Francis was. And when the Blessed Francis saw him, he said unto him: "Whence comest thou, brother?" And he saith, "From thy cell." And the Blessed Francis said unto him: "For that thou hast said it is my cell, henceforward another shall stay therein and not I." For we that were with him have often heard him saying that word: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." And, again, he would say: "When Our Lord withdrew Him into the wilderness and fasted forty days and forty nights, He had no cell nor house made there, but abode throughout on a stone of the mountains." Wherefore, by His example would he never have house nor cell that should be called his own, nor none such would he never have made at all. If it were that at any time he had said to the brethren: "Go and make ready such or such a cell," yet was he never minded thereafter to abide in it on account of that word of the Holy Gospel: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on." For even about the time of his death he made be written in his will that all the cells and houses of the brethren should be of stud and mud only, the better to maintain poverty and humility.

Chapter Ƒ

Of the manner of taking places in cities and building therein, according to the intention of the Blessed Francis

 IN a time when he was at Siena for the infirmity of his eyes, Doctor Bonaventura, who had given the brethren land whereon a place was built, said unto him: “Father, how seemeth it unto thee of this place?” And the Blessed Francis saith unto him: “Wouldst thou that I tell thee how the places of the brethren ought to be built?” He made answer: “Yes, Father.” And the Blessed Francis said: “When the brethren go to any city where they have no place, and find any man willing to give them so much land, as that they may build them a place and have therein a garden and all things necessary, they ought to consider first of all how much land will be enough for them, looking always to the poverty and the good example that in all things we are bound to show forth.”

But this he said, for that he was minded the brethren should in no wise, neither in houses, nor churches, nor gardens, nor in nought else whereof they had the use, trespass beyond the bounds of poverty, nor hold no places whatsoever by right of ownership, but should sojourn therein as pilgrims and strangers; wherefore he would not that the brethren should be lodged together in the places in large numbers, for that it seemed to him a hard thing for poverty to be observed in a great multitude. And this was his intention from the beginning of his conversion even to the end, that poverty should in all things be thoroughly observed.

“When, therefore, the brethren have considered the land necessary for the place, they ought to go to the Bishop of the city and say unto him: ‘Such an one is fain to give us so much land for the love of God and for the salvation of his soul, to the end that we may build us a place therein; wherefore, first of all, we have recourse to you as father and lord of souls unto all the flock committed unto you, and of all our brethren that shall sojourn in this place, inasmuch as we desire to build therein with God’s blessing and yours.’”

But this he said for that the harvest of souls which the brethren would fain garner, they do the better gather in through being at peace with the clergy, winning them over even as the people, rather than by scandalising them, albeit they might thereby win over the people. He saith, moreover: “The Lord hath called us unto the succor of His faith and of the clergy and prelates of the Holy Roman Church. And therefore are we bound, as far as possible, always

to love them and honor and reverence them. For we be called brethren Minor, for that, as in name, so in example, we ought to be humble beyond other men of this world. And seeing that from the beginning of my conversion the Lord hath put His word into the mouth of the Bishop of Assisi, that he should give me counsel, and be of good comfort unto me in the service of Christ; on this account, and on account of many other things excellent that I do pay regard unto in the Prelates, I am fain to love and venerate, not the Bishops alone, but the poorer clergy also, and to hold them for my lords.

“Thereafter, when they have received a blessing from the Bishop, let them go and make a great trench be driven around the compass of the land they have received for building the place, and thereby let them set a good hedge for a wall, as a mark of holy poverty and humility. After that, let them make be built poor houses of mud and stūd, and sundry little cells, wherein at times the brethren may pray and work for greater decency and for the avoiding of sloth. And let them make build little churches, for they ought not to have great churches built, neither for the sake of preaching to the people nor upon no other occasion, for the humility is the greater and the example the better when they go to other churches to preach. And if at any time prelates and clerics, either regular or secular, shall come unto their places, the sorry houses, the little cells, and the small churches will preach to them, and more will they be edified by these things than they would be by words.” Moreover, saith he, “Many a time do the brethren have great buildings made, breaking thereby our holy poverty, giving occasion of mischievous whispers, and setting a bad example unto many, whensoever by reason of the offer of a better or holier place, or the object of gathering together a greater congregation of folk, they do leave their old places and buildings through covetousness and avarice, and destroy them to make others great and excessive, so that they which did there give alms, and others that see these things, are scandalized and troubled thereat. For these reasons it is better for the brethren to make their buildings little and sorry, observing their profession and giving a good example to their neighbors, than for them to act against their promise and give to others an evil example. For if it were that the brethren should still build their houses of the sorriest, albeit they should leave a sorry site when a site more decent were offered, the scandal would be the less.”

Chapter Ʒ

How the brethren, and more notably they that had authoritie and they that had most of human learning, were against the Blessed Francis about making the places and dwelling places sorry

WHEN the Blessed Francis made ordinance that the churches of the brethren should be little and their houses built only of stude and mud in token of holy poverty and humility, he, being faine to set this pattern first in the place of S. Mary of the Little Portion, and to have the houses therein for the most part put together of stude and mud so that it might be an everlasting memorial to all the brethren present and future, for that it was the first and chief place of the whole Order, certain brethren were against him in this, saying that in certain provinces wood was more costly than stone, so that it seemed to them not good to make the houses of stude and mud. But the Blessed Francis was not minded to contend with them, and the more for that he was nigh unto death and sore sick. Wherefore at that time he made be written in his will: "Let the brethren take heed that they accept not for their own the churches, dwelling-places, and other things that may be built for them save only as holy poverty beseemeth, but be lodged therein as pilgrims and strangers." But we that were with him when he wrote the Rule and well-nigh all the rest of his writings do bear witness that he made be written in the Rule and his other writings many things wherein a number of the brethren, and specially those of us that were in authority and had most of human learning, were against him, the which would today be greatly useful and necessary to the whole Religion; yet nevertheless, for that he sorely feared a scandal, he condescended even against his own will to the will of the brethren. Nevertheless this speech was often on his lips: "Woe unto those brethren that set them against me in this matter which I know of a certainty to be of the will of God for the greater usefulness and need of the whole Religion, albeit I unwillingly condescend unto their will." Whence he did oftentimes say unto us, his companions: "Herein is my grief and my affliction, that in these things which with much travail of prayer and meditation I obtain of God through His mercy for the welfare present and future of the whole Religion, and am by Himself certified that they be in accordance with His will, yet certain of the brethren on the authority of their own knowledge and false forethought do go against me and make them void, saying, 'Such and such things are to be kept and observed, and such others not.'"

Chapter XXX

**How he held it a theft to obtain alms or to make use thereof
beyond what is necessary**

THE Blessed Francis was often wont to say these words unto the brethren: “Never was I a thief in the matter of alms, neither in obtaining the same, nor in making use of them beyond what was necessary. Always have I received less than I might, lest the other needy ones should be cheated of their portion, for to do the contrary would have been robbery.”

Chapter XXXI

**How Christ said unto him that He would not the brethren should
have aught, neither in common nor in special**

WHEN the brethren-minister would persuade him that he should allow the brethren to have something in common, at least so that a multitude so great should have that to which they might have recourse, the Blessed Francis in prayer did call upon Christ and take counsel with Him hereupon. Who forthwith made answer, saying: “I will take away all things in special and in common; seeing that as for this family always will I be ready to make provision, howsoever it may increase, and evermore will I cherish it so long as it shall hope in Me.”

Chapter XXXII

**Of his execration of money, and in what wise he punished a
brother on this account**

FRANCIS, true friend and imitator of Christ, despising perfectly all things that are of this world, did above all execrate money, and both by word and example did urge his brethren to flee therefrom as from the devil. For this was the policy given to the brethren, that money should hold in their affections no higher place than dung. Now it so befell one day that a certain layman did enter into the church of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion to pray, and by way of oblation did place a piece of money within the cross. When he had gone his way, a certain brother did foolishly

take the piece in his hand and throw it into the locker. But when this was told to the Blessed Francis, the brother, seeing that he had been caught, straightway betook him to pardon, and prostrating himself on the ground did proffer him unto the stripes.

The Blessed Francis reasoned with him and did chide him right bitterly for that he had touched the piece of money, and commanded him to pick up the piece out of the locker with his mouth and carry it beyond the hedge of the place, and set it with his own mouth on the dung of an ass. All they that did see and hear the same were sore stricken with fear, and thenceforward did despise money the more for that it had been made of no more account than the dung of an ass, and every day were they encouraged by new examples to despise it utterly.

Chapter XV

Of avoiding coddling, and of the multiplication of habits, and of having patience in times of need

THIS man, endued with virtue from on high, did make him warm rather from within by the divine, than from without by the bodily garment. He did detest that any in the Order should go clad in threefold garments, or make use of clothing more delicate than was needful. For he maintained that to make a need of that which is a need pointed out by the will only, and not by reason, is the token of a quenched spirit. “When the spirit,” saith he, “is lukewarm, and little by little cooling away from grace, it cannot be but that flesh and blood will seek after the things that are their own.” He said, moreover: “For what remaineth when the soul is without spiritual delights, but for the flesh to turn back to its own delights? Then the animal appetite is pleaded in excuse as a point of necessity; then the sense of the flesh doth shape the conscience.

“If a true necessity lieth upon my brother, and he forthwith hasteneth to satisfy the same, what reward shall he receive? for an opportunity of deserving a reward hath befallen him, but he hath taken pains to prove that he was loath so to do. For not to bear indignities patiently is nought else but to seek to return into Egypt.”

Lastly, he would that the brethren on no account should have more than two habits, but these he did allow to be lined with pieces sewn on. Choice

broadcloths, he said, were to be abhorred, and full bitingly would he flout them that thwarted him herein; and that he might spur such by his own example, he did always sew coarse sackcloth upon his habit. Whence even at his death he bade his burial-habit be covered with sackcloth. Howbeit, those brethren whom sickness or other necessity did compel, did put on another soft habit underneath, next the skin; but in such wise as that without-doors coarseness and meanness should be observed in their outward seeming. For with sore sorrow was he wont to say: “Presently will rigor be so greatly relaxed, and lukewarmness will so far prevail, as that the sons of a father that was a beggar will not be ashamed even to wear scarlet cloth, with only a change of color.”

Chapter LVJ

That he would not satisfy his body with aught whereof he thought that other brethren were in want

Now, when the Blessed Francis was sojourning at the hermitage of S. Eleutherius over against Rieti, by reason of the great cold he did line his own habit and the habit of his companion Richer with sundry pieces of cloth, so that thereby his body began to be some litle comforted, for he never wore but one habit, to wit, the one he wore every day. And a little after, when he was coming back from prayer, with great gladness he said to his companion: “Me it behoveth to be the pattern and example of all the brethren, wherefore, albeit that it is necessary for my body to have my habit lined, yet it is meet that I take thought for others of my brethren unto whom the same thing is a necessity, but who haply neither have it nor can have it. Whence it behoveth me consider them, so that I may suffer the necessities which they themselves suffer, so that, when they see this in me, they may bear their own with the greater patience.”

But what and how great were the necessities that he denied his body to the intent that he might give a good example to the brethren, and that they might bear their own needs more willingly, we that were with him can never set forth in words nor in writing. For after the brethren began to be multiplied, he made it his highest and chiefest study to teach the brethren the things that they had to do or to avoid rather by his deeds than by his words.

Chapter **LVII**

That he was ashamed to see any man poorer than himself

WHENCE on a time, when he had met a certain needy man, taking note of his poverty, he said unto his companion: “That man’s poverty doth imply great shame unto us, and doth sorely rebuke our poverty, for the greatest shame is it to me whensoever I find one poorer than myself, seeing that I have chosen holy poverty for my Lady and for my spiritual and bodily riches, and this voice hath been bruited abroad throughout the world, to wit, that I have professed poverty before God and before men.”

Chapter **LVIII**

How he did induce and teach the first brethren to go forth for alms

WHEN the Blessed Francis began to have brethren, so mightily was he pleased with their conversion, and that the Lord had given him so goodly a company, and so greatly did he love and reverence them, that he did not tell them to go forth for alms. More especially for that it seemed unto him that they were ashamed to go, wherefore, that he might spare their shame, he himself did every day go forth for alms alone. And when he was overwearied with this toil, especially for that he had been delicately nurtured in the world, and was feeble of bodily complexion, and had been yet more enfeebled by exceeding abstinence and affliction, and perceiving that he was not able to endure so heavy travail alone, and that they had been called to this work, albeit they were ashamed to do it, for that as yet they knew not fully, neither had they discretion enough to say: “We also are willing to go for alms.” Wherefore he said unto them: “My dearest brethren and little children, be ye not ashamed to go forth for alms, for the Lord did make Himself poor in this world for us, and by His example have we made choice of the truest poverty. For this is our heritage, that our Lord Jesus Christ did achieve and hath left unto us and unto all that fain would live in holy poverty according to His example. Of a truth I tell you that many of the holier and nobler sort of this world shall come unto this congregation, and shall hold it for high honor and grace to go forth for alms. Go ye forth, therefore, in confidence and with a gladsome heart, for alms with God’s blessing, and more willingly and gladly ought ye to go for alms than he that for a single piece of money did

offer an hundred pence, seeing that unto them from whom ye shall ask an alms ye do offer the love of God, saying: ‘For the love of God do us an alms,’ in comparison wherewith heaven and earth are nought.”

And, for that the brethren were few, he was not able to send them forth two and two, wherefore he sent each one by himself to go among the castles and towns. And it came to pass, when they returned with such alms as they had found, that each did show to the Blessed Francis the alms that he had gathered. And one would say unto another: “I have gathered more alms than thou.” And the Blessed Francis did rejoyce hereof, beholding them so blithe and joyous. And thenceforward did each right gladly ask leave to go forth for alms.

Chapter XXX

*That he would not the brethren should be anxious to make
provision for tomorrow*

ABOUT the same time, when the Blessed Francis was with such brethren as he then had, in so great poverty did he live with them that in all things and throughout all they did observe the Holy Gospel to the letter, to wit, from the day that the Lord revealed unto him that he and his brethren ought to live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. Wherefore he forbade the brother that did the cooking for the brethren to put the herbs into hot water of an evening, as is the wont, when he was to give them the brethren to eat on the day following, so that that they might observe that word of the Holy Gospel, “Take no thought for the morrow.” And so that brother did put off setting them to be sodden until after matins, when the day was already begun whereon they should be eaten. Wherefore for a long time many brethren in many places did observe the same, having no mind to gather or receive more alms than were necessary for one day, more especially in the cities.

Chapter XX

How he did rebuke by word and example those brethren that had made ready the table sumptuously on the day of the Lord's Nativity

WHEN a certain minister of the brethren had come to the Blessed Francis for the purpose of celebrating with him the feast of the Lord's nativity at the place of the brethren of Rieti, the brethren, by occasion of the minister and the feast, had set out the tables somewhat worshipfully and curiously on the very day of the Nativity, spreading napkins fair and white, with glass vessels thereupon. The Blessed Francis, coming down from his cell to eat, saw the tables raised on a dais and curiously set out. Thereupon he went straightway secretly and took the staff and scrip of a certain poor man that had come that day, and, calling one of his companions in a whisper, he went forth of the door without the brethren of the house knowing it. Howbeit, the companion abided within nigh the door. In the meanwhile the brethren came in to meat, for the Blessed Francis had bidden the brethren never to wait for him when he came not forthwith at the hour of eating together. And, after he had stood a little space without, he knocked at the door, and forthwith his companion opened unto him, and, coming in with the scrip on his back and the staff in his hand, he went to the door of the house, wherein the brethren were eating together, as a pilgrim and a beggar, and cried out, saying: "For the love of our Lord God, give an alms to this poor sick pilgrim!" But the minister and the rest of the brethren did know him again at once, and the minister made answer unto him: "Brother, we also be poor, and for that we be many, the alms that we have be necessary unto us, but for the love of the Lord of whom thou hast spoken, enter into the house, and we will give thee of the alms that the Lord hath given unto us!" And when he had come in, and was standing before the table of the brethren, the minister gave him a platter, wherein he did eat, and of the bread in like manner. And, receiving the same, he sat humbly by the fire, while the brethren did sit at the table. Then he sighed and said to the brethren: "When I beheld the table honorably and curiously made ready, I bethought me that it was not the table of poor Religious that every day do go from door to door for alms, for, my best beloved, unto us rather is it seemly to follow the example of the humility and poverty of Christ even more than unto other Religious, forasmuch as unto this have we been called and made profession thereof before God and

before men. Whence meseemeth it only right that I should sit as a brother Minor, for the festivals of the Lord and of other saints be more honored by the need and poverty whereby the saints themselves did win to heaven, than by the curiousness and superfluity whereby the soul is withdrawn away from Heaven." Hereat were the brethren ashamed, bethinking them that what he had said was very sooth. And certain of them began to weep sore, beholding how he sat upon the ground, and that he was fain to correct and teach them in such holy and simple wise. He admonished the brethren, moreover, that they should have their tables so humble and cleanly as that they of this world might be edified thereby, and if it should so befall that any poor man should be invited by the brethren, he might sit along with them as an equal, and not, like a beggar, on the ground, while the brethren sat at the high table.

Chapter XXX

How the Lord Bishop of Ostia wept and was edified at the poverty of the brethren

THE Lord Bishop of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope Gregory, when he came to the Chapter of the brethren at S. Mary of the Little Portion, went into the house to look at the brethren's dormitory with a number of soldiers and clerics, and, when he saw that the brethren lay on the ground and had nought under them but a little straw and some bolsters, all tattered and torn as it were, and no pillows, he began to weep sore before them all, saying: "Look you here where the brethren sleep, while we wretched ones do make use of so many superfluities! How will it be with us for this?" Whereby he himself and all the rest were much edified. Moreover, no table saw he there, for that in that place the brethren did eat together on the ground.

Chapter XXXIII

How the soldiers found things necessary by asking an alms from door to door, according to the counsel of the Blessed Francis

WHEN the Blessed Francis was at the place at Bagnara, above the city of Nocera, his feet began to swell grievously by reason of the ailment of a dropsy, and sore sick was he there. But when the men of Assisi heard thereof, certain soldiers came in haste to that place that they might bring him to Assisi, fearing lest in case he should die there, others might have his most holy body. But whilst they were bringing him on the way, they rested in a certain walled town within the lordship of Assisi to dine there, and the Blessed Francis lay quiet in the house of a certain poor man that willingly did take him in, while the soldiers went about the town to buy themselves necessaries, the which howbeit they found not. Wherefore they came back to the Blessed Francis, saying unto him as it were in jest: “Brother, needs must you give us some of our alms, for here can we have nought to eat.” And the Blessed Francis, with great fervor of spirit, saith unto them: “The reason wherefore ye have found nought is that ye put your trust in your flies and your deniers”—for he was wont to call money “flies”—“and not in God. Now turn ye back to the houses among the which ye went seeking to buy, and setting aside all shamefastness, ask an alms there for the love of the Lord God, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they will give unto you abundantly.”

They went therefore and asked an alms as he had told them, and with much gladness and abundance did they of whom the alms were asked give of such things as they had. And knowing that this by miracle had befallen them, with great joy did they return unto the Blessed Francis, praising the Lord.


Thus, verily, did the Blessed Francis hold it a high nobility both as towards God and as towards the world to seek alms for the love of the Lord God, for that all things which the Heavenly Father did create for the use of man on account of His love for His well-beloved Son, were freely granted by way of alms after sin, alike to the worthy and the unworthy.

For he said that the servant of God ought more willingly and joyfully to ask an alms for the love of the Lord God, than he that of his largesse and courtesy should go about saying: “Whosoever shall give me such a piece of money as is worth but a single penny, unto him will I give a thousand marks of gold,” forasmuch as the servant of God in asking an alms doth offer the love of God unto them of whom he asketh, in comparison wherewith all things

that are in heaven and in earth be as nought. Whence before such time as the brethren were multiplied, and even after they were multiplied, when they went about the world preaching and were invited by any, howsoever noble and rich, to eat and to lodge with him, always at the hour of eating they went for alms, or ever they went into his house, as a good example to the brethren and for the dignity of our Lady Poverty. And many a time did he say unto him that did invite him that he would not go, making answer thus unto him: "I am fain not to lay aside my royal dignity and heritage, and my profession and that of my brethren, to wit, to go for alms from door to door." And sometimes he that had invited him would go with him, and such alms as the Blessed Francis did obtain would he keep as relics on account of his devotion. He that wrote these things saw this many a time and doth hereby bear witness thereof.

Chapter XXXIII

How he went for alms before he would go in to the Cardinal's table

N a time when the Blessed Francis was visiting the Lord Bishop of Ostia, that was afterward Pope Gregory, at the hour of eating together he went as it were by stealth from door to door for alms, and when he was come back the Lord Bishop of Ostia had already gone in to meat with a number of knights and nobles. But the Blessed Francis, drawing nigh the table, did set thereon before the Cardinal such alms as he had found and took his seat next him at the table, for he would that the Blessed Francis should always sit near him. And the Cardinal was thereby some little ashamed that he should have gone for alms and set them on the table, but as at that time he said nought unto him on account of them that were there present seated. And when he had eaten some little, the Blessed Francis took of his alms and sent a morsel thereof to each of the knights and the chaplains of my Lord Cardinal on behalf of our Lord God. Who all receiving the same with great gladness and devotion, did spread out their hoods and cassocks, and some did eat thereof and some did set it aside out of devotion to him. But my Lord Cardinal of Ostia did greatly rejoice thereat on account of their devotion, and most of all for that those alms were not of wheaten bread.

After meat, he went into his chamber, taking with him the Blessed Francis, and lifting up his arms did embrace the Blessed Francis with exceeding gladness

and rejoicing, saying unto him: “O most simple brother mine, wherefore hast thou done me shame this day, insomuch as that coming to my house, which is the house of the brethren, thou shouldst go forth for alms?”

The Blessed Francis made answer: “Verily, my Lord, I have shown thee the greatest honor, for that when a liege subject doth his duty and fulfilleth his obedience unto his lord, he doth honor unto his lord, and,” saith he, “meet it is that I be the pattern and example of your poor men, and most of all for that I know in this religion of the brotherhood there are and will be brethren Minor in name and in work that for the love of the Lord God and for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who shall teach them in all things, shall humble themselves to all humility and subjection and service of their brethren. Some, moreover, there are and will be among them that either held back by shame or by reason of evil habit disdain and will disdain to humiliate and lower themselves by going forth for alms and to do other menial works, wherefore it is meet that I teach by my work them that are and shall be of the religion, so as that in this world and in the world to come they may be without excuse before God. When, therefore, I am sojourning with you, that are our Lord and Pope, or with other worshipful and rich men of the world, that for the love of our Lord God do not only receive me with much devotion into your houses, but do even compel me to come in, I am fain not to be ashamed of going forth for alms; nay, rather, I am fain to have and to hold this as towards God for the highest nobility and a royal dignity, and in honor of Him who, being Lord of all, was willing for our sakes to become servant of all, and who, when He was rich and glorious in His majesty, did come as one poor and despised in our humility. Whence I desire that the brethren, both they that now are and they that shall be hereafter, should know that I hold it for a greater consolation both of soul and body when I sit at the sorry table of the brethren, and behold before me the sorry alms that are obtained from door to door for the love of our Lord God, than when I sit at your board or that of other lords plentifully laid out with divers dainty meats. For the bread of alms is holy bread, that the praise and love of the Lord God doth hallow, forasmuch as whensoever a brother goeth forth for alms, he ought first of all to say: ‘Praised and blessed be God our Lord.’ Afterwards he ought to say: ‘Do us an alms for the love of our Lord God!’”

And by the setting forth of words of this kind by the Blessed Francis was the Cardinal greatly edified, and he saith unto him, “My son, do whatsoever is right in thine own eyes, forasmuch as God is with thee and thou art with

Him.”

For the will of the Blessed Francis was thus, and many a time he said that a brother ought not to stand long upon going forth for alms on account of the great merit thereof, and lest he should be shamed to go forth afterwards. Yea, the more noble and better off in the world was the brother, by so much the more was he rejoiced and edified as concerning him when he went forth for alms and did other menial works that the brethren did as at that time.

Chapter XXXV

Of the brother that did neither pray nor work, but did eat well

AT the outset of the Religion, when the brethren sojourned at Rivo Torto, near Assisi, among them was a certain brother that did hardly pray at all, and never did any work. He would not go forth for alms, but he did eat bravely. Perceiving these things, the Blessed Francis knew by the Holy Spirit that he was a carnal man, and saith he unto him: “Go thy ways, brother fly, forasmuch as thou art minded to devour the labor of thy brethren and to be slothful in the work of God, even as the idle drone and barren that winneth nought nor laboreth, but devoureth the winning and the travail of the good bees.” And so he went his way, and, for that he was carnal, he neither sought for nor found mercy.


Chapter XXXVI

How he went forth with fervor to a certain poor man that went with alms praising God

AT another time, also, while the Blessed Francis was sojourning at S. Mary of the Little Portion, a certain poor man, right spiritual, came by the highway as he returned from Assisi, whither he had gone for alms, and he went along praising God in a loud voice with great gladness. But when he came nigh the church of the Blessed Mary, the Blessed Francis heard him, and forthwith went out to him with exceeding great fervor and joy, meeting him in the way, and with much gladness kissing his shoulder, whereon he bore the wallet with his alms. And he took the wallet from his shoulder and set it on his own shoulder, and so carried the same into the house of the brethren, and said before the brethren: “Thus would I that my brother should go and return with alms, glad and joyful and praising God.”

Chapter XXVJ

How it was revealed unto him of the Lord that they should be called Friars Minor, to wit, Lesser Brethren, and should announce peace and salbation

N a certain occasion the Blessed Francis said: “The Religion and life of the brethren Minor is a certain little flock that the Son of God in this last hour did ask of His Heavenly Father, saying: ‘Father, I would that Thou shouldst make and give Me a new people and an humble in this last hour, that in humility and poverty shall be unlike unto all that have gone before them, and shall be content to have Me only.’ And the Father hearkeneth unto His Son, and saith: ‘My Son, this that Thou hast asked of Me is done.’”

Whence the Blessed Francis said that God did therefore will and reveal unto him that they should be called brethren Minor, for that they be the people poor and humble whom the Son of God did ask of His Father, of the which people the Son of God Himself saith in the Gospel: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” And again: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” And albeit the Lord did understand this of all poor men spiritual, yet did he hereby more especially foretell the Religion of the brethren Minor that should come thereafter in His Church.

Wherefore, according as it was revealed unto the Blessed Francis that the Religion ought to be called of the brethren Minor, so did he make the same be written in the first Rule that he did lay before Pope Innocent III, who did approve and grant it, and afterwards did announce in Consistory to all. In likewise the Lord did reveal to him the salutation that the brethren ought to say, even as he made be written in his will, saying: “The Lord revealed unto me that I ought to say by way of salutation: ‘The Lord give thee peace!’”

Whence, in the beginning of the Religion, when he went with a certain brother that was one of the twelve first, the brother saluted men and women by the way and them that were in the fields, saying: “The Lord give ye peace.” And, for that men had not heard such a salutation made aforetime by any Religious, they did much marvel thereof. Yea, some there were that said unto them with indignation, “What meaneth this same salutation of yours?” So that the brother did begin thereof to be ashamed, and on this account said unto the Blessed Francis: “Give me leave to say another salutation.” And


the Blessed Francis saith unto him: "Let them talk, for they perceive not the things that are of God. Nevertheless, be not ashamed, forasmuch as nobles and princes of this world shall manifest their reverence toward thee and other of the brethren by reason of this salutation. For no great thing is it, and if the Lord be minded to have a new people and a small, peculiar and unlike all that went before in life and in words, that shall be content to have Himself only, Who is sweeter than any!"

Part III

The Third Part, of Charity and Compassion and Condescension to One's Neighbor

Chapter XXXIII

And, first, how he condescended to a brother that was dying of hunger, eating with him and admonishing the brethren that they should do penance discreetly

 IN a time when the Blessed Francis began to have brethren and was sojourning with them at Rivo Torto, near Assisi, it so fell out on a certain night, while all the brethren were asleep about the middle of the night, that one of the brethren cried out, saying: "I am dying! I am dying!" Whereupon all the brethren did awake from sleep amazed and sore afraid. And, rising up, the Blessed Francis said: "Arise, brethren, and kindle the light!" And when the light was kindled, he said: "Who is he that said 'I am dying'?" And the brother made answer: "I am he." And he saith unto him: "What aileth thee, brother? How art thou dying?" But he saith: "I am dying of hunger."

Then the Blessed Francis forthwith had a table laid out, and, as a man full of charity and discretion, did eat with him lest he should be ashamed to eat alone; and by his will, all the other brethren did eat with him likewise.

For that brother and all the rest were newly converted to the Lord, and did afflict their bodies beyond measure. And after they had eaten together, the Blessed Francis said unto the rest of the brethren: "My best beloved, I say unto you that each one of you ought to pay heed unto his own nature, for, albeit that some one of you may be strong enough to be sustained by less food than another, yet it is my will that he who needeth more food shall not be bound to imitate that other herein, but, paying heed to his own nature, let him allow his body the necessity thereof, in such sort that he may be strong

enough to serve the spirit. For, whereas we be held to beware of superfluity of food, the which is a hindrance both to the body and the soul, so likewise, and even more, ought we to beware of too great abstinence, seeing that the Lord willeth mercy and not sacrifice." Moreover, saith he: "My best beloved brethren, this that I have done, to wit, that out of charity toward my brother, we have eaten together equally with him, lest he should be ashamed to eat alone, it was rather necessity and charity that compelled me so to do; but I say unto you that it is not my will hereafter to do the like, forasmuch as it would be neither religious nor becoming; but my will it is, and I do enjoin you, that each one of the brethren do, according to our poverty, satisfy the needs of his body as may be necessary for him."

For the first brethren, and others that came after them, for a long time did afflict their bodies beyond measure by abstinence from meat and drink, by vigils, by cold, by coarseness of raiment, and by the labor of their hands. They wore underneath, next the skin, girdles of iron and exceeding strong coats of chainmail and hair shirts; wherefore the holy father, bethinking him that upon such occasion the brethren might become ailing and sick, and, in truth, certain of them did in a little time wax sick, did in a certain clause forbid any brother to wear aught save his habit only underneath next the skin.

Nevertheless, we that were with him do bear witness of him that, albeit all the days of his life he was discreet and forbearing toward the brethren, yet was it in such sort as that the brethren, in the matter of food as in other things, should at no time ever depart from the way of poverty and decency of our Religion. The most holy father himself, from the beginning of his conversion even unto the end of his life, was nevertheless always austere toward his own body, albeit he was by nature feeble, and could not live in the world otherwise than delicately. Whence, on a certain time, taking note that the brethren did, as at that time, exceed the measure of poverty and decency in food and in all things, in a certain sermon he preached to sundry of the brethren, and in the person of all the brethren he said: "The brethren think that our pittance is not enough for the necessities of my body, yet, inasmuch as it behoveth me to be the pattern and example of all the brethren, it is my will to use and to be content with few meats, and those of the poorest, and to use all other things in accordance with poverty, utterly abhorring all things sumptuous and delicate."

Chapter XXXIII

How he condescended to a sick brother by eating grapes with him

ANOTHER time, when the Blessed Francis was at the same place, a certain spiritual brother and ancient in the religion lay there sick and very feeble. Taking note of whom, the Blessed Francis was moved to pity over him, but forasmuch as that time the brethren, both they that were healthy and they that were sick, did with great cheerfulness use poverty as if it had been abundance, and in their ailments made no use of medicines, nor did even ask for them, but did rather take more willingly such things as were unwholesome to the body, the Blessed Francis said within himself: "If that brother would eat ripe grapes the first thing in the morning, I do believe it would do him good." And as he thought even so did he.

Whereupon one day he arose early in the morning and called the brother secretly, and led him into a certain vineyard that was near the place. And he chose a vine whereon were grapes good to eat, and seating himself near the vine with the brother, he began to eat of the grapes, lest the brother himself should be ashamed to eat alone. And while they were yet eating, the brother was delivered of his ailment, and both together alike praised God.

Whence that brother did all the days of his life remember the mercy and pity that the most holy father showed and did unto him, and oftentimes with great devotion and shedding of tears would relate the same among the brethren.

Chapter XXXIV

How he made strip himself and his companion that he might clothe a poor woman

AT Celano in the wintertime, when the Blessed Francis had a cloth folded after the fashion of a mantle that a certain friend of the brethren had lent him, a certain old woman met him and begged an alms. Whereupon he straightway loosed the cloth from his neck, and albeit that it were another's, gave it to the poor woman, saying: "Go and make thee a kirtle thereof, for thy need is sore enough."

The old woman laughed thereat, and in amazement, I know not whether of fear or joy, took the cloth from his hands, and for fear lest, if she should

wait, there might be danger of the same being asked for back, ran as fast as she could and cut the cloth with her shears. But when she found that there was not enough cloth for a kirtle, she came running back to the first kindness of the holy father, pointing out to him that the piece of cloth was too scanty for a kirtle. The saint turned his eyes toward his companion that wore such another piece of cloth on his back, and said unto him: "Thou hearest what this poor woman saith: For the love of God let us bear with the cold and give that piece of cloth to the poor woman, so that her kirtle may be whole." And straightway as he himself had given, the companion gave also. Thus did both of them abide bare, that the poor woman might be clad.

Chapter IIII

That he held it a theft not to give to one more needy

ONCE on a time, when he was coming back from Siena, he met with a certain poor man, and saith he to his companion, "Needs must we render up this mantle to this poor man, whose own it is; for we only received the same as a loan until such time as we should find one poorer than ourselves." But the companion, having regard to the pious father's own necessity, stoutly maintained that he ought not to provide for another and neglect himself. Unto whom said St. Francis: "No mind have I to be a thief, for it would be imputed to us as a theft were we not to give it to one more needy." Whereupon the pious father gave the mantle as a present to the poor man.

Chapter IIII

How he gave a new mantle to a poor man upon condition

AT the Cell of Cortona, the Blessed Francis wore a new mantle that the brethren had procured for him with some trouble. A poor man came to the place lamenting his wife that was dead and his family left poverty-stricken. On whom the Saint, having compassion, said: "I give thee this mantle upon such condition, that thou render it up to none save he buy it fairly and pay thee." And when the brethren heard this, they ran together to the poor man, that they might take the mantle away from him. But the poor man, taking heart of grace in the sight of the holy father, held it fast with

joined hands, and was carrying it off as being his own. In the end the brethren redeemed the mantle, taking care that a fair price should be paid to the poor man.

Chapter XXXIII

How a certain poor man, by virtue of the alms of the Blessed Francis, forgave his lord the wrongs he had done him, and laid aside his hatred

AT the Hill in the lordship of Perugia, the Blessed Francis took in a certain poor man whom he had known aforetime in the world, and said unto him: “Brother, how is it with thee?” But he, in the wrath of his heart, began to utter curses against his lord, saying: “Thanks to my lord, whom may the Lord curse, I cannot be otherwise than ill, seeing that all my goods hath he taken away from me.”

But the Blessed Francis, seeing that he persisted in his deadly hatred, having pity on his soul, saith unto him: “Brother, for the love of God, forgive thy lord, that thou mayst set free thy soul, and it may be that he will give thee back the things he hath taken from thee. Elsewise thou hast lost thy things and wilt lose thy soul.” And he said: “I cannot utterly forgive him save he give me back the things he hath taken away from me.” Then the Blessed Francis said: “Behold, I give thee this mantle, and I pray thee for the love of the Lord God that thou forgive thy lord.” And forthwith his heart was sweetened, and moved thereunto by the favor, he did forgive his lord the wrongs he had done him.

Chapter XXXIII

How he sent a mantle to a poor woman that suffered in the eyes, as he did himself

ACERTAIN poor woman of Machilone came to Rieti for an infirmity of the eyes. But when the leech came to the Blessed Francis, he said unto him: “Brother, a certain woman that hath an infirmity of the eyes hath come unto me, but so poor is she that needs must I give her her expenses.” As soon as he heard this he was moved to pity of her case, and calling one of the

brethren that was his warden, he said unto him: "Brother warden, needs must we return our loan." Who saith: "What is the loan, brother?" Whereupon he said: "The mantle that we did borrow of the poor sick woman we must return unto her." And his warden saith unto him: "Brother, whatsoever seemeth thee best, that do thou."

Then the Blessed Francis did joyfully call a certain spiritual man that was familiar with him and said unto him: "Take this mantle and twelve loaves therewithal, and go unto the poor woman that hath an infirmity of the eyes, whom the leech shall show thee, and say unto her: 'The poor man unto whom thou didst lend this mantle sendeth thanks unto thee for the loan thereof. Take that which is thine own.'"

He went accordingly and said to the woman all that the Blessed Francis had said unto him. But she, conceiving that a joke was being played upon her, with fear and shamefastness said unto him: "Let me go in peace. I know nought of that thou sayest." Whereupon he set the mantle and the twelve loaves in her hands. But she, perceiving that he spoke this in very sooth, with fear and reverence received the same, rejoicing and praising the Lord. And fearing lest it should be taken away from her, she arose stealthily by night and went back to her own house with joy. But the Blessed Francis had made ordinance with his warden to give her her expenses every day so long as she abode there.

We therefore that were with him do bear witness of him, that so great was his charity and pity both to sick and healthy, not only toward his brethren, but also toward other poor folk both healthy and sick, that those necessaries of his body that the brethren at times did procure for him with great pains and travail, first of all soothing us with soft words lest we should be troubled thereat, with much inward as well as outward gladness he would give unto the poor, even though he himself should go without things that were very necessary for him. And on this account the Minister General and his own warden did enjoin him not to give his habit to any of the brethren without their leave. For the brethren of their devotion toward him would sometimes beg a habit of him, which he gave them straightway, and sometimes he would divide the same, giving a part and keeping a part himself, forasmuch as he never wore but a single habit.

Chapter XXXV

How he gave his habit to the brethren who begged it for the love of God

IT thus fell out that on a time when he was going through a certain province preaching, two Frenchborn brethren met him, and after they had had much consolation from him, at last they begged his habit of him for the love of God. But he forthwith, so soon as he heard the words “love of God”, put off his habit and gave it unto them, himself abiding naked some part of an hour.

For whensoever any did allege the love of God to him, whether it were the cord wherewith he was girded, or his habit, or aught else that were asked, he never denied it to any; yea, he did hereby put himself to sore straits, and oftentimes would he rebuke the brethren for that on account of almost anything whatsoever they would take the name of “the love of God” in vain. For he would say: “So passing high and precious is the love of God, that never ought it to be named save in seldom times of necessity, and then only with great reverence.”

But one of those brethren did put off his habit and gave it unto him in like manner. Whensoever he gave his habit or a part thereof to another, he did thereby suffer great necessity and tribulation, for that he could not have another habit quickly enough, more especially for that he was always minded to wear a poor habit pieced together with patches, sometimes both within and without; yea, never or right seldom would he wear a habit of new cloth, but would obtain from some brother his habit which he had worn for some time. And at times he would even accept one part of his habit from one brother and another part from another. On the inner side, on account of his many infirmities and chills of the stomach and the spleen, he would sometimes patch it double with new cloth. And this manner of poverty in his raiment did he hold and observe until the year that he departed to the Lord; for a few days before his death, for that he was dropsical and as it were all dried up, and on account of the many other infirmities that he had, the brethren made many habits for him, for that of necessity his habit had to be changed every day and night.

Chapter XXXV

How he was minded to gibe a poor man a piece of cloth by stealth

ANOTHER time a certain poor man came to the place where the Blessed Francis was, and asked of the brethren a piece of cloth for the love of God. Which when he heard, the Blessed Francis said unto one of the brethren: "Make search through the house and see whether thou canst find a piece, or any cloth, and give the same unto the poor man." And the brother ran all over the house and said he could not find any.

But so that the poor brother should not go back empty-handed, the Blessed Francis went secretly because of the warden, lest he should forbid him, and took a knife, and sitting down in a secret place began to cut off a piece of his habit that was sewn on the inner side, meaning to give it to the poor man secretly. But the warden, perceiving the same, straightway went to him and forbade him to give it, and the more for that the cold at that time was great and he himself was sick and exceeding cold. Wherefore the Blessed Francis said unto him: "If so be that thou wilt I should not give him this piece, thou must by all means make be given some other piece to our poor brother." And so the brethren gave the poor man some cloth from their habits at the instance of the Blessed Francis.

When he went about the world preaching, whether he were afoot or on an ass after he began to be sick, or on horseback in very great and extreme necessity, for otherwise he would not ride, and this but a little before his death, if it were that any brother lent him a mantle, he would only accept the same on such condition as that he might give it to any poor person that he met or that might come unto him, so only that his spirit should bear witness that it was necessary unto him.

Chapter XXXVI

How he told Brother Egidius to clothe the poor man

AT the outset of the Religion, while he was sojourning at Rivo Torto with two companions that were all he had as at that time, behold a certain man by name Egidius, that was the third brother, came to him out of the world, intending to take upon himself his manner of life.

And when he thus abode there for several days clad in the garments he had brought with him out of the world, it came to pass that a certain poor

man came to that place begging an alms of the Blessed Francis. The Blessed Francis, turning to this Egidius, saith unto him: "Give the poor brother thy mantle." Who forthwith with great gladness took it off his shoulders and gave it to the poor man. And thereupon it seemed unto him that straightway God had sent new grace into his heart, for that he had given his mantle to the poor man with cheerfulness. And thus received by the Blessed Francis, he did ever make godly progress even to the very highest perfection.

Chapter XXXVII

Of the penance he gave a brother that did judge badly a poor man

WHEN the Blessed Francis had gone for the purpose of preaching to a certain place of the brethren nigh unto Rocca Brizzi, it so befell that on the very day that he should preach, a certain poor man that was sick came unto him. On whom, having much compassion, he began to speak to his companion about his poverty and sickness, and his companion saith unto him: "True it is, brother, that he seemeth poor enough, yet haply in all the province is none that hath greater will to be rich."

And being forthwith sharply rebuked by the Blessed Francis, he did acknowledge his fault. And the Blessed Francis saith: "Wilt thou on this account do the penance that I shall enjoin thee?" Who made answer: "Willingly will I do it." And he said unto him: "Go and put off thy habit and cast thee down naked at the feet of the poor man, and tell him how thou hast sinned against him in disparaging him, and bid him that he pray for thee." He went therefore and did all things as the Blessed Francis had bidden him. And after he had so done, he rose up and did put on his habit and went back to the Blessed Francis. And the Blessed Francis saith unto him: "Wouldst thou know how thou didst sin against him, yea rather, against Christ? When thou seest a poor man, thou oughtest to bethink thee of Him in whose name he cometh, to wit, Christ that did take upon Himself our poverty and infirmity, for his sickness and poverty be as it were a mirror unto us wherein we may look and with pity perceive the sickness and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Chapter XXXVIIII

Of the New Testament that he made be giben to a poor woman,
the mother of two brethren

AT another time, when he was sojourning at S. Mary of the Little Portion, a certain woman old and poor, that had two sons in the Religion, came unto the place begging an alms of the Blessed Francis.

Straightway the Blessed Francis said to brother Peter of Catana, that was then Minister General: "Can we have aught to give this woman our mother?" For the mother of any brother would he call his mother, and mother of all the brethren. Brother Peter made answer unto him: "Nought is there in the house that we can give her"; for she would fain have had such alms as that thereby she might sustain her body. "Howbeit in the church we have one only New Testament, wherein we read the lessons at matins." For at that time the brethren had no breviaries and not many psalters.

The Blessed Francis therefore said unto him: "Give our mother the Testament so that she may sell it for her necessity. For firmly do I believe that it will be better pleasing to the Lord and to the Blessed Virgin than if we should read therein." And so he gave it her. For that may be said and written of him which is read in the blessed Job: "For pity came forth from his mother's womb and did with him wax great."

Whence unto us that were with him, not only those things that we have understood from others as concerning his charity and pity toward the brethren and other poor men, but even those things that we have seen with our eyes, full long would it be and full difficult either to write or to tell.

Part IV

The Fourth Part, of Holy Humility and Obedience in Himself and in the Brethren

Chapter XXXIII

And first how he did resign the office of superior, and appointed brother Peter of Catana Minister General

THAT he might observe the virtue of holy humility, some few years after his conversion, in a certain Chapter before the brethren, he did resign the office of superior, saying: “Henceforward I am dead unto you, but see here brother Peter of Catana, unto whom I and you all will be obedient.” And prostrating himself upon the ground, he did promise obedience and reverence unto him.

All the brethren wept thereat, and exceeding great sorrow did wring forth full sore lamentation, to wit, when they saw themselves in a manner made orphans to so great a father. But the blessed father, lifting up his eyes toward heaven and joining his hands, said: “Lord, unto Thee do I commend the family that hitherto Thou hast committed unto me. And now, O Lord most sweet, on account of those infirmities whereof Thou knowest, being unable to have the care thereof, I do commend the same unto the ministers, the which in the day of judgment shall be held answerable before Thee, O Lord, in case any brother shall perish through their negligence or evil example or too harsh correction.”

He therefore thenceforward did remain subject even unto death, more humbly bearing him in all things than any of the others.

Chapter XL

How he gave up even his companions, being unwilling to have a special companion

ANOTHER time he gave up all his companions to his vicar, saying: “I am unwilling to seem singular in this prerogative of liberty, that I should have a special companion, but let the brethren assign me a companion from place to place as the Lord shall inspire them.” Then he added: “I saw a blind man just now since that had but a whelp to guide him on his way, and fain would I seem no better off than he.” For this was always his glory, that, laying aside all singularity and appearance of boasting, the virtue of Christ did ever abide in him.

Chapter XLI

That he did renounce his office by reason of bad superiors

WHENCE, when he was asked by a certain brother wherefore he had cast off the brethren from his own care, and delivered them into strange hands, as though they did in no wise belong to him, he made answer: “My son, I do love the brethren the best I may, but if they would follow my footsteps, verily, then should I love them all the better, nor should I make me strange unto them. For some there be among the number of the superiors, that do draw them aside to other things, setting before them the example of the elders, and holding my advice as of little account, but that which they themselves do and how they do it will be made clearer in the end.”

And a little afterward, when he was weighed down by exceeding infirmity, in the vehemence of his spirit, he sat him upright in his pallet, crying out and saying: “Who be they that have snatched my Religion and my brethren from my hands? If I come to the General Chapter, I will show them of what kind is my will!”

Chapter XLIIII

That he did humbly procure flesh-meats for the sick and admonished them to be patient

THE Blessed Francis was not ashamed to obtain flesh-meats for a sick brother among the public places of the cities, but he did admonish them that lay sick to bear any deficiency therein patiently, and not to get up and make a grievance thereof whenever they could not be fully satisfied. Whence in the first Rule he made be written thus: "I beseech my brethren that in their infirmities they be not wrath nor troubled, either against God or against the brethren, and that they be not too solicitous to ask for medicines, nor too desirous to relieve this flesh that so soon must die, which is the enemy of the soul, but that they give thanks for all things and desire to be such as God would have them be, for them that God hath fore-ordained unto eternal life He teacheth by the stings of scourges and infirmities, even as He himself saith: "Them that I love do I rebuke and chasten."

Chapter XLV

Of the humble answer of the Blessed Francis and Dominic when they were questioned together by the Cardinal as to whether they would that their brethren should be prelates in the Church

IN the city of Rome, when those two bright guiding-lights of the world, to wit, the Blessed Francis and the Blessed Dominic, were both together before the Lord Bishop of Ostia, that was afterward High Pontiff, and each in turn did pour forth words of God as it were streams of honey, at the last the Lord Cardinal said unto them: "In the primitive Church, the pastors and prelates were poor men, glowing with the fervor of charity and not of covetousness. Wherefore then do we not make of your brethren bishops and prelates, that should prevail over all others both in word and example?"

Then arose between the Saints a humble and devout contention as to which should first make answer, not indeed a contention of precedence, but of deference on both sides, as if one should compel the other to make answer. But at length, the humility of Francis did win the victory that he should not

be first to speak, and was victorious also over Dominic in that he did humbly obey by being the first to make answer.

The Blessed Dominic, therefore, said in answer: “My lord, verily, unto high degree have my brethren been promoted if they would fain be learned in this matter; and so far as in me lieth, never will I allow that they should obtain any high place of dignity.”

Then the Blessed Francis, bowing himself before the said Lord Cardinal, made answer: “My lord, my brethren be called brethren Minor, with the intent that they should not presume to become brethren Major, for their calling teacheth them to stand all on a level, and to follow the footsteps of Christ’s humility, so that hereby they may at last be exalted above others in regard to the Saints. Wherefore, if you would that they should bring forth fruit in the Church of God, hold them and keep them in the condition of their calling, and if it be that they shall climb up on high, thrust them down by force into the plain, and never allow them to rise up to any preferment.”

These were the answers of the holy men, and when the replies on both sides were ended, the Lord Bishop of Ostia, greatly edified thereby, did give exceeding great thanks to God.

And as the two departed together, the Blessed Dominic begged the Blessed Francis that he would deign to give him the cord wherewith he was girded. The Blessed Francis did out of humility refuse, even as the other had begged it out of charity. But the happy devotion of him that asked did win the day, and the cord of the Blessed Francis, that he received as by violence of charity, did the Blessed Dominic gird on under his habit, and ever thereafter did devoutly wear.

At length the one did place his hands between the hands of the other, and each did most sweetly commend him to each in mutual farewell greeting. And S. Dominic said unto S. Francis: “Brother Francis, I would that thy Religion and mine should be made one, and that we should live in the Church under equal conditions.” At last, when they parted asunder, the one from the other, the Blessed Dominic said unto many of them that stood by: “Of a truth I say unto you that all the Religious ought to imitate this holy man Francis, so absolute is the perfection of his holiness.”

Chapter XLV

That, as a foundation of humility, he would that all the brethren should be as servants to the lepers

FROM the beginning of his conversion, the Blessed Francis, by God's assistance, as a wise builder, did lay his foundations upon a firm rock, to wit, upon the exceeding great humility and poverty of the Son of God, calling his Religion that of brethren Minor out of his surpassing humility. Whence, at the beginning of the Religion, he would that the brethren should abide in the hospitals of the lepers to wait upon them, and there lay the foundation of holy humility. For since that both gentle and simple did come into the Order, among other things that were declared unto them, it was said that they needs must humbly be as servants unto the lepers and abide in their houses; as is contained in the first Rule: "Willing to have nought under heaven save only holy poverty, whereby they are nourished in this world by bodily and spiritual food, and in the world to come shall obtain their heavenly heritage." And thus did he found himself, both for himself and for others, upon an exceedingly great humility and poverty, forasmuch as being one of most account in the Church of God, he did choose and will to be an underling, not only in the Church but even among his brethren. May this lowliness in his thought and his desire be his highest exaltation in the sight of God and man!

Chapter XLVI

That of all his good words and works he would that the honor should be attributed to God alone

WHEN he preached to the people in Rieti in the Piazza of the city, so soon as his preaching was ended, forthwith rose up the Bishop of the city, a man verily discreet and spiritual, and saith unto the people: "Our Lord from the beginning, since He planted and built up His Church, hath ever enlumined her by holy men that by word and example might cause her to flourish; wherefore now in this last hour He hath enlumined her by this poor and despised and unlettered man Francis. And for this be ye bound to love and worship the Lord, and to take heed that ye sin not, for not in this way dealeth He with every nation."

And when he had made an end of these words, the Bishop came down from the place where he had been preaching, and went into the church of the bishopric. Unto whom the Blessed Francis drawing nigh, did bow himself before him, falling at his feet, and said: "In truth I say unto you, my lord Bishop, that no man hath ever done me so great honor in this world as have you this day, for others say: 'This is a holy man', attributing the glory and the holiness to me, and not to the Creator; but you, as he that is discreet, have separated the precious from the vile."

For when the Blessed Francis was praised and said to be a saint, he made answer unto such discourses, saying: "As yet I feel no assurance that I may not fall away and have sons and daughters, for in whatsoever hour the Lord should take away from me His treasure that He hath commended unto me, what else would remain unto me save only body and soul that even infidels have? Yea, rather ought I to believe that, if the Lord had granted to a robber or a paynim so great blessings as He hath unto me, more faithful than I would they have been unto the Lord. For, whereas in a picture of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin painted upon wood the Lord is honored and the Blessed Virgin also, yet nevertheless do not the wood and the painting attribute aught unto themselves. And in likewise is the servant of God in some sort a picture of God, wherein God is honored by reason of His goodness, yet ought he to attribute nought as unto himself, inasmuch as in the sight of God he is less than the wood and the picture; yea, he is stark nought. Wherefore unto God alone is the glory and the honor to be rendered, but unto himself only shame and tribulation so long as he liveth in the midst of the miseries of this world."

Chapter XLVJ

That even until his death he was fain to have one of his companions as warden, and to live in subjection

BEING minded to persevere even to the death in perfect humility and subjection, long before his death he said unto the Minister General: "I would that thou shouldst commit thy wardership over me to one of my companions, whom I may obey in thy stead, for such is the benefit of obedience that I would thou shouldst ever abide with me, both in life and death."

And thenceforward, even unto his death, he had one of his companions as his warden, whom he did obey in the stead of the Minister General. Yea,

on a time he said unto his companions: “This grace among others hath the Lord conferred upon me, that I would as diligently obey a novice that hath only today entered Religion, had he been assigned me for my warden, as him that is foremost and ancient in life and in the Religion. For he that is subject ought not to look upon him that is set over him as a man, but as God, for whose sake he is made subject unto him.”

Afterwards he said: “None having authority is there in all the world that is so feared by his subjects, as the Lord would make me be feared, if so I would, by my brethren. But this grace hath the Lord granted me, that I am minded to be content with all, as he that is Minor in Religion.”

But we that were with him have seen this with our eyes, even as he that doth here bear witness how, when certain of the brethren did not satisfy him in his necessities, or said some word to him such as a man is apt to be offended thereat, straightway he went to prayer, and when he came back he was unwilling to remember him of aught, nor ever did he say: “Such an one hath not satisfied me,” or “Such an one spoke unto me such a word.” And thus persevering in such wise, the nearer he drew nigh unto death, by so much the more was he heedful to consider how best he could live and die in all humility and poverty and in all perfection of virtues.

Chapter **XLVII**

Of the perfect manner of obedience that he taught

THE most holy father would say unto his brethren: “My best-beloved brethren, fulfil my injunction at the first word, and wait not for what is said unto you to be repeated. Argue not, nor be ye judges of the injunction, for nought is there impossible therein, seeing that, even if it were that I should command you aught beyond your strength, yet holy obedience will never be lacking in strength.”

Chapter XLVIIII

How he spoke of the perfectly obedient under the similitude of a dead body

IN a time this was what he sighed forth before his companions: “Scarce is there one Religious in the world that doth rightly obey his superior.”

Straightway the companions said unto him: “Tell us, father, what is the perfect and the highest obedience?” And he, by way of answer, described one truly and perfectly obedient under the figure of a dead man, as thus: “Take a lifeless body and set it where you please. Ye will see that it resenteth not being moved, nor changeth its position, nor crieth out when it is let go. If that it be set upon a throne, it looketh not toward the highest, but the lowest. If it be clad in purple, then is it doubly wan. This is the truly obedient, that asketh no question wherefore he should be moved, careth not where he is placed, urgeth not that he should be changed elsewhither. Promoted to office, he holdeth his wonted humility; and the more he is honored, the more he thinketh him unworthy.”

Obediences purely and simply enjoined, not asked for, he called holy obedience. But the highest obedience, the obedience wherein flesh and blood have nought of their own, he believed to be that wherein, by divine inspiration, men do go among the infidels either for the profit of their neighbors or for the desire of martyrdom, yea, and to ask for this obedience he deemed to be right acceptable unto God.

Chapter XLX

That it is a perilous thing too lightly to order a brother to do aught “on his obedience”, and also not to obey an order thus given

THE blessed father thought it seldom advisable that an order should be given to a brother “on his obedience,” for that a weapon to be used only in a last necessity ought not to be launched in the first instance. “The hand,” saith he, “should not be too ready to grasp the sword.” On the other hand, he would say: “He that hasteneth not to obey an order

given on his obedience neither feareth God nor reverenceth man,” so long, to wit, as he hath no necessary cause for tarrying.

Nought is more true, for what else is the power of command in one that giveth order rashly but a sword in the hand of a madman? And again, what case is more hopeless than that of a Religious who doth neglect and despise his obedience?

Chapter I

How he made answer to the brethren that would persuade him to petition for a privilege that they might be allowed to preach freely

CERTAIN of the brethren said unto the Blessed Francis: “Father, seest thou not that the Bishops at times do not allow us to preach, and many days do they make us stand idle in a district before we be able to announce the word of the Lord? Better were it that thou shouldst obtain from the lord Pope a privilege in this matter, seeing that it would be for the salvation of souls.”

Unto whom he made answer rebuking them sore, and saying: “Ye brethren Minor, ye know not the will of God, nor will ye allow me to convert the whole world as God willeth; for I am minded first of all to convert the prelates by holy humility and reverence, so that when they shall see our holy life and our humble reverence toward them, they shall ask you to preach and convert the people, and call them together to hear your preaching better than your privileges that will only lead you on to pride. And if it be that ye hold yourselves aloof from all covetousness and persuade the people to render the churches their due, they themselves will beseech you to hear the confessions of their people, albeit hereof ye ought to take no heed, inasmuch as so only they be converted they will right easily find confessors for themselves.

“As for me, I am fain to have this privilege of the Lord, that never may I have any privilege from man, save only the privilege to do reverence unto all, and to convert mankind through obedience to our holy Rule rather by example than by word.”

Chapter LII

Of the manner that all the brethren then held in reconciling them one to another whensoever one should have given offense to another

THE Blessed Francis did maintain that the brethren Minor were sent of the Lord in these last days to show examples of life to them that were covered round about by the darkness of their sins. He would say that he was fulfilled of the sweetest smells and anointed with the virtue of precious ointment whensoever he heard the brave deeds of the holy brethren that were scattered about the world.

One day it fell out that a certain brother did fling forth words of insult against another in the presence of a nobleman of the island of Cyprus. But when he that did this perceived that his brother was somewhat troubled thereby, he was forthwith seized with such desire to do vengeance on himself that he took of the dung of an ass and did thrust the same into his own mouth, grinding it with his teeth, and saying: "Eat thou of the dung, thou tongue that didst shed the venom of wrath upon my brother." But when the nobleman saw him do thus, he was stricken with amazement and went his way greatly edified, and from that time forth did dispose himself and all that he had according to the will of the brethren.

This therefore did all the brethren observe as of wont, that if one of them had uttered a word of injury or offense against another, he did straightway without tarrying prostrate himself on the ground and kiss the foot of him he had offended, and did humbly ask his pardon. The holy father did exult in such things whensoever he heard that his sons did of themselves show forth examples of holiness, and did load those brethren with blessings most worthy of all acceptation that did in word or work bring sinners to the love of Christ, for in the zeal for souls wherewith he himself was wholly fulfilled he would that his sons should show themselves true by their likeness to himself.

Chapter LII

How Christ did make complaint to Brother Leo, the companion of Blessed Francis, as concerning the ingratitude and pride of the brethren

IN a time Our Lord Jesus Christ said unto brother Leo, the companion of the Blessed Francis: “Brother Leo, I lament over the brethren.” Unto whom brother Leo made answer: “Wherefore, Lord?” And the Lord answered: “For three things: to wit, that they acknowledge not my blessings that I do so largely and bountifully confer upon them, as thou knowest, albeit they sow not neither do they reap. Also for that all day do they murmur and are idle, and also for that they do oftentimes provoke one another to wrath and return not to their love and forgive not the injury they have received.”

Chapter LIII

How he made answer humbly and truly to a certain doctor of the Order of Preachers that did ask him concerning a word of Scripture

WHILST that he was abiding at Siena, there came unto him a certain doctor of sacred theology of the Order of Preachers, a man truly humble and right spiritual. And when he and the Blessed Francis had discoursed together for some little time on the words of the Lord, the master asked of him concerning that word of Ezekiel: “If thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way, his soul will I require at thine hand.” For he said: “Many, good father, do I know that be in mortal sin, unto whom I speak not to warn them from their wicked way. Will their souls be required at my hand?”

Unto whom the Blessed Francis humbly said that he was a simple man, and that therefore it was needful rather that he should be taught of him than that he should make answer as to the meaning of the Scripture. Whereupon the master added humbly: “Brother, albeit that I have heard of sundry wise men the exposition of this word, yet gladly would I learn your understanding hereof.” The Blessed Francis said therefore: “If it be that the word is to be

understood generally, I take it in such wise as that the servant of God ought so to burn and shine in his life and holiness in himself, as by the example of his light and by the tongue of his holy conversation he may be a rebuke unto all the wicked. Thus, I say, the brightness of his light and the sweet smell of his good name will be a warning to all to forsake their wicked way.”

The doctor, therefore, very greatly edified, at his departure thence said unto the companions of the Blessed Francis: “My brethren, the theology of this man, upborne by purity and contemplation, is as a flying eagle, but our learning doth crawl upon its belly over the earth.”

Chapter LIIII

Of humilitie and keeping peace with the clergy

ALBEIT the Blessed Francis would that his sons should be at peace with all men, and behave themselves as little ones to the whole world, yet did he teach them by word and show them by example that they should be more especially humble towards the clergy.

For he would say: “We are sent to succor the clergy for the salvation of souls, and whatsoever in them is found wanting should be supplied by us. But let each receive his wages not according to the authority he holdeth, but according to the work he doeth. Know ye this, brethren, that the gain of souls is most grateful unto God, and this gain we can better make with the peace of the clergy than by being at discordance with them. But if they hinder the salvation of the people, vengeance is God’s and He will repay them in due time; wherefore be ye subject unto your superiors and take heed as far as in you lieth that no evil jealousy arise between you. If ye be sons of peace, ye shall win both clergy and people, and this is more acceptable unto God than to win the people only and to scandalise the clergy. Cover,” saith he, “their slips, and supply their many defects; and when ye have done this be ye therefore yourselves the more humble.”

Chapter LV

How he did humbly acquire the church of S. Mary of the Angels of the Abbot of S. Benedict of Assisi, and would that the brethren should evermore humbly dwell therein

THE Blessed Francis, seeing that it was the will of God to multiply the number of the brethren, said unto them: “My best-beloved brethren and little sons, I see that it is the Lord’s will to multiply us, whence it seemeth unto me a good and godly thing that we should acquire, either from the canons of S. Rufinus or from the Abbot of S. Benedict, some church wherein the brethren may say their Hours, and only have near thereunto some poor little house built of wattle and dab wherein the brethren may rest and work, for this place is not decent, neither is it large enough for the brethren now that it is the Lord’s will to multiply them, and more especially for that we have no church here wherein the brethren may say their Hours. And if any brother should die, it would not be decent to bury him here, nor in the church of the secular clergy.” And this speech was pleasing unto all the brethren.

He went therefore unto the Bishop of Assisi and propounded the words aforesaid in his presence. Unto whom said the Bishop: “Brother, no church have I that I am able to give you.” And the canons made answer the same.

Then went he to the Abbot of S. Benedict of Mount Subasio, and propounded unto him the same words. But the Abbot, moved to pity, took counsel with his monks, and, by the working of the divine grace and will, granted unto the Blessed Francis and his brethren the church of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion, as the smallest and poorest of all the churches they had. And saith the Abbot unto the Blessed Francis: “Behold, brother, we have granted what thou didst demand. But if it be that the Lord shall multiply this your congregation, we would that this place should be the head of all your places.”

And this speech pleased the Blessed Francis and his brethren, and the Blessed Francis did rejoice exceedingly over the place that had been granted to the brethren, and most of all for that the name of the church was that of the Mother of Christ, and for that it was so small and poor a church, and, moreover, for that it was named “of the Little Portion,” wherein it was prefigured that it should be the head and mother of the poor brethren Minor. For it was called “the Little Portion” inasmuch as the courtyard had been named of old the Little Portion.

Whence the Blessed Francis said: “Therefore did the Lord will that no other church should be granted unto the brethren, and that the first brethren at that time should not build a church anew, nor should have any other but this, forasmuch as herein was fulfilled a certain prophecy through the advent of the brethren Minor.” And albeit it were poor, and is now destroyed, nevertheless of a long time did the men of the city of Assisi and of all the lordship thereof have great devotion unto that church, and greater yet have they today, and their devotion waxeth daily. Wherefore straightway, so soon as the brethren went thither to abide, the Lord did multiply their number day by day, and the sweet smell of their good name was marvellously spread abroad throughout all the Vale of Spoleto and through many parts of the world. But aforetime it was called S. Mary of the Angels, for that, as it is said, the songs of angels were oftentimes heard there.

And albeit the Abbot and monks did freely grant the same to the Blessed Francis and his brethren, yet did the Blessed Francis, as a wise and thrifty master, being minded that his house, to wit, the Religion, should be founded upon a firm rock, that is, upon an exceeding great poverty, send yearly to the said Abbot and his monks a basket-full of the little fishes that be called roaches in token of great humility and poverty, for that the brethren had no place of their own, nor abode in any that was not in the demesne of some or other in such sort as that the brethren never had even the power of alienating the same in any manner. But when the brethren carried the little fishes to the monks yearly, they, by reason of the humility of the Blessed Francis that did this of his own free will, gave them a vessel full of oil.

But we that were with the Blessed Francis do bear witness that he himself, with affirmation of the word, did say of that church that therein was it revealed unto him—for many were the prerogatives that the Lord did there make manifest unto him—that, among all the churches of the world that the Blessed Virgin loved, none loved she with so abounding an affection as this. And on this account thenceforth he had the greatest reverence and devotion toward it, and, that the brethren might always have the memorial thereof in their hearts, at his death he made be written in his will that all the brethren should do likewise.

For, about the time of his death, in the presence of the Minister General and others of the brethren, he said: “The place of S. Mary of the Little Portion I am minded to devise and leave to the brethren by will, so that it may be held by the brethren in the greatest devotion and reverence.”

The which, indeed, our ancient brethren did, for albeit the place were holy and pre-lect by Christ and the Glorious Virgin, yet did they preserve the holiness thereof by continual prayer and silence by day and night. And if at times they did talk after the term and establishment of the silence, they spoke only with the greatest devotion and decency of things pertaining unto the praise of God and the salvation of souls. And if it so happened that any should begin to speak idle and useless words, albeit it was seldom that this did befall, forthwith was he corrected by another brother.

Moreover, they did macerate their flesh by many fastings, by cold and nakedness, and by the labor of their hands. For many a time, to the intent that they might not stand idle, they would help poor men in their fields that did afterwards give them of their bread for the love of God. By these and other good deeds they did hallow the place and maintain themselves in holiness. But thereafter, by occasion of the brethren and of seculars assembling together to that place more than they had been wont, for that even the brethren be colder in prayer and in godly works and more lax, even to joining in idle talk and discourse of the news of this world, than they were wont to be, the place itself is not held in so great reverence and devotion as heretofore it was wont to be, and as the first brethren would.

When the Blessed Francis had spoken these words, forthwith he made an end thereof with great fervor, saying: "I will, therefore, that this place be always immediately under the power of the minister and servant General, to the intent that thence he may have the greater care and solicitude in providing therein for a good and holy family. Let clerks be chosen of the better and more holy and more honorable of the brethren, and such as are in the whole Religion they that know best how to say the Office, to the end that not only lay folk, but other brethren also may see and hear them gladly, and with great devotion. And of the lay brethren, let holy men and discreet, humble and honorable, be chosen to wait upon them. I will also that no person and no brother shall enter into that place save only the Minister General and they that wait upon him. And they shall not speak with any person save with the brethren that wait upon them and with the minister whensoever he shall visit them. I will in like wise that the brethren who serve them shall be bound not to speak idle words or of the news of this world unto them, or of any other things whatsoever, save such as may be of profit unto their souls. And, therefore, it is especially my will that none enter into that place, so that they may the better maintain the purity and holiness thereof, and that nought at

all be said nor done in that place idly, but that the whole place be held pure and holy in hymns and praises to the Lord.

“And when any of those brethren shall depart hence unto the Lord, I will that another holy brother, wheresoever he may be, be sent thither by the Minister General. For if it shall be hereafter that other brethren shall decline from purity and loyalty, I will that this blessed place be and remain forever the mirror and good example of the whole Religion, and in some sort a candlestick before the throne of God and before the Blessed Virgin burning evermore and shining. Wherefore, may God be gracious unto the shortcomings and faults of all the brethren, and ever preserve and protect this Religion, and this sapling of His own plantation.”

Chapter LVJ

Of the humble reverence he showed concerning the sweeping of churches and cleansing them

IN a time when he was sojourning at S. Mary of the Little Portion and the brethren as yet were few, the Blessed Francis went about throughout the towns and churches in the circuit of the lordship of Assisi warning and preaching unto men that they should do penance, and he carried a broom for sweeping the churches that were unclean, for the Blessed Francis was sore grieved whensoever he saw any church not so clean as he would have it. And for this cause, when he had made an end of preaching, he did always make all the priests that were present be assembled together in some place apart, lest he should be overheard by the laymen, and did preach unto them of the salvation of souls, and particularly that they should be careful to keep clean the churches and altars and all things appertaining to the celebration of the divine mysteries.

Chapter LVII

Of the countryman that found him sweeping a church, and after his conversion did enter the Order and became a holy brother

NOW when he went to a certain church of a village in the lordship of Assisi, he began to sweep the same humbly and to cleanse it, and straightway a report concerning him went forth through the whole village, forasmuch as he was gladly seen of the folk therein and yet more gladly heard. But when a certain countryman of marvellous simplicity that was plowing in his field, John by name, did hear of it, he went unto him forthwith and found him sweeping the church humbly and devoutly. And saith he unto him: “Brother, give me the broom, for I have a will to help thee.” And taking the broom into his hands he swept that which was left.

And while they were sitting together, saith he to the Blessed Francis: “Brother, it is a long time now since I had a will of serving God, and specially after I heard the talk about thee and thy brethren, but I knew not in what wise I could come unto thee. Now, therefore, for that it hath pleased the Lord I should see thee, I desire to do whatsoever shall please thee.”

The Blessed Francis, perceiving his devotion, did exceedingly rejoice in the Lord, forasmuch as at that time he had but few brethren, and it seemed to him that by the simplicity and purity of the man he ought to be a good Religious. But he said unto him: “Brother, if it be that thou art minded to be of our life and society, thou needs must strip thyself of all those things that now thou mayst have without offense for thine own, and give them to the poor according to the counsel of the Holy Gospel, forasmuch as all my brethren that were able have done the same.”

When he heard this he went straightway to the field where he had left his oxen, and unyoked them, and led one thereof into the presence of the Blessed Francis, and said unto him: “Brother, so many years have I served my father and all them of my household, and albeit this be but a small portion of mine heritage, yet am I willing to accept this ox as my share and to give the same to the poor, as it shall seem thee best.” But when his kinsmen and his brethren, that yet were little, saw how he was minded to leave them, all of his household began to weep so sore and to bewail them with voices so sorrowful that the Blessed Francis was moved unto compassion thereby, for the family was large and helpless. And the Blessed Francis saith unto them: “Make ready food for all of us, and let us eat thereof all together; and weep not, for I will make ye

right joyful.” And forthwith they made ready and all did eat together with great gladness.

After meat, the Blessed Francis said: “This your son is minded to serve God, and thereof ought ye not to grieve, but rather to rejoyce exceedingly. For unto you, not only as toward God but as toward this world, is it counted for a great honor and for the profit both of souls and bodies that God should be honored by one of your own flesh, and all our brethren shall be your sons and brethren. And, for that he is a creature of God and is minded to serve his Creator, to serve whom is to reign as king, I cannot and I ought not to yield him up to you, but to the intent that ye may have some consolation for him, I will that he make over that which is his own in this ox unto you, as unto the poor, albeit, according to the Gospel, he ought to give it unto others of the poor.” And all they were comforted in the words of the Blessed Francis, and most of all did they rejoyce of the ox that was yielded up unto them, seeing that they were exceeding poor.

And, for that pure and holy simpleness in himself and others was right well pleasing unto the Blessed Francis, he clad him in the habit of the Religion and took him with him as his companion. For of so great simpleness was he that he held himself bound to do in all things as the Blessed Francis did.

Hence, when the Blessed Francis stayed in any church or in any place to pray, he also would look at him and straitly conform himself unto all his acts and gestures. Insomuch as if it were that the Blessed Francis did bend his knees, or lift up his hands to Heaven, or spit, or sighed, he also did all these things in like wise. But when the Blessed Francis had given thought to this matter, he with great cheerfulness did begin to reprove him somewhat as concerning these and the like simple ways. Unto whom he made answer: “Father, I did promise to do all the things that thou doest, wherefore I needs must conform myself unto thee in all things.” And the Blessed Francis did marvel and marvellously rejoyce when he saw in him so great purity and simplicity.

Howbeit thereafter he began to make so great progress that the Blessed Francis and the other brethren did very greatly marvel at his perfection, and after some little space he died in that same holy proficiency in godliness. Whence afterward the Blessed Francis, with great cheerfulness of mind and body, would tell stories among the brethren of his conversation, giving him the name, not of brother, but of John the Saint.

Chapter LVIII

How he did punish himself by eating in the same dish with a leper for that he had done shame unto him

NOW when the Blessed Francis returned to the church of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion, he found brother James the Simple with a certain leper that had many sores. For the Blessed Francis had commended this leper and all other lepers unto him, forasmuch as he was, as it were, their leech, and did willingly tent and cleanse and bind up their wounds, for at that time the brethren abode in the hospitals of the lepers.

The Blessed Francis therefore said unto brother James, as if reproving him: “Thou shouldst not lead these Christians abroad, for it is not decent, neither for thee nor for them.” For albeit he would that he should serve them, yet was he unwilling that he should lead them that were greatly afflicted beyond the hospital, forasmuch as men are wont to abhor the sight of such exceedingly, and brother James was so simple that he went with them out of the hospital as far as the church of S. Mary of the Little Portion as if he had been going thither with the brethren. Now the Blessed Francis called the lepers themselves brother-Christians.

And when he had spoken these words, the Blessed Francis did straightway reproach himself, thinking that the leper should have been shamed by the reproof that he had spoken unto brother James. And being fain to make satisfaction both to God and the leper, he told his fault to brother Peter of Catana that was then Minister General, and saith he: “I would that thou confirm unto me the penance whereof I have made choice to do for this default, and that thou wilt in no wise contradict me herein.” Who made answer: “Brother, whatsoever pleaseth thee, that do!” For brother Peter did so reverence and fear him that he did not presume to contradict him, albeit thereby was he often himself afflicted.

Then said the Blessed Francis: “Let this be my penance, to wit, that I eat together in one dish with my brother-Christian.” When, therefore, the Blessed Francis sat at table with the leper and the other brethren, a dish was set between the Blessed Francis and the leper. Now he was all covered with sores and loathsome, and especially he had his fingers drawn together, and, bleeding wherewith, he took the pieces out of the dish in such wise that when he set them in the dish, the blood and matter from his fingers ran down thereinto. And when brother Peter and the rest of the brethren saw this, greatly were

they grieved thereby, but they dared say nought by reason of their fear and reverence of the holy father.

He that saw this did write the same, and beareth witness of these things.

Chapter LII

How he put devils to flight by words of humility

WHEN a time the Blessed Francis went to the church of the Blessed Peter at Bovara, near the walled town of Trevi in the Vale of Spoleto, and with him went brother Pacifico, that in the world was called the King of Verse and the Courtly Doctor of Singers. Now the church was deserted. Wherefore said the Blessed Francis to the Blessed Pacifico: "Go back to the hospital of the lepers, for I am minded to remain here alone to-night, and tomorrow early in the morning come back to me." Now whilst he abode there alone and had said Compline and other prayers, he was fain to rest and to go to sleep, but could not. And his spirit began to be afraid and to feel devilish suggestions, and forthwith he went out of the church and did cross himself, saying: "On behalf of God Almighty, I bid you devils that you exercise upon my body all that it hath been given unto you to do by the Lord Jesus Christ, forasmuch as all things I am ready to undergo! For since the greatest enemy I have is mine own body, you do avenge me of mine adversary and most bitter foe!" And straightway those suggestions did cease altogether, and going back to the place where he had laid him down, he went to sleep in peace.

Chapter LI

Of the vision of brother Pacifico that he saw, and how he heard that the seat of Lucifer was reserved for the humble Francis

WHEN the morrow came, brother Pacifico came back unto him. The Blessed Francis was then standing before the altar in prayer. And brother Pacifico waited for him without the choir, praying in like wise before a crucifix. And when he began to pray, he was lifted up and snatched away into Heaven, whether in the body or out of the body God only knoweth, and saw in Heaven many seats, whereof he saw one higher than the rest, and glorious beyond them all, shining and made fair with every precious

stone. And marvelling at the beauty thereof, he began to think within himself whose seat it should be. And straightway he heard a voice saying unto him: "This seat was the seat of Lucifer, and in his stead shall the humble Francis sit herein."

And when he had come back to himself, forthwith the Blessed Francis went without unto him, at whose feet the brother fell straightway with his arms set together after the manner of a cross, and conceiving him as already in Heaven abiding in that chair, said unto him: "Father, forgive me, and beseech the Lord that He have mercy upon me and forgive me my sins!" But stretching forth his hand, the Blessed Francis lifted him up and straightway knew that he had seen something in prayer. For he did seem all changed, and spoke unto the Blessed Francis not as if he were still living in the flesh, but as already reigning in Heaven.

But afterward, for that he was unwilling to tell the Blessed Francis of his vision, he began to speak words unto him, touching the matter as it were in a roundabout fashion, and among other things he said unto him: "How deemest thou of thyself, brother?" The Blessed Francis made answer and said unto him: "Meseemeth that I be the greatest sinner in all the world." And straightway it was said unto the soul of brother Pacifico: "Hereby mayst thou know the truth of the vision thou hast seen, for whereas on account of his pride was Lucifer cast down from that throne, even so shall Francis on account of his humility deserve to be exalted and to sit therein."

Chapter LXX

How he made himself be haled naked with a rope tied round his neck before the people

Now on a time when he was somewhat recovered of a certain sore sickness that he had, it seemed to him that his allowance of food in that sickness had somewhat exceeded, albeit he had eaten but little; and rising up one day when as yet he was not free of his quartan fever, he made the people of the city of Assisi be called together in the Piazza for preaching. And when he had made an end of preaching, he bade the people that none should depart thence until such time as he should return unto them. Whereupon, entering into the church of the bishopric of S. Rufinus with many of the brethren and brother Peter of Catana, that was a canon of that

Church and had been chosen first Minister General by the Blessed Francis, he told the same brother Peter, enjoining him on his obedience, without contradiction, to do that which he should tell him to do. Brother Peter made answer unto him: "Brother, I neither can nor ought to will or to do anything as concerning me and thee other than as it shall please thee." Wherefore, putting off his habit, the Blessed Francis bade him tie a cord round his neck and hale him naked before the people as far as the place where he had been preaching. Another brother he bade take a dishful of ashes and go up to the place where he had preached, and when he was haled as far as that place, should cast the ashes over his face. But he did not obey him herein for the exceeding pity and compassion wherewith he was moved towards him.

And brother Peter, taking the cord tied to his neck, did hale him behind him as he had bidden him. Howbeit he himself did weep right sore, and the other brethren with him did shed tears of exceeding compassion and bitterness.

And when he was thus led naked before the people as far as the place wherein he had preached, he said: "You and all that by mine example do leave the world behind and enter into the religion and life of the brethren, ye do all believe that I am a holy man, yet nevertheless do I confess unto God and unto you that in this sickness of mine I have eaten of flesh-meats and broths sodden of meat." And all as it were did begin to weep over him for exceeding pity and compassion, specially as it was then winter-time and the cold was exceeding sore, and he was not yet free of the quartan fever.

And smiting their bosoms they did accuse themselves, saying: "If this saint, for just and manifest necessity, with so great shame of his body doth thus accuse himself whose life we know to be holy, and whom moreover by his exceeding abstinence and by the austerities that he hath done unto his body from the beginning of his conversion to Christ we do behold alive in the flesh that is as it were already dead before its time, what shall we wretched ones do, that all the days of our life have lived and continually do live according to the desire of the flesh?"

Chapter LXXI

How he would that any comforts he received for his body should be known to all

IN like manner, at another time, when he had eaten in a certain hermitage at the time of S. Martin's Lent, of cakes made with lard on account of his ailments that did render oil exceeding unwholesome, at the end of the Lent, when he was preaching to a crowd of folk, at the first word of his sermon he said unto them: "Ye come to me with great devoutness, believing me to be a saint, but I do confess unto God and unto you that this Lent I have eaten of cakes made with lard."

Yea, moreover, well-nigh always when he had been eating with any laymen or some little bodily comfort was made for him by the brethren on account of his infirmities, straightway within the house and without, in the presence of the brethren that knew not thereof and of laymen, would he say openly, "I have eaten of such and such meats." For he had no mind to hide from men what was manifest to God. In like manner also, wheresoever and in the presence of whatsoever Religious or lay-folk, his spirit was moved to pride or vainglory, or to any wickedness, forthwith would he confess the same before them nakedly, without any cloak whatsoever.

Whence once he said unto his companions: "In such wise I am fain to live in the wildernesses and in other places wherein I sojourn, as if all men were looking upon me. For if they take me to be a holy man, and I lead not the life that beseemeth a holy man, then I should be a hypocrite."

When, therefore, on account of an ailment of the spleen and a chill of the stomach, one of his companions that was his warden was minded to sew on the inner side of his habit a little bit of fox-skin nigh the spleen and stomach, particularly as the cold was great, the Blessed Francis made answer unto him: "If thou wouldst that I should have fox-skin on the inner side of my habit, make be set without upon the habit a shred of the same skin, so as that thereby men may know that I have fox-skin within also." And this he made be done, but full little did he wear it, albeit it were greatly necessary unto him.

Chapter LXXIII

How he did straightway accuse himself of the vain glory he had
in giving alms

WHEN he was going through the city of Assisi, a certain poor old woman did ask an alms of him for the love of God, and forthwith he gave her the mantle that he had on his back, but straightway without tarrying he did confess before them that were following the vainglory that he had therein.

And so many other examples like unto these have we seen and heard of his absolute humility, that we who were conversant with him cannot set forth the same, neither in word nor in writing. But to this did the Blessed Francis pay the chiefeſt and higheſt heed, that never should he be a hypocrite before God; albeit on account of his frequent infirmities, an allowance beyond the ordinary was a necessity to him, yet did he ever take thought to show in himself a good example to the brethren and to others, wherefore he would endure every privation, that he might take away from all every occasion of murmuring.

Chapter LXXIV

How he described the state of perfect humility in his own person

WHEN the time of the Chapter was drawing near, the Blessed Francis said to his companion: "Meseemeth I am not a brother Minor save I be in the state that I shall tell thee. Behold, the brethren with great devotion invite me to the Chapter, and moved by their devotion I do go unto the Chapter with them. And when they be gathered together they beseech me that I shall announce unto them the Word of God and preach among them. And rising up I preach unto them as the Holy Spirit shall have taught me. Now suppose, when the preaching is ended, that all should cry out against me, 'We will not have thee to reign over us, for thou art not eloquent, as is befitting, and too simple art thou, and an idiot, and we be sore ashamed to have a superior over us so simple and despised, wherefore henceforth presume not to be called our superior!' And so they cast me out with contumely and disgrace. Meseemeth I am no brother Minor if I rejoyce not when they should thus hold me of no account and cast me out with shame, being unwilling

that I should be their superior, as gladly as when they venerate and honor me, the profit and advantage to themselves in either case being equal. For if I am glad when they do exalt and honor me on account of their own profit and devoutness, wherein nevertheless may be peril to my soul, much more ought I to be glad and joyful of the profit and salvation of my soul when they speak evil against me, wherein is the certain gain of a soul.”

Chapter LXXV

How he was minded to go humbly into distant parts in like manner as he had sent other brethren, and how he taught the brethren to go humbly and devoutly through the world

WHEN the Chapter was ended wherein many brethren were sent to certain provinces beyond sea, the Blessed Francis, remaining with certain of the brethren, said unto them: “My best beloved brethren, meet it is that I should be the pattern and example of all the brethren. If, therefore, I have sent the brethren into far-off parts to undergo travail and shame, hunger and thirst, and other necessities, it is only just, and holy obedience doth require, that I in like manner should go to some distant province, to the intent that the brethren should the more patiently endure their adversities when they shall hear that I also undergo the same. Go, therefore, and pray the Lord that He grant me to make choice of the province that shall be most to His praise and the profit of souls and a good example of our Religion.”

For it was the wont of the most holy father when he was minded to go to some province, first to pray the Lord, and to send brethren to pray that the Lord would direct his heart to go thither where it was best pleasing unto Him.

The brethren, therefore, went to pray, and when they had made an end of praying they came back unto him. And straightway with joy he said unto them: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Glorious Virgin Mary and of all saints, I choose the province of France, wherein is a Catholic folk, and the more for that among other Catholics they do manifest a special reverence toward the Body of Christ, the which is right grateful unto me, wherefore with them will I most willingly hold converse.”

For the Blessed Francis had so great reverence and devotion toward the Body of Christ, that he would it should be written in the Rule that the

brethren in the provinces wherein they sojourned should have a great care and solicitude in this matter, and should admonish clerics and priests that they should set aside the Body of Christ in an honorable and decent place, the which, if they neglected to do, the brethren were to do it for them.

He would, moreover, it should be set in the Rule, that wheresoever the brethren should find the names of the Lord and the words whereby the Body of the Lord is made not well and honorably put into safe keeping, they themselves should collect the same and put them away worshipfully, honoring God in His words. And albeit these things were not written in the Rule, for that it seemed not good to the ministers that this should be an injunction to the brethren, yet in his will and in other of his writings he was minded to leave to the brethren his will in these matters.

At one time, indeed, he was minded to send certain brethren through all the provinces, that should take with them a number of pyxes fair and clean, and wheresoever they should find the Body of the Lord dishonorably set away, they should place the same with all honor in these pyxes. He desired, moreover, to send certain other brethren throughout all the provinces with good and fair moulds of iron for shaping of the Hosts fair and cleanly.

When, therefore, the Blessed Francis did choose those brethren that he wished to take with him, he said unto them: "In the name of the Lord go ye two and two by the way humbly and worshipfully, and, above all, with strait silence from early morning until after tierce, praying unto the Lord in your hearts, and let idle words and useless be not so much as named amongst you. For albeit that ye walk abroad, let your conversation be not less humble and beseeching than if ye were in a hermitage or a cell. For we, wheresoever we be, or whithersoever we may walk, have always the cell with us. For brother Body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit that abideth within the cell to pray to the Lord and meditate upon Him. Whence if it be that the soul abideth not quietly in her cell, of right little avail is the cell of the Religious built with hands."

And when he had come as far as Florence, he found there my Lord Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia, that was afterward Pope Gregory, who, when he had heard from the Blessed Francis that he was minded to go into France, forbade him to go thither, saying: "Brother, it is my will thou go not beyond the mountains, for many prelates there be that gladly would hinder the good work of thy Religion in the Court of Rome. But I and the other Cardinals that love the Religion will right gladly protect and help the same if thou wilt

abide within the circuit of this province.”

And the Blessed Francis saith unto him: “My lord, great shame is it unto me, seeing that I have sent others of my brethren into provinces far away, if I myself remain in these parts, and partake not in the tribulations that they for the Lord’s sake are about to endure.”

But the Bishop said unto him, as it were reproving him: “Wherefore hast thou sent thy brethren so far away to die of hunger and to suffer other tribulations?”

The Blessed Francis made answer unto him with great fervor and in the spirit of prophecy, saying: “My lord, thinkest thou that the Lord hath sent the brethren for the sake of these provinces only? Yea, I tell thee of a truth that God hath chosen and sent the brethren for the profit and salvation of the souls of all the men of this world; not alone in the lands of the faithful, but even in the lands of the infidel shall they be received, and many be the souls that they shall win.”

And the Lord Bishop of Ostia did marvel at his words, affirming that he spoke the truth, yet even so he would not allow him to go into France; but the Blessed Francis sent thither brother Pacifico with many other brethren. Howbeit, he himself went back to the Vale of Spoleto.

Chapter LXXI

*How he taught the brethren to win the souls of certain robbers by
humility and charity*

ANTO a certain hermitage of the brethren above the Borgo San Sepolcro came robbers on a time for bread, that did hide them in the woods and rob them that passed that way. Certain of the brethren said that it was not a good thing to give them alms, but others out of compassion did give for the sake of moving them to repentance.

In the meanwhile the Blessed Francis came to that place, whom the brethren did ask whether it were a good thing to give them alms, and the Blessed Francis said unto them: “If ye will do as I shall tell you, I trust in the Lord that ye shall win their souls. Go ye therefore and procure good bread and good wine and carry them into the forest wherein they abide, and cry out saying: ‘Brother robbers, come unto us, for that we be brethren, and bring you good bread and good wine!’ They will come incontinent. Then spread

ye a napkin on the ground and set the bread and wine thereon, and serve the same humbly and cheerfully until they have eaten. Howbeit, after they have eaten, ye shall speak unto them of the Word of God, and at the last ye shall prefer this first petition for the love of God, to wit, that they do promise you not to murder nor do no man any hurt to his person. For if ye shall ask them everything at once, they will not hearken unto you, but so much will they promise ye forthwith for the sake of your humility and charity.

“Then, on another day, on account of their good promise, carry unto them along with the bread and wine, eggs and cheese, and serve until they shall have eaten. And when they have eaten thereof ye shall say unto them: ‘Why stand ye here all the day, to die of hunger and suffer so many hardships, and therewithal to do so many evil deeds in will and in work, whereby, save ye be converted unto the Lord, ye do destroy your own souls? Better is it that ye serve the Lord, that shall bestow upon you in this world the things that be necessary to the body, and in the end shall save your souls.’ Then shall they be inspired of God and shall be converted for the sake of your humility and patience that ye have shown them.”

The brethren accordingly did all things as the Blessed Francis had told them, and the robbers by the grace and mercy of God did hearken unto them and did observe letter by letter and point by point all things whatsoever the brethren did humbly beseech them to do. Yea, by reason of the humility and familiarity of the brethren toward them, they did begin humbly to serve the brethren themselves, bearing wood on their shoulders as far as the hermitage, and, at the last, certain of them did enter the Religion. Others moreover, confessing their sins, did penance for those they had committed, promising in the hands of the brethren that they would thereafter live of the labor of their hands and never be guilty of the like again.

Chapter LXXIIII

**How he was beaten by devils and knew thereby that it was better
pleasing to God he should stay in poor and humble places than
with Cardinals**



IN a time the Blessed Francis went to Rome to visit the lord Bishop of Ostia, and after he had stayed some days with him, he visited also the lord Leo, a Cardinal that was mightily devoted to the Blessed

Francis. And for that it was then winter time and altogether unfit for walking by reason of the cold and wind and rain, he besought him that he would sojourn with him some days and take his victual from him as a poor man along with the other poor men that did eat daily in his house.

Howbeit this he said for that he knew the Blessed Francis was minded always to be taken in as a poor man wheresoever he might be lodged, albeit the lord Pope and the Cardinal, with the greatest reverence and devotion, would have received him and revered him as a Saint. Moreover, he added: "I will give thee a good house apart, wherein thou mayst pray and eat if thou wilt."

Then brother Angelo Tancredi, that was one of the twelve first brethren, who also was staying with the said Cardinal, said unto the Blessed Francis: "Brother, near hereby is a certain tower very roomy and remote wherein thou mayst dwell as in a hermitage." The which when the Blessed Francis saw, he was pleased therewithal, and coming back to the Cardinal said unto him: "My lord, haply I will remain with you for some days."

And the lord Cardinal made great joy thereof. Brother Angelo therefore went and made ready a place in the tower for the Blessed Francis and his companion. And for that the Blessed Francis was not minded to come down from thence so long as he abode with the Cardinal, and desired also that none should come in unto him, brother Angelo promised and made ordinance that every day victual should be brought thither for him and his companion.

And when the Blessed Francis had gone thither with his companion, on the first night when he was fain to go to sleep therein, came devils that did beat him sore. And calling his companion he said unto him: "Brother, the devils have beaten me sore, and therefore I will that thou remain near me, for I am afraid to stay here alone." And that night his companion bode near him, for the Blessed Francis was all trembling as he that is smitten with an ague, wherefore both were awake through the whole night.

In the meanwhile, said the Blessed Francis to his companion: "Wherefore have the devils beaten me? and wherefore hath power been given unto them of the Lord that they should do me hurt?" And saith he: "The devils be the Lord's sergeants, for even as the High Bailiff of the city doth send his sergeant to punish him that hath committed an offense, even so doth the Lord by his sergeants, to wit, by the devils that in this world are His ministers, correct and chastise whomsoever He loveth. For even the perfect Religious doth oft-times sin, albeit he know not thereof; wherefore by means of the devil is he chastised, for that he knoweth not his sin, to the intent that he may search diligently

both within him and without, and find out those things wherein he hath offended. For in them that the Lord loveth of very love in this world, He doth leave nought in them to be punished hereafter.

“Howbeit, by the mercy and grace of God, I know not that I have offended in aught for which I have not made amends by confession and satisfaction; yea, by His mercy hath God granted me this boon, that as concerning all things wherein I may please or displease Him I do receive clear knowledge in prayer. But it may be that He hath now by His sergeants chastised me for that, albeit my lord Cardinal hath gladly shown me mercy, and that it is necessary for my body to receive this refreshment, yet my brethren that go about the world enduring hunger and manifold tribulations, and other brethren that abide in hermitages and sorry houses, when they shall hear that I am sojourning with my lord Cardinal, may find occasion to murmur against me, saying, ‘We do endure all these many adversities, while he hath these comforts of his own.’

“For I am bound ever to set them a good example, seeing that for this have I been given unto them, for more are the brethren edified when I abide amongst them in their sorry places rather than in others, and more patiently do they bear their own tribulations when they hear that I also do endure the same.”

For in truth this was the chiefest and continual study of our father, that always and in all things he should afford a good example, and take away from the brethren all occasion of murmuring as concerning him. And on account of this, sick or healthy, so many and so sore were the sufferings he endured that all the brethren whosoever that knew thereof as did we that were with him until his dying day, so often as they read thereof or commend them in writing to memory, cannot refrain them from tears, and are willing to undergo all tribulations and necessities with the greater patience and cheerfulness.

The Blessed Francis come down therefore from the tower early in the morning and went to the lord Cardinal, telling him all that had befallen him and that he and his companion had undergone; yea, he even said unto him: “Men do believe me to be a saint, and behold, the devils have cast me forth from my retreat.”

And the lord Cardinal was right cheerful with him. Howbeit, for that he knew and revered him as a saint, he would not contradict him after he was minded not to stay there, And so the Blessed Francis, bidding him farewell, came back to the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo near Rieti.

Chapter LXXIII

How he rebuked the brethren that wished to go by the way of their wisdom and science and not by the way of humility, and did foretell them of the reformation of the Order and the bringing back thereof to its first condition

WHEN the Blessed Francis was in the Chapter General at S. Mary of the Little Portion, that was called the Chapter of the Wattles, for that no dwellings were therein but such as were built with wattles, and five thousand brethren were assembled, a great many that were wise and learned went to the lord Bishop of Ostia, that was likewise there, and said unto him: “My lord, we would that thou shouldst persuade brother Francis to follow the counsel of the wiser brethren, and allow himself sometimes to be guided by them.” And they did allege the Rules of S. Benedict, S. Augustine, and S. Bernard, that did teach how such and such should be the life of them that were in the Order.

And when the Cardinal had repeated all these things to the Blessed Francis by way of admonition, the Blessed Francis, making no answer unto him, did take him by the hand, and led him unto the brethren in Chapter assembled, and spoke thus unto the brethren in the fervor and the strength of the Holy Spirit: “My brethren! My brethren! The Lord hath called me by the way of simplicity and humility, and this way hath He pointed out to me in truth for myself and for them that are willing to believe me and to imitate me. I am fain, therefore, that ye name unto me no other Rule, neither of S. Benedict, nor of S. Augustine, nor of S. Bernard, nor any other way or form of living save that which hath been mercifully shown and given unto me by the Lord. And the Lord hath told me that He would I should be a new covenant in the world, and that He would not lead us by any other way than by that knowledge. But with all your science and your wisdom, God will confound you, and I have trust in the sergeants of the Lord, that by means of them God will punish you, and that ye shall yet return to your condition, for all your fault-finding, will ye or nill ye!”

Then the Cardinal was sore amazed, and answered nought, and all the brethren were mightily afraid.

Chapter LXX

How he foreknew and foretold that knowledge should be the occasion of ruin to the Order, and how he forbade one of the companions to devote himself to the study of preaching

THE Blessed Francis sorrowed sorely to see the knowledge that puffeth up sought after to the neglect of godliness, and more especially if any should persevere not in the vocation wherein he was called at the beginning. For he would say: “Those brethren of mine that are led away by curiosity of knowledge in the day of tribulation will find their hands empty. Therefore would I that they should rather be corroborated in godliness, so that, when the time of tribulation shall come, they may have the Lord with them in their straits, for verily tribulation shall come, such as that books useful for nought shall be cast aside into lockers and dark corners.”

This he said not because the reading of Holy Scripture was displeasing to him, but that he might withdraw all from overmuch care for learning. For he would rather that they should be good brethren in charity than smatterers in the curiosities of knowledge.

He also scented aforehand the times that in no long space were to come wherein he foreknew that the knowledge which puffeth up should be the occasion of falling, whence after his death he did appear to one of the companions that on a time was over-intent upon the study of preaching, whom he did rebuke and warn, bidding him take good heed to walk in the way of humility and simplicity.

Chapter LXXI

That in the coming time of tribulation, they that shall enter the Order shall be blessed, and they that shall be approved shall be better than they that went before them

THE Blessed Francis said: “The time shall come wherein, by the evil examples of evil brethren, this Religion, beloved of God, shall be defamed in such sort as that she shall be ashamed to go forth in public; but they that at that time shall come to take the Order upon them, shall be led thereunto by the working of the Holy Spirit only, and flesh and blood

shall print no stain upon them, but they shall be truly blessed of the Lord. And, albeit in them their works shall not be meritorious, yet, nevertheless, for that the charity which did make the saints work fervently in spirit doth wax cold, exceeding great temptations shall come unto them, and they that in that time shall have been found approved shall be better than they that went before them. But woe unto them that, with only the show and appearance of religious conversation, and applauding themselves on their own wisdom, and putting their trust in their knowledge, shall then have been found idle, that is, not endeavouring themselves in godly works, in the way of the cross and of repentance, in the pure observance of the Gospel that by their profession they are bound to observe in purity and simplicity! For they resist not with constancy the temptations that are permitted to befall for the probation of the elect; but they that shall have been proven and approved, shall receive the crown of life whereunto the malice of the reprobate doth cause them to strive.”

Chapter LXXJ

How he made answer to his companion that asked him wherefore he corrected not the excesses that did overtake the Order in his own time

A CERTAIN companion of the Blessed Francis once said: “Father, pardon me, that which I would say unto thee hath already been considered of many,” and saith he: “Thou knowest how formerly by the grace of God the whole Religion did flourish in the purity of perfection; how all the brethren, with great fervor and solicitude, did in all things observe holy poverty, to wit, in their small and sorry buildings and furniture, their few and sorry books and habits, and as in these so in all other outward matters, they were of one will and fervor and solicitude to observe all things that pertain to our profession and vocation, and the example to all, and in like manner were they all of one mind in the love of God and of their neighbor, as men truly apostolic and evangelic. But now for some little time past hath this purity and perfection begun to be changed into something exceeding different, albeit many do talk and excuse the brethren by reason of their multitude, saying that on this account these things cannot be observed by the brethren; yea, many brethren have been smitten with so great blindness as that the people is

more edified by these than by the former things, and more readily converted to devotion, and therefore it seemeth them that they do live the more becomingly, despising and setting at nought the way of holy simplicity and poverty that was the very beginning and foundation of our Religion. Whence we, taking thought of these things, do firmly believe that they are displeasing unto thee, yet do we greatly marvel wherefore, if they do thus displease thee, thou dost put up with them and not correct them.”

The Blessed Francis made answer and said unto him: “The Lord forgive thee, brother, forasmuch as thou art minded to be mine adversary against me, and to mix me up with these things that pertain not unto mine office. For so long as I held the office of superior over the brethren and they did abide in their vocation and profession, albeit that from the beginning of my conversion I have ever been ailing, yet with such small solicitude as I could, I did endeavour to satisfy them both by example and by preaching; but after I perceived how the Lord did multiply the number of the brethren, and how they themselves by reason of their lukewarmness and want of spirit did begin to decline from the right way and safe wherein they had been wont to walk, and treading the broader way that leadeth unto death, would no longer pay heed unto their calling and profession nor to any good example, and were not minded to forsake the perilous and deadly journey they had emprised by reason of any preaching or admonition or example of mine that I did ever manifest before them, I did, therefore, resign the superiorship and the government of the Religion unto God and unto the ministers thereof. Whence, albeit that at the time when I did renounce mine office of superior over the brethren I did excuse me before the brethren in the Chapter General for that, by reason of mine infirmities, I was not able to undertake the charge of them, yet nevertheless, were the brethren willing to walk according to my will, for their comfort and utility I would that they should have none other minister but me until my dying day. From the time that a good and faithful subject knoweth and observeth the will of his superior, little solicitude need the superior have about him; yea, so greatly should I rejoice in the goodness of the brethren, by reason of the gain unto them and the gain unto myself, that if I were lying abed sick it would be no trouble unto me to satisfy them; for that mine office—that is, the office of superior—is spiritual only, to-wit, to have the mastery over their evil ways and spiritually to correct and amend them. But, seeing that I cannot correct and amend them by preaching, admonition, and example, I am not minded to become an executioner to punish and scourge

them like the magistrates of this world.

“For I trust in the Lord that the invisible enemies that are the sergeants of the Lord for punishing the guilty in this world and in the world to come will yet take vengeance on them that transgress the commandments of God and the vow of their profession, and will make them be corrected by the men of this world to their reproach and shame, and that so they may be turned back unto their own calling and profession.

“Howsoever, unto the day of my death I will never cease, at least by good example and by good deeds, to lead the brethren to walk in the way that the Lord did point out unto me, the way that I have taught and pointed out by word and example, so as that they may be without excuse before God, and I shall not be bound before God to render any further account concerning them.”

Chapter XXXIII

*That by the prayers and tears of the humble and simple brethren
are converted those souls that seem to be converted by the
knowledge and preaching of others*

THE most holy father would not that his brethren should be covetous of knowledge and books, but his will and that which he preached unto them was that they should take heed to be founded upon holy humility and to imitate pure simplicity, holy prayer, and our Lady Poverty, wherein the holy first brethren did build, and this alone he told them was the safe way to the salvation of their own souls and the edification of others, forasmuch as Christ, to the imitation of whom we are called, did show and teach this way alone by word and likewise by example.

For the blessed father, looking forward to things to be, knew by the Holy Spirit, and many a time and oft did say unto the brethren, that “many brethren taking occasion from the edification of others will let go their own calling, to wit, holy humility, pure simplicity, prayer, devotion, and our Lady Poverty, and it will come to pass with them that they shall think themselves thereby to be the more endued, that is fulfilled, with devotion, and to glow more warmly with the love, and to be enlumined more brightly by the knowledge of God by reason of their understanding of Scripture. Hence in time of trial they will remain inwardly cold and empty, so as that they will not be able to turn back

to their early calling, for that the time for living according to their calling they have lost in vain studies and false, and I fear lest that which they did seem to have shall be taken away from them, forasmuch as that which was given unto them, to wit, to hold and imitate their calling, they have altogether neglected.”

And he said further: “Many brethren there be that set all their study and all their care upon acquiring knowledge, letting go their holy calling by wandering forth both in mind and body beyond the way of humility and holy prayer; who, when they have preached to the people and have learnt that some have thereby been edified or converted to repentance, are incontinently puffed up and extol themselves upon their work and the gain of another, as if it had been their own gain; when nevertheless they have preached rather to their own condemnation and harm, and have done nothing for themselves according to the truth, save only as the instruments of them through whom in truth the Lord hath gathered in this harvest, for them that they believe to be edified and converted to repentance by their knowledge and preaching, the Lord doth in truth edify and convert by the prayers of the holy, poor, humble, and simple brethren, albeit the holy brethren for the most part know not aught thereof, for thus is it the will of God they should know not, lest haply they might pride themselves thereon.

“Those brethren be my knights of the Table Round that do hide themselves in wildernesses and lonely places, that they may give themselves up to prayer and meditation, bewailing their own and others’ sins, living simply and humbly conversing, whose holiness is known unto God, albeit that at times it is unknown to the brethren and to men. When the souls of these shall be presented by the angels of the Lord, then shall the Lord show them the fruit and wages of their travail, to wit, the many souls that have been saved through their prayers and tears, and shall say unto them: ‘My dearly beloved sons, such and so many be the souls that have been saved by your prayers and tears and examples, and for that ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make ye rulers over many things. Others, verily, have preached and labored in sermons of their own wisdom, yet is it through your merits that I have wrought the fruit of salvation, wherefore receive ye the wages of their labors as well as the fruit of your merits, which is the everlasting kingdom that ye have snatched by the violence of your simplicity and humbleness, and of your prayers and tears.’

“And even thus shall they, bringing their sheaves, that is, the fruits and deservings of their holy humility and simplicity, enter into the joy of their

Lord, rejoicing and exulting. But they that cared for nought save only to know and to point out to others the way of salvation, doing nought as for themselves, shall stand naked and empty-handed before the judgment-seat of Christ, bringing only the sheaves of confusion and of shame and of sorrow.

“Then shall the truth of holy humility and simplicity and of holy prayer and poverty that is our calling, be exalted and glorified and magnified, the which truth they that are puffed up with the wind of knowledge have disparaged in their life and in the idle sermons of their own wisdom, saying that truth itself is a lie, and, as though they had been smitten with blindness, cruelly persecuting them that did walk in the truth.

“Then shall the error and the falsehood of their opinions wherein they have walked, and which they have preached for the truth, whereby they have cast down many into the pit of darkness, come to an end in grief and confusion and shame, and they themselves with the darkness of their opinion shall be overwhelmed in outer darkness with the spirits of darkness.”

Whence the Blessed Francis did oftentimes say upon that word: “The barren hath borne seven and she that hath many children is waxed feeble”: “The ‘barren’ is the good Religious, simple, humble, poor, and despised, vile and abject, that with holy prayers and godly works doth edify others continually, and bringeth forth with grievous groaning.”

This word did he repeat many a time and oft before the ministers and other brethren, more especially in the Chapter General.

Chapter LXXIII

How it was his will and teaching that superiors and preachers should exercise themselves in prayer and works of humility

THE faithful servant and perfect imitator of Christ, Francis, feeling himself in virtue of holy humility in a peculiar manner transformed into Christ, did desire humility itself in his brethren beyond all other virtues, and did most affectionately encourage them without ceasing, by word and example, to love, desire, obtain, and keep that grace, and most of all did he admonish and induce the ministers and preachers to exercise them in works of humility.

For he said that by reason of holding the office of superior, or of devotion to the cares of preaching, they ought not to omit holy and devout prayer, going

forth for alms, working at times with their hands, and doing other works like the rest of the brethren, for the sake of good example and the gain of their own and other souls. He said moreover: “Greatly are those brethren that are under them edified when their ministers and preachers give themselves up to prayer and incline them willingly to works of humility and services of mean account. For otherwise they cannot, without confusion and prejudice and condemnation to themselves, admonish other brethren as concerning these matters. For meet is it they should practise the example of Christ before they preach it, and preach and practise at the same time.”

Chapter LXXV

How unto his own shame he taught the brethren to know when he was the servant of God and when not

THE Blessed Francis once called together a number of the brethren and said unto them: “I have besought the Lord that He would deign to show me when I am His servant and when not. For nought else do I desire but always to be His servant. But the most gracious Lord, of His condescension, did make answer unto me: ‘Know that thou art truly my servant while thou thinkest, speakest, and doest holy things.’ Wherefore have I called you brethren together and notified ye hereof to the intent that I may be shamed before ye whensoever ye shall see me fail in any or in all of the said respects.”

Chapter LXXVI

How he would by all means that all the brethren should sometimes labor with their hands

THE lukewarm, that did never apply them earnestly and humbly to any business, he said would quickly be vomited forth out of the mouth of God. No idle man might ever appear in his sight, but he would straightway rebuke him with a biting tooth. Forasmuch as he himself, the example of all perfection, did humbly toil with his hands, allowing nought of the most precious gift of time to run to waste.

For he said: “I will that all my brethren should labor and exercise them humbly in good works, so as that we be less burdensome to men, and that

neither heart nor tongue rove abroad in idleness. Let them that know nothing learn to work.”

Howbeit he said that the gain and the wages of the labor should be left to the judgment, not of the laborer, but to the judgment of the warden or of the family.

Part V

The Fifth Part, of His Zeal in the Perfecting of the Rule and Toward the Whole Religion

Chapter LXXVJ

How he praised the profession of the Rule, and would that the brethren should know the same and talk thereof and die therewithal

THAT perfect champion and lover of the observance of the Holy Gospel, the Blessed Francis, did most ardently strive for the common profession of our Rule, which is nought other than the perfect observance of the Gospel, and did endow with a special blessing all them that are and shall be true champions thereof.

For this our profession, he would say unto his imitators, is the book of life, the hope of salvation, the earnest of glory, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of the Cross, the estate of perfection, the key of paradise, and the condition of the everlasting covenant. This he would should be held of all and known of all, and he would that the brethren in their discourses together should avoid weariness by oftentimes conferring thereupon, and in remembrance of the oath they had taken should full oft hold converse with the inner man as concerning the same.

He taught them, moreover, ever to carry it before their eyes in perpetual memory, to remind them of the life they should lead and of due observance of the Rule, and, what is more, it was his will and teaching that the brethren should die therewith.

Chapter LXXVII

Of a holy layman that was martyred holding the Rule in his hands

WHEREFORE, of this holy document and institute of the most blessed father was a certain lay-brother not forgetful, whom we do without doubt believe to have been received into the choir of the martyrs. For, whilst by reason of his zeal for martyrdom he was among the infidels, and was in the end led forth by the Saracens to martyrdom, holding the Rule with great fervor in both hands, and humbly bending his knees, he said unto his companion: “Of all things that I have done contrary to this Rule, my dearest brother, before the eyes of the divine majesty and before thee do I confess me guilty.” To this brief confession succeeded the sword, whereby ending his life he won the crown of martyrdom. This brother it was that had entered the Order while as yet but a lad, and scarce could endure the fasting of the Rule, yet, nevertheless, stripling as he was, he wore a coat of mail next his skin. Happy the boy that did thus happily begin and no less happily end!

Chapter LXXVIII

How he would the Religion should always be under the protection and correction of the Roman Church

THE Blessed Francis said: “I will go and commend the Religion of the brethren Minor to the Holy Roman Church, by the rod of whose power they that wish it evil may be terrified and chastised, and the sons of God may everywhere rejoice in full liberty to the increase of everlasting salvation. May her sons thereby learn to be grateful for the sweet blessings of their Mother, and evermore follow her reverend footsteps with devoutness of spirit!

“For under her protection shall no evil befall the Order, nor shall the son of Belial go through the vineyard of the Lord unpunished. The Holy Mother herself shall emulate the glory of our poverty, and will not in any wise allow the renown of our humility and the triumph of our obedience to be darkened by the clouds of pride. The chains of charity and peace wherewith we are bound will she preserve unbroken, smiting them that disagree with her as with her smartest censure, and the sacred observance of Gospel purity shall

flourish daily in her sight, nor will she suffer the sweet smell of our good report and of our holy conversation to be given forth in vain.”

Chapter LXXXIII

**Of the four prerogatives that God did confer upon the Religion
and did announce unto the Blessed Francis**

THE Blessed Francis said that he had obtained from the Lord these four things, and that the same had been announced unto him by an angel, to wit, that the Religion and profession of the brethren Minor should not fail even unto the Day of Judgment; also that none who did knowingly persecute the Order should live long; also that no wicked man that was minded to live wickedly in the Order should be able to abide long therein; also, that whosoever shall of his heart love the Order, howsoever he may have sinned, shall at the last find mercy.

Chapter LXXXIV

**Of the conditions that he said were necessary in a Minister
General and in his companions**

So great was the zeal he had for the preserving of perfection in the Religion, and so great seemed to him to be the perfection of the profession of the Rule, that his thoughts did often run upon who should be after his death sufficient to the government of the whole Religion, and the preservation by God’s assistance of perfection therein, yet none could he find fitting.

Whence, near the end of his life, a certain brother said unto him: “Father, thou wilt go hence unto the Lord, and this family that followeth thee will abide in the vale of tears: notify therefore unto us if any there be in the Order thou knowest in whom thy spirit can find rest, and upon whom the burden of the Minister General may worthily be laid.”

The Blessed Francis made answer, and all his words were the weightier for his sighs: “My son, the captain of an army so great and made up of so many manner of men, the shepherd of a flock so huge and so scattered abroad, do I behold none that is sufficient to be; yet one will I picture for you in whom

shall be seen clearly such an one as the captain and shepherd of this family ought to be.

“This man,” saith he, “ought to be one of most grave life, of great discretion, of laudable report, without private affections, lest while he loveth a part more dearly, he breed scandal to the whole. The study of prayer ought he to hold dear, but so as that he distribute certain hours to his own soul and certain others to his flock, for the first thing in the morning ought he set before all things the most holy sacrifice of the Mass, and therein by long devotion most lovingly to commend himself and the flock to the divine protection. But after prayer let him set himself in the midst to be plucked and pilled of all, ready to make answer to all and to make provision for all with charity and patience and gentleness.

“One ought he to be that accepteth the person of none, so that no less heed shall he pay to the simple and foolish than to the knowing and wise. Unto whom, if the gift of knowledge be granted, yet in his dealings let him rather bear the stamp of piety and simplicity, patience and humility, and let him cherish godliness in himself and in others, and in preaching godliness let him evermore practise the same, inciting others thereunto rather by his example than by his sermons. Let him be a blasphemer of money, the which is the chiefest source of corruption to our profession and perfection, and as the head and pattern to be imitated of all, let him in no wise give rise unto abuse by multiplying of money-boxes.

“Let it be enough for him as for himself to have his habit and his little book; for others his little basket with a reed, his tablets, and a seal. Let him not be a heaper up of books nor overmuch given to reading, lest haply he derogate from his office that cometh before his study. Let him pitifully console the afflicted, seeing that this is the last remedy of them that suffer tribulation, lest, in case he have not wherewith to supply the remedies of health, the desperateness of the disease do prevail over them that are sick. That he may bend the froward to tractableness, let him prostrate himself, and remit somewhat of his rightful due that thereby he may make gain of a soul.

“Unto the runaways of the Order, as unto sheep that have perished, let him deny not the bowels of pity, nor never refuse them mercy, knowing that so overpowering be the temptations that can drive them to so great a downfall, that were the Lord to permit him to be tried thereby himself, haply he might slide down toward an even steeper precipice. I would that he should be honored by all with all devotion and reverence as the vicar of Christ, and

that in all things and by all provision should be made for him with all goodwill, having regard to his necessity and the meanness of our estate.

“Nevertheless doth it behove him not to look kindly upon honors, nor to take delight in favors more than in injuries, so that his behavior be not changed by honors save for the better. But in case at any time he should be in need of more palatable and better food, let him take it not by stealth but in the public place, so that others may have no shame in providing them with the like in their ailments and infirmities.

“Especially needful is it that he be able to detect the secrets of conscience and to search out the truth from hidden sources. All accusations at the outset let him hold suspect until the truth by diligent examination doth begin to appear. But let him not lend ear to babblers; in accusations especially, let him hold them suspect and believe them not easily. Lastly, such an one ought he to be as never in any wise to warp nor relax the manly rule of equity and justice through covetousness of retaining office; yet so nevertheless, as that the soul of none shall be slain by excess of rigor; nor of excess of mildness let lukewarmness be born, nor let dissolution of discipline be the outcome of an over-ready pardon. So let him be feared of all as that he may be loved of them that fear. Let him always think and feel that his office of superior is more of a burden than an honor unto him.

“I would, therefore, that he should have companions endowed with honesty, austere as against their own wills, brave in times of need, pitiful and compassionate toward them that offend, having an equal affection toward all, receiving nought for their labor save only just enough for the pure necessities of the body, and desirous of nought save the praise of God, the profit of the Order, the merit of their own souls, and the perfect salvation of all the brethren, becomingly courteous toward all, and all becomingly courteous toward them, with holy cheerfulness receiving both the form and example of observance of the Gospel according to the profession of the Rule in their own persons purely and simply, and manifesting the same to all. Behold, I say, such an one ought the Minister General to be, and such companions ought he to have.”

Chapter LXXXI

How the Lord spoke unto him when he was sore afflicted by reason of the brethren that did decline from perfection

FORASMUCH as according to the measure of the zeal that he had continually for the perfection of the Religion, he could not but be made sad whensoever he did hear of or see any imperfection therein; when he began to understand that certain brethren gave an ill example in the Religion, and that the brethren generally had begun to decline from the topmost summit of their profession, inwardly smitten with passing grief of heart, he said unto the Lord once in prayer: "Lord, unto Thee do I resign the family that Thou didst give me."

And the Lord said straightway unto him: "Tell me, O thou simple and foolish mannikin, wherefore dost thou sorrow so sore when some man goeth forth from the Religion and when the brethren walk not by the way that I did show thee? Tell me, moreover, who was it that planted this Religion of the brethren? Who is it that maketh a man be converted to repentance? Who is it that giveth him strength to persevere therein? Is it not I? I chose thee not over My family because thou wert a man learned and eloquent, forasmuch as I willed not that thou, nor they that were true brethren and true observers of the Rule that I did give unto thee, should walk in the way of learning and eloquence. But I chose thee, simple and foolish as thou art, that both thou and others may know how it is I that shall keep watch over My flock, and I have set thee as a sign unto them that the works which I work in thee, they also should work in themselves. For they that walk in the way that I have showed unto thee, have Me, and they shall have Me yet more abundantly; but they that will to walk in the other way, from them shall be taken away even that which they do seem to have.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, grieve not thou so sore henceforth, but do what thou doest, work what thou workest, seeing that in abiding charity have I planted the Religion of the brethren. Hence mayst thou know how greatly I love them; if any one of the brethren, returning to his vomit, shall die beyond the pale of the Religion, another will I send into the Religion that shall have his crown in his stead, and if such an one be not yet born, yet him will I make be born. And, that thou mayst know how greatly I do love the life and the Religion of the brethren of mine own free will, were it so that in the whole Religion did remain but three brethren only, yet even then shall it be My

Religion, and I will not forsake it forever!”

And when he had heard these things, his spirit did abide marvellously comforted. And albeit for the passing zeal that he ever had for the perfection of the Religion, he could not so contain himself but that he should be mightily grieved with all his heart when he heard of any fall from perfection among the brethren whereby an evil example might be set or a scandal arise; yet nevertheless, after he had been thus comforted of the Lord, he did call to mind that word of the psalm: “I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments’, and observe the Rule that the Lord Himself did give unto me and unto them that would imitate me.

“Moreover, all the brethren have bound them hereunto even as have I. And therefore after I did resign mine office over the brethren by reason of mine infirmities and other reasonable causes, I am not henceforth held to aught save only to pray for the Religion and to set a good example unto the brethren; for this have I of the Lord and do know for a truth, that even were it that mine infirmity excused me not, the most help that I could render the Religion is that every day I should give myself to prayer unto the Lord for it, that He will govern and preserve and protect the same. For herein have I bound me unto the Lord and unto the brethren, that if any one of the brethren should perish through evil example of mine, I am willing to undertake that the Lord should hold me answerable in his stead.”

These words he spoke within himself to quiet his own heart, and he himself moreover did oftentimes expound the same unto the brethren in discoursing on the words of Scripture and in the Chapters.

Whence, if any brother should tell him at any time that he ought to interfere in the governing of the Order, he would make answer, saying: “The brethren have their Rule and have sworn to observe it, and that they may have no excuse on my account, after it pleased the Lord to appoint me to be superior over them, I did swear before them that I myself in like manner would observe the same. Whence, since the brethren know what they ought to do, and moreover, what to avoid, nought remaineth save that I should teach them by works, seeing that for this was I given unto them in my life and after my death.”

Chapter LXXXIII

Of the special zeal that he had unto the place of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion, and of the ordinances that he made therein against idle words

BEYOND all other places of the Order, he had a special zeal and passing great fondness his life long in making be observed in all perfection of life and conversation in the holy place of S. Mary of the Angels, as in the head and mother of the whole Religion, intending and willing that this place should be the pattern and example of humility and poverty and every Gospel perfection unto all other places, and that the brethren therein abiding ought ever to be, beyond the rest of the brethren, circumspect and solicitous in doing and avoiding all such things as pertain unto a perfect observance of the Rule.

Whence on a time, for the avoiding of idleness that is the root of all evil, and especially in a Religious, on a certain day he made ordinance that after meat, the brethren together with himself should forthwith exercise them in some work, lest the good that they had gained in time of prayer should be wholly or in part wasted in vain and idle words whereunto a man after meat is mostly disposed.

Moreover he made ordinance and commanded the same to be firmly observed, that if any of the brethren doing nothing or at work on anything should utter any idle word among the brethren, he should be bound to say one *Pater Noster*, praising God at the beginning and at the end of the prayer, but so nevertheless, that if haply conscious of his lapse, he should first have blamed himself for that he had committed, he should say the *Pater Noster* for his own soul with the *Laudes Domino* as aforesaid, but if it were that he should be first reprov'd thereof by one of the brethren, he should be bound to say the *Pater Noster* for the soul of the brother so reprov'ing him. But in case he that was reprov'd did excuse himself and would not say the *Pater Noster*, he should in like manner be bound to say two *Pater Nosters* for the soul of the brother that did reprove him. But if on his own or another's witness it shall be proven true that he did speak that idle word, he shall say the said *Laudes Deo* at the beginning and end of the prayer loud enough to be heard or understood of all the brethren standing by, the which brethren whilst that he sayeth the same shall hold their peace and hearken thereunto. But in case any brother listening and hearing a brother speak an idle word shall hold his

peace and shall not reprove him, let him in like manner be held to say one *Pater Noster* with the *Laudes Deo* for the soul of him that speaketh the idle word.

And whatsoever brother entering a cell or house or any place wherein he shall find another brother or other brethren, he ought forthwith to bless and praise God devoutly.

These *Laudes Domino* the most holy father was ever careful himself to say, and with most earnest will and desire did teach and incite the other brethren to say the same lauds heedfully and devoutly.

Chapter LXXXIII

How he did admonish the brethren that they should never forsake this place

ALBEIT the Blessed Francis knew that the Kingdom of Heaven hath been established in every quarter of the earth and did believe that in every place the grace of God might be given unto His elect, yet nevertheless, did he know by experience that the place of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion was fulfilled of more abundant grace and was haunted by the visitation of heavenly spirits from on high.

For this reason would he often say unto the brethren: “See, O my sons, that never do ye forsake this place. If that ye be thrust forth on the one side, enter ye by the other, for this place is holy and the dwelling place of Christ and of the Virgin His Mother. Here when we were few did the Most High give us increase; here by the light of His wisdom did He enlumine the souls of His poor; here by the fire of His love did He kindle our wills. Here, whosoever shall pray with a devout heart, shall obtain that which he doth desire, and he that doth offend shall the more grievously be punished. Wherefore, O my sons, hold ye this place most worthy of all reverence and honor, as in very truth the dwelling place of God, specially beloved of Him and of His Mother; and therein with all your heart, with the voice of exultation and of confession, confess ye to God the Father and to His Son our Lord Jesus Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit!”

Chapter LXXXV

Of the prerogatives that the Lord wrought in the place of
S. Mary of the Angels

Holy of Holies is this Place of Places
Meetly held worthy of surpassing honor!
Happy thereof the surname, "Of the Angels",
Happier yet the same, "The Blessed Mary".

Now, a true omen, the third name conferreth
"The Little Portion" on the Little Brethren,
Here, where by night oft a presence of Angels
Singing sweet hymns illumineth the watches.

Fallen it lay when Francis did upraise it,
Of the three churches his own band rebuilt
Choosing this one wherein to don the sack-cloth,
Binding the flesh in fetters of the spirit.

Here in this holy precinct was begotten
Erstwhile our Order of the Brethren Minor;
Here shall be found that throng of saints forever
Whilst they still take example of their father.

First to be shorn as vowed to Christ her Lover,
Clara did here forsake the world to find Him,
Mother of noble brethren and of sisters
Bringing back Christ to men through their endeavor.

Here was the old world's broad highway made narrow,
Here the way broader for the Chosen People;
Here grew the Rule; here Poverty, our Lady,
Smiting down pride, called back the Cross amongst us.

Francis sore troubled, weary of his burden,
Here findeth peace; his sorrows here have healing;

Here is the truth made clear whereof he doubted,
Here all the father prayeth for is granted.

Part VJ

The Sixth Part, of his Zeal for the Perfection of the Brethren

Chapter LXXXV

And first, how he did describe unto them a perfect brother

THE most Blessed father, as it were transformed in some sort into the holy brethren, out of the burning of the love and the fervency of the zeal that he had toward their perfection, did often meditate within himself what were the conditions and virtues wherewith a good brother Minor must needs be adorned. And he said that a good brother Minor would be he that had the life and conditions of these holy brethren, to wit: the faith of brother Bernard, that he had in absolute perfection along with the love of poverty; the simplicity and purity of brother Leo, that in truth was of a most holy purity; the courtesy of brother Angelo, that was the first soldier to come into the Order, and was fulfilled of all courtesy and kindness; the gracious aspect and natural sense with fair and devout eloquence of brother Masseo; the mind lifted up in contemplation that brother Egidio had even to the highest perfection; the godly and continual activity of the holy Rufinus, that did always pray without intermission, so as that even asleep or at work his mind was always with the Lord; the patience of brother Juniper, that did attain to a state of perfect patience by reason of the perfect renunciation of his own will that he did set before his eyes, and his surpassing desire to imitate Christ by the way of the Cross; the bodily and spiritual strength of brother John de Laudibus, that at that time was strong in the body above all men; the charity of brother Rogero, whose whole life and conversation was in the fervency of charity; and the solicitude of brother Lucido, that was ever passing solicitous and was never minded to stay in a place more than a month or so, but when he liked staying in any place would forthwith depart therefrom, saying: "Not here but in Heaven is our place of abiding."

Chapter LXXXVJ

How he did describe wanton eyes, that he might induce the brethren to honorable living

AMONG the other virtues that he loved and did desire should be in the brethren, next to the foundation of holy humility he did chiefly love the comeliness and cleanliness of chastity. Whence, being minded to teach the brethren to have chaste eyes, he was wont to figure wanton eyes under this similitude. A King, pious and powerful, sent to the Queen two messengers, the one after the other. The first returneth and bringeth back the message word for word and saith nought of the Queen, forasmuch as he had wisely kept his eyes in his head so that they had not leapt out were it never so little toward the Queen. The other returneth and after a few words doth begin to weave a long history as concerning the beauty of the Queen. "Verily, my lord," saith he, "a passing fair woman have I seen; happy he that doth enjoy her!"

And the King unto him: "Thou wicked servant, thou hast cast wanton eyes upon my Queen! It is clear that thou wouldst fain have procured by craft that which thou didst look upon!"

He biddeth therefore the first be called and saith unto him, "How seemeth unto thee of the Queen?" "Excellent well, meseemeth," saith he, "for that she did willingly and patiently hearken unto me." Thus wisely made he answer, and the King saith unto him: "Is there any comeliness in her or not?" He answereth: "My lord, to look upon her comeliness is yours; mine was it only to carry the words of my message." The King giveth sentence: "Thou," saith he, "hast chaste eyes, be thou in my chamber yet more chaste of thy body, and enjoy my delights. But let this wanton one go forth of the house, lest he pollute my chamber!"

He said therefore: "Who ought not be afraid to look upon the spouse of Christ?"

Chapter LXXXVJ

Of three words that he left unto the brethren to preserve their perfection

IN a time when by reason of an infirmity of the stomach he would fain vomit, on account of the exceeding great violence he did unto himself, he vomited blood throughout all the night until matins, and when his companions did behold him die, as it were, through exceeding weakness and affliction, with sore grief and shedding of tears they said unto him: “Father, what shall we do without thee? Unto whom wilt thou leave us orphans? Thou hast ever been a father and a mother unto us, begetting and bringing us forth in Christ. Thou hast been unto us a captain and shepherd, a master and corrector, teaching and correcting us more by example than by word! Whither therefore shall we go, sheep without a shepherd, orphan sons without a father, rude men and simple without a captain?”

“Whither shall we go seek thee, O glory of poverty, praise of simplicity, honor of our vileness? Who hereafter shall show us blind men the way of truth? Where will be the mouth that spoke unto us and the tongue that gave us counsel? Where will be the fervent spirit directing us in the way of the Cross, and comforting us even unto Gospel perfection? Where wilt thou be, that we may betake us unto thee, thou light of our eyes, that we may seek thee out, thou comforter of our souls? Behold, thou diest, father! Behold, thou dost thus leave us desolate, forsaking us in our sadness and bitter loss!

“Behold, the day draweth nigh, the day of weeping and bitterness, the day of desolation and sorrow! Lo, the bitter day that we have dreaded to look upon ever since we were with thee, yea, that we could not even think upon! Truly, no marvel is this, for thy life hath been unto us for a continual light, and thy words for burning torches lighting us evermore on the way of the Cross to Gospel perfection, to the love and imitation of the most sweet Crucified!

“Wherefore, father, at least give thy blessing unto us and unto thy other sons whom thou hast begotten in Christ, and leave us some memorial of thy will, that the brethren may have thee ever in remembrance and may be able to say: ‘These words did our father leave unto us, his brethren and sons, at his death.’”

Then did the most pitiful father turn his fatherly eyes upon his sons, and said unto them: “Call unto me brother Benedict de Pirato.” For that brother was a holy priest and discreet, that did celebrate unto the Blessed Francis

whensoever he lay sick, for that always when he was able, was he minded to have or to hear Mass, howsoever feeble he might be.

And when he had come, he said unto him: "Write how that I do give my blessing unto all my brethren that are in the Religion and unto them that shall come after, even unto the world's end. And, for that by reason of my weakness and the pain of mine infirmity I am not able to speak much, in these three words do I briefly lay open my will and intention unto all the brethren present and to be; to wit, that in token of my remembrance and blessing and testament, let them evermore love one another even as I have loved them, let them evermore love and observe our Lady Poverty, and evermore be faithful and loyal lieges to the prelates and clergy of Holy Mother Church."

For thus was our father in the Chapters of the brethren always wont at the end of the Chapter to give his blessing and absolution to all the brethren in the Religion present and to come, and even out of Chapter in the fervency of his charity would he many a time do the same. Moreover he would admonish the brethren that they should dread all evil example and beware of following the same, and his curse did he leave unto all them that by evil example should provoke men to blaspheme the Religion and life of the brethren, for that good and holy poor men be thereby shamed and sorely afflicted.

Chapter LXXXVJJJ

**Of the love that he showed unto the brethren when near his death
by giving to each a morsel of bread as did Christ**

ONE night the Blessed Francis was grieved so sore by the pain of his infirmities that, at that night, he could neither rest nor sleep. But on the morrow, when his pains were some little abated, he bade call all the brethren that were in the place, and beholding them as they sat before him, he did look upon them as though all the brethren were there present in their persons.

And setting his right hand upon the head of each, he gave his blessing unto all of the Order, present, absent, and to come, even unto the world's end. And he did seem as it were to have compassion on himself for that he might not look upon all his brethren and sons before his death.

But for that he was fain in his own death to imitate his Lord and Master, whom in his life he had imitated perfectly, he bade breads be brought unto

him and blessed them, and did make them be broken into many pieces, for that by reason of his too great feebleness he was not able himself to break them. And taking the bread, he held forth a morsel unto each of the brethren, enjoining him to eat the whole thereof.

For even as our Lord before His death was minded to eat with the apostles on the fifth day of the week in token of His love, so was the Blessed Francis, His perfect imitator, fain to show his brethren the same token of his love. And that he was fain to do this after the similitude of Christ is clearly manifest hereby, for that he did ask afterward whether it were then the fifth day of the week.

But one of the brethren did reserve a morsel of that bread, and after the death of the Blessed Francis, many sick folk that did taste thereof were straightway healed of their infirmities.

Chapter LXXXIII

How he feared lest any tribulation should befall the brethren by reason of his infirmities

WHEN by reason of the pain of his ailments he was not able to take rest, and saw that thereby the brethren were much distraught and wearied on his account, for that hitherto he had ever loved the souls of the brethren more than his own body, he did begin to fear lest the brethren, out of their exceeding travail in attending to his necessities, might incur some offense, even were it the least, against God by reason of some impatience.

Whence, on a time with pity and compassion, he said unto his companions: “My best-beloved brethren and little children, let it not be a weariness unto ye to travail on behalf of mine infirmity, seeing that the Lord on behalf of me, His little servant, shall in this world and the next repay ye all the fruit of those your works that by reason of your solicitude for my infirmity ye cannot now perform; yea, greater gain do ye hereby achieve than were ye to labor for yourselves, seeing that He which succoreth me doth succor the whole Religion and life of the brethren. Yea, verily, ye may say thus: ‘Upon thee do we spend our charges, and in thy stead shall the Lord be a debtor unto us.’”

But this the holy father said being fain to succor and raise their drooping spirit for the passing great zeal that he had toward the perfection of his souls. For he feared lest they might be tempted at times under stress of that travail

to say: “We cannot pray nor endure so sore travail,” and thus might become overwearied and thereby impatient, so as that they might haply be losers of great gain in return for a small labor.

Chapter XC

How he did admonish the sisters of S. Clara

AFTER the Blessed Francis made his “Praises unto the Lord of His creatures,” he made also certain holy words with music for the comforting and edification of the Poor Ladies, knowing that they were sore troubled by reason of his infirmity. And because he was not able to visit them in person, he sent the words unto them by the companions. For he was fain in those words to lay open his will unto them, to wit, how they ought to live and converse humbly and be of one mind in charity. For he perceived that their conversion and holy conversation did not only tend to the exaltation of the brethrens’ Religion, but to the exceeding great edification of the Church Universal.

But knowing that from the beginning of their conversion they had led a life passing strait and poverty-stricken, he was moved with pity and compassion toward them. Whence in those same words he besought them, that even as the Lord from many parts had assembled them together in one to holy charity, holy poverty, and holy obedience, so ought they ever to live and to die therein. And specially did he admonish them that out of such alms as the Lord might give them they should discreetly make provision for their bodies with cheerfulness and thanksgiving, and most of all, how they that were healthy in their toils that they did undergo on behalf of their sick sisters, and they themselves that were sick, should also be patient in their infirmities.

Part VII

The Seventh Part, of His Continual Fervency of Love and Compassion Toward the Passion of Christ

Chapter XCJ

And first, that he paid no need unto his own infirmities for the
love of Christ's Passion

SUCH was the Blessed Francis's fervency of love and compassion toward the pangs and sufferings of Christ, and so sorely did he daily afflict himself both inwardly and outwardly on account of the Passion itself, that he heeded not his own infirmities. Whence albeit that of a long time and unto his dying day he suffered ailments of the stomach and liver and spleen, and from the time that he returned from beyond sea had continual exceeding great pain of the eyes, yet would he never thereof take any pains to make himself be healthy.

Whence the lord Bishop of Ostia, seeing that he was and ever had been so austere as concerning his own body, and most of all because he had begun already to lose the sight of his eyes and because he was not minded to make himself be healed thereof, did with much pity and compassion admonish him, saying: "Brother, thou dost not well in that thou dost not make thyself be healed, for thy life and health be of exceeding great usefulness to the brethren and lay-folk and to the whole Church. For seeing that thou hast compassion on thy sick brethren, and hast ever been pitiful and merciful-hearted toward them, thou oughtest not to be cruel unto thyself in so sore necessity. Wherefore I do enjoin thee, that thou make thyself be healed and succored."

For the most holy father himself did always take anything bitter as it had been sweet, for that he did evermore draw forth a passing great sweetness from the humility and the footprints of the Son of God.

Chapter XCII

How he was found going bewailing in a loud voice the Passion of Christ

NOT long after his conversion, when he was walking on a time on the way not far from the church of the Blessed Mary of the Little Portion, he went making lamentation in a loud voice. But a certain spiritual man met him, and fearing that he had a pain from some sickness, said unto him: "What aileth thee, brother?" But he made answer: "Thus ought I to go throughout the whole world without shame, bewailing the Passion of my Lord."

Thereupon he also did begin to lament sore and to shed tears. This man we knew and understood this from himself, and much comfort and pity did he make for the Blessed Francis and for us his companions.

Chapter XCIII

How the joyous songs that he did sometimes make out of doores would be turned into tears and pity for Christ

DRUNKEN with the love and compassion of Christ, the Blessed Francis would at times do such-like things as this; for the passing sweet melody of the spirit within him, seething over outwardly, did oftentimes find utterance in the French tongue, and the strain of the divine whisper that his ear had caught would break forth into a French song of joyous exulting. At times he would pick up a stick from the ground, and setting it upon his left shoulder, would draw another stick after the manner of a bow with his right hand athwart the same, as athwart a viol or other instrument, and making befitting gestures would sing in French of our Lord Jesus Christ. But all this show of joyousness would be ended in tears, and the exultation would die out in pity of Christ's Passion. And in tears would he abide, drawing deep sighs and with redoubled lamentations would he hang suspended from heaven, forgetful of that which he did hold in his hands the while.

Part VVVV

The Eighth Part, of His Zeal Toward Prayer and the Divine Work, and Toward Observing Spiritual Gladness in Himself and Others

Chapter CCCV

And first, of prayer and the Divine Office

ALBEIT that for many years he was afflicted with the said infirmities, yet nevertheless so devout was he and reverent at his orisons and at the Divine Office, that at such time as he was praying or even saying his canonical Hours, never would he lean against a wall or the jamb of a door, but would always stand upright and bareheaded, or at times upon his knees; and all the more for that the greater part of the day and night he did give himself up to prayer; yea, when he went about the world afoot, he would always stand still when he would say his Hours, and if it were that he were riding by reason of his infirmities, yet would he always alight to say the Office.

Hence, on a time when it was raining exceeding heavily, and he, by reason of his infirmity and passing great necessity, was riding a-horseback, when he was already all bathed in wet, he lighted of his horse when he would say his Hours, and with as great fervency of devotion and reverence said the Office thus standing in the road with the rain continually pouring upon him as had he been in a church or a cell. And he saith to his companion: "If the body would fain eat his meat, that with the body itself doth become the food of worms, in peace and quiet, with how much quiet and peace and with how great reverence and devotion ought the soul to receive the food that is God Himself!"

Chapter XCVI

How he ever loved in himself and others both inward and outward spiritual cheerfulness

HEREIN had the Blessed Francis always his highest and chiefest study, that apart from prayer and the Divine Office he should maintain both inwardly and outwardly a spiritual cheerfulness. And this in like manner did he specially love in the brethren, yea, oftentimes did he reprove them for their mournfulness and melancholy.

For he would say that “if the servant of God would study to have and to keep both inwardly and outwardly the spiritual cheerfulness that ariseth out of cleanness of heart, and is obtained by devoutness of prayer, the devils have no power to do him a hurt, saying: ‘Because the servant of God hath cheerfulness in tribulation and in prosperity, we can find no entrance whereby to enter into him, nor to do him a hurt.’ But then do the devils exult when they are able to quench or to hinder by any means soever the devoutness and cheerfulness that do arise from simple prayer and other godly works.

“For if that the Devil may have aught of his own in the servant of God, save he be wise and heedful at once to destroy and do away therewith by virtue of holy prayer, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, in a short time out of a single hair he maketh a beam by evermore adding thereunto. Therefore, my brethren, for that this spiritual cheerfulness doth proceed from cleanness of heart and the purity of continual prayer, special heed should be given to the acquiring and preserving of these two things, that ye may have both inwardly and outwardly the cheerfulness which with exceeding affection I do desire to see and to feel both in myself and in you, to the edification of our neighbor and to the disgrace of our enemy. For unto the enemy and unto his limbs doth it pertain to be sorrowful, but unto us always to rejoice and be glad in the Lord.”

Chapter XCVII

How he did rebuke a companion that was sad in the face

THE Blessed Francis said: “Seeing that I know how the devils do envy me by reason of the blessings that the Lord hath granted unto me, I do know also and see that as they cannot do me a hurt through

mine own self, they do lie in wait and study how to do me a hurt through my companions. But if it be that they can do me no hurt, neither through myself nor my companions, they do flee away in sore confusion. Yea, if I were at any time tempted or melancholy, when I do perceive the cheerfulness of my companion, then straightway by occasion of his cheerfulness, I am turned back from temptation and melancholy to inward and outward cheerfulness.”

For this reason did the father himself sorely rebuke them that made an outward show of sadness. For on a certain time he rebuked one of the companions that did appear with a sorrowful countenance. And he saith unto him: “Why showest thou outwardly this dolor and sadness on account of thine offenses? Keep this sadness to thyself and God only, and pray Him of His mercy that He forgive thee and restore to thy soul the healthy joyfulness whereof it hath been deprived as a punishment for thy sin. But before me and others be heedful ever to have cheerfulness, for it becometh not a servant of God before his brother or any other to show sadness and a troubled countenance.”

Not that it is to be understood or believed that our father, the lover of all gravity and decency, would desire this cheerfulness to be shown in laughter or even in the least idle word, forasmuch as hereby it is not spiritual cheerfulness that is shown, but rather vanity and folly; yea, in the servant of God he did specially abhor laughter and idle speech, for he would that the servant of God should not only not laugh himself, but should not afford to others the least occasion for laughter. Whence in a certain admonition he did more clearly define what ought to be the cheerfulness of a servant of God, for saith he: “Blessed is the Religious that hath no joyousness nor gladness save only in the most holy words and works of the Lord, and therewithal provoketh men into the love of God in joy and gladness. And woe unto the Religious that doth delight in vain and idle words and therewithal provoketh men unto laughter.”

By cheerfulness of countenance, therefore, he did understand the fervency and solicitude and disposition and preparation of mind and body to do all good work with a good will, for that by a fervency and disposition of this kind others are at times more readily provoked to do the like than by the good deed itself. Yea, be the deed never so good, and it seem not done of a good will and a warm heart, it rather begetteth weariness than provoketh unto good.

And therefore it did irk him to see sadness in the face, that doth too often represent melancholy and indisposition of mind and idleness of body in every good work. But gravity and seriousness in countenance and in all the members

and senses of the body he did ever specially love in himself and others, and unto this as far as in him lay he did incite others both by word and example.

For he knew by experience that gravity and modesty of manner of this kind is, as it were, a wall and passing strong shield against the arrows of the Devil, and that the soul without the protection of this wall and shield is as a soldier naked in the midst of enemies exceeding strong and armed unto the teeth, continually raging and bent upon his death.

Chapter CCVII

How he taught the brethren to satisfy the necessities of the body, lest prayer should be lost

THE most holy father, perceiving and understanding that the body was created for the soul, and that bodily acts ought to be done for the sake of spiritual acts, spoke thus: “The servant of God, in eating and drinking and sleeping and supplying the other necessities of the body, ought to satisfy his body with discretion, in such sort as that Brother body shall have no right to murmur, saying: ‘I cannot stand upright and attend to prayer, nor be cheerful in tribulations of the mind, nor work other good works for that thou dost not satisfy my needs.’”

“For if that the servant of God were to satisfy his body with discretion and in a manner enough good and decent, and Brother body were to be negligent and sluggish and sleepy in prayer, in vigils, and in good works, then ought he to chastise him as a bad and lazy mule, for that he is willing enough to eat, but unwilling to be of any profit and carry his burden. But if by reason of want and poverty Brother body cannot have what is necessary unto him in health and sickness, when he hath asked humbly and honestly of his brother or his superior for the love of God, and it is not given unto him, let him endure it patiently for the love of God that did Himself endure the same, that did seek one to comfort Him and found him not. And this necessity borne with patience shall be counted unto him of the Lord for martyrdom. And, for that he did that which he ought, to wit, ask humbly, his necessity is excused of the Lord, even though the body be full sore enfeebled thereby.”

Part III

The Ninth Part, of Certain Temptations that the Lord Did Allow to Befall Him

Chapter XCVIIII

And first, how the devil did enter into a pillow that he had under
his head

WHAT time the Blessed Francis in the hermitage at Greccio was so-
journing to pray in the last cell beyond the greater cell, on a certain
night in the first sleep, he called his companion that lay near him,
and the companion rising up went to the vestibule of the cell where the Blessed
Francis lay, and the saint said unto him: “Brother, I have not been able to sleep
tonight, nor to stand upright to pray, for my head and my legs do tremble
sore and meseemeth I have eaten bread kneaded of tares.”

And when the companion spoke unto him words of compassion, the
Blessed Francis said: “I do verily believe that the devil is in this pillow that I
have at mine head.” For albeit that he would never lie on feathers nor have a
feather pillow from the time that he had left the world, yet the brethren had
at that time compelled him against his will to have that pillow by reason of
the infirmity in his eyes.

He flung it therefore at his companion, but the companion catching it
with his right hand did set it upon his left shoulder, and when he had gone
out of the vestibule of the cell, straightway he lost his speech, and was not able
to loose the pillow nor to move his limbs, but stood there upright, unable
to move from the place, and without any feeling in him. But when he had
thus stood for some space, by God’s grace the Blessed Francis called him, and
straightway he returned unto him, letting fall the pillow behind his back.

And when he had come back to the Blessed Francis, he notified unto him
all that had befallen him, and, saith the Blessed Francis: “Last evening when I
was saying Compline I felt the devil come into the cell. Whereby I do perceive
that this devil is passing crafty, forasmuch as that not being able to do a hurt

unto my soul, he is fain to hinder a necessity of my body in such sort as that I cannot sleep nor stand upright at prayer, and by this means to hinder the devoutness and cheerfulness of my heart, so as that thereby I should murmur as concerning mine infirmity.”

Chapter XCIII

Of an exceeding sore temptation that he had for more than two years

WHILST he was abiding in the place of S. Mary an exceeding strong temptation was sent upon him for the profit of his soul. Thereby was he so sore afflicted in mind and body that many a time would he withdraw him from the company of the brethren, for that he could not show himself unto them as cheerful as was his wont. Nevertheless, he did afflict himself by abstinence from meat and drink and words, did pray instantly and shed abundant tears that the Lord would deign to send him a sufficient remedy in tribulation so sore.

When he had been thus afflicted more than two years, it befell that on a certain day whilst that he was praying in the Church of S. Mary, that word of the Gospel was spoken unto him in spirit: “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove.”

The Blessed Francis made answer: “Lord, what is this mountain?” And it was said unto him: “This mountain is thy temptation.” And S. Francis said: “Therefore, O Lord, be it unto me as Thou hast spoken!”

Straightway he was set free so perfectly as that it seemed to him he had never had any temptation at all. In like manner on the holy mount Alverna, whereon he did receive the stigmata of the Lord in his body, he did suffer temptations and tribulations of the devils so that he could not show him cheerful as was his wont. For he said unto his companion: “Did the brethren only know how many and how sore be the tribulations and afflictions where-with the devils do persecute me, there is not one of them but would be moved with pity and compassion toward me.”

Chapter C

Of the temptation that he had through mice, whereof the Lord did comfort him and did certify him of His kingdom

TWO years before his death, when he was at S. Damian's in a certain little cell built of wattles and was exceeding sore afflicted by the infirmity of his eyes, so as that by the space of sixty days and more he could not see the light of day nor even the light of fire, it came to pass by divine permission that for increase of his affliction and his merit so many mice did come into the cell as that running over him and about him by night and day they allowed him neither to pray nor to rest. Yea, when he did eat, they came upon his table and did infest him in multitudes, whereby both he and his companions did know manifestly that it was a temptation of the devil.

The Blessed Francis, seeing himself thus tormented by so many afflictions, on a certain night, moved with pity of his own case, said within himself: "Lord, look upon me and succor me in mine infirmities that I may endure them in patience."

And straightway it was said unto him in spirit: "Tell me, brother, if a certain man in return for these thine infirmities and tribulations would give thee a treasure so great and precious as that in respect of that mighty treasure the whole earth were as nought, wouldst thou not greatly rejoice thereat?" And the Blessed Francis made answer: "Great, verily, O Lord, would be that treasure, and full precious, yea, altogether admirable and desirable."

And again he heard One saying unto him: "Therefore, brother, be glad and rejoice in thine infirmities and tribulations, and as for the rest, take thou no more heed than if thou hadst already entered into My Kingdom!"

And rising up in the morning he said unto his companions: "If the Emperor should give a whole realm to one of his servants, would not that servant rejoice greatly? But and if he should give him his whole Empire, would he not much more rejoice?" Moreover he said unto them: "Therefore meet is it that I rejoice greatly in mine infirmities and tribulations, and take comfort in the Lord, giving thanks unto God the Father and His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Ghost of so great grace as the Lord hath done me, to wit, that He hath condescended unto me, His unworthy servant still living in the flesh, to certify me as concerning His Kingdom. Whence am I fain unto His praise and our consolation and the edification of our neighbor, to make a new song of praise as concerning those creatures of the Lord whereof we

do every day make use, and without whom we are not able to live, and in the which mankind doth sorely offend his Creator. For continually do we show ourselves ungrateful for so great grace and so many blessings, not praising the Lord our Creator and giver of all good things as we ought.”

And sitting down he began to meditate awhile, and afterward he said: “Most high, almighty and most gracious Lord,” and the rest, and made music thereupon, and did teach his companions how they should say and sing the same.

For his spirit as at that time was in so great comfort and sweetness that he was fain to send for brother Pacifico, that in the world was called the King of Verse and the right courteous Doctor of Singers, and he was fain to give him sundry of the brethren to go with him throughout the world preaching and singing the praises of the Lord. For he said he would that he among them which did know best how to preach should first preach unto the people, and that after the preaching all should sing together the praises of the Lord as it were minstrels of the Lord.

And when the Lauds were ended, he would that the preacher should say unto the people: “We be the minstrels of the Lord, and this largesse do we crave of you, to wit, that ye shall be in the state of true repentance.” And saith he: “For what be the servants of God but certain minstrels of His, that so lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual gladness?”

And specially did he say this of the brethren Minor, that are given unto the people of God for the salvation thereof.

Part I

The Tenth Part, of the Spirit of Prophecy

Chapter C

And first, how he did foretell that peace would be made between the Bishop and the High Bailiff of Assisi in virtue of the Lauds that he had made as concerning the creatures, the which he did make be sung by his companions before them

AFTER the Blessed Francis had composed the said Lauds of the creatures, that he did call “The Song of the Sun”, it came to pass that a great dissension arose betwixt the Bishop and the High Bailiff of the city of Assisi, in such sort that the Bishop did excommunicate the High Bailiff, and the High Bailiff made be proclaimed that none should sell aught to the Bishop nor buy anything of him nor enter into any contract whatsoever with him.

The Blessed Francis, since he was thus sick and heard this, was moved to pity upon them, and most of all because none did interpose betwixt them to make peace. And he saith unto his companions: “Great shame is it unto us servants of God that the Bishop and the High Bailiff do thus hate one another, and that none doth interpose to make them at peace.” And straightway he did make a verse in the said Lauds upon that occasion, saying thus:

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of them that do show forgiveness for love of
Thee,
And do endure sickness and tribulation.
Yea, blessed be they that shall endure in peace
For of Thee, O Thou most highest, shall they be crowned.

Afterward, he called one of his companions and saith unto him: “Go to the High Bailiff, and tell him on my behalf to come unto the Bishop’s house,

himself with the magnates of the City and as many more as he can bring with him.”

And when the brother was gone, he said unto other twain of his companions: “Go ye unto the presence of the Bishop and the High Bailiff and the others that are with them, and chant ye the Song of Brother Sun, and I have trust in the Lord that He will forthwith humble their hearts, and that they shall thereby be brought back to their former love and friendship.”

And when all were assembled together in the Piazza of the cloister of the episcopate, those two brethren rose up, and one of them said: “The Blessed Francis in his sickness hath made a Lauds of the Lord as concerning His creatures to the praise of the Lord Himself and to the edification of our neighbor. Whence he doth beseech you that ye will hearken thereunto with great devoutness.” And therewithal they did begin to say and sing the same.

But the High Bailiff straightway rose up with hands and arms joined together and did hearken intently thereunto as unto the Gospel of the Lord, with exceeding great devotion and with many tears, for great faith had he and devotion toward the Blessed Francis.

And when the Lauds of the Lord were ended, the High Bailiff said before them all: “In truth I say unto you that not only my Lord Bishop, whom I do desire and ought to have for my Lord, but were it one that had slain mine own brother or my son, him would I forgive!” And so saying, he did fling himself down at the Bishop’s feet and said unto him: “Behold, I am ready in all things to make satisfaction unto thee as thou shalt please, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His servant, the Blessed Francis!”

But the Bishop accepting him, did lift him up with his hands and said unto him: “According unto mine office, meet is it that I be humble, and for that by nature I be swift to wrath, meet is it also that thou shouldst pardon me.” And in this wise with great kindness and love did they embrace and kiss each other.

But the brethren were amazed and rejoiced, beholding that which the Blessed Francis had foretold as to their concord thus fulfilled to the letter. And all they that were present did ascribe all this as a miracle exceeding great unto the merits of the Blessed Francis, that the Lord had so suddenly visited them and that from so great discord and scandal they had returned to so great concordance without recalling a single word that had been spoken.

But we that were with the Blessed Francis do bear witness that when he did say of aught “Thus and thus will it be,” the same did always come to pass

to the letter, and so many and so great things of this kind have we seen that it would be long to write them or to tell.

Chapter CII

How he foresaw the fall of a brother that would not confess under the pretence of silence

THERE was a certain brother, outwardly of honest and holy conversation, that day and night did seem to be intent upon prayer, and did so strictly observe continual silence as that sometimes, when he did confess him to the priest, he made his confession by certain signs and not by words. For so devout and fervent in the love of God did he seem to be, that when he was sitting at times with the brethren, albeit he spoke not, he would nevertheless rejoice greatly both inwardly and outwardly in the hearing of good words, whereby he did often draw other brethren to devoutness.

But when he had persisted for many years in conversation of this kind, it came to pass that the Blessed Francis came to the place wherein he abode. Who, when he heard of his conversation from the brethren, said unto them: "Know ye of a truth that this is a temptation of the devil, forasmuch as he is not minded to confess." In the meantime the Minister General came thither to visit the Blessed Francis, and did begin to commend him before the Blessed Francis, and the Blessed Francis saith unto him: "Believe me, brother, forasmuch as that brother is led and deceived of an evil spirit."

Said the Minister General: "Marvellous seemeth it unto me, and as it were incredible, how this may be in a man that hath so many signs and works of holiness." And the Blessed Francis said unto him, "Prove him, saying unto the brother, 'Brother, it is wholly my will that thou confess twice or at least once in a week.'"

But he set his finger on his mouth, shaking his head, and showing by signs that he would in no wise do this by reason of his love of silence. But the minister, fearing to scandalize him, let him go. And not many days after, that brother did of his own will withdraw from the Order and return unto the world wearing the habit of a layman.

But it came to pass one day, when two of the companions of the Blessed Francis were walking by a certain way, they came over against him where he was walking alone as a pilgrim exceeding poor. And having compassion upon

him they said: "O unhappy one, where is thine honest and holy conversation? For thou wouldst not speak and show thyself unto the brethren, and now thou goest roaming up and down the world as a man that knoweth not God."

But he did begin to speak unto them, swearing many times "By my faith" like as do men of this world, and they said unto him: "Unhappy man, wherefore swearest thou 'By thy faith' like unto laymen, seeing that thou didst keep silence not only from idle words, but from all?"

And so they let him go, and a little thereafter he died, and greatly did we marvel when we saw how that was true to the letter which the Blessed Francis had foretold concerning him at the time when that unhappy one was held by the brethren to be a saint.

Chapter CIII

Of him that did weep before the Blessed Francis, that he might be received into the Order

AT the time when none was received into the Order without the leave of the Blessed Francis, a certain son of a nobleman of Lucca came with many others wishing to enter the Order, to the Blessed Francis that was then sick in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi.

And when all they were presented unto the Blessed Francis, this one bowed himself before him and began to weep sore, beseeching him that he might be received. The Blessed Francis, looking straitly upon him, said: "O wretched and carnal man, wherefore dost thou lie unto the Holy Ghost and unto me? Thou dost weep carnally, not spiritually!" And when he had said this, forthwith came his kinsmen on horses without the palace wishing to take and carry him back. But he, when he heard the clattering of horses, did look forth through a certain window and saw his kinsmen, and did forthwith go down unto them and, as the Blessed Francis had foreseen, did return into the world with them.

Chapter CIIII

Of a Priest's vineyard that was despoiled of his grapes by occasion of the Blessed Francis

AT the church of S. Fabian that is near Rieti, the Blessed Francis made abode with a poor priest by reason of the infirmity of his eyes. At that time also was Pope Honorius at that city with all his court. Whence it came to pass that many Cardinals and other great clerks visited the Blessed Francis as it were daily, by reason of the devotion that they had unto him.

Now this church had a little vineyard nigh the house wherein the Blessed Francis abode, and in the house was a door whereby well-nigh all they that visited him did enter into the vineyard, and the more for that the grapes were then ripe and the place was right passing pleasant; so that by this occasion the vineyard was demolished, as it were, and despoiled of the grapes.

Wherefore the priest began to be scandalized thereat, saying: "Albeit the vineyard be little, yet did I gather therein enough for my necessity, and behold, this year have I lost it!"

Hearing the which, the Blessed Francis made him be called and said unto him: "Sir, be not further troubled, forasmuch as we cannot now do other, but trust in the Lord, seeing that for me, His little servant, He is able wholly to restore unto thee thy loss. Tell me, how many *salme* of wine hadst thou, when thou hadst most out of thy vineyard?" The priest made answer, "Father, thirteen *salme*." Said the Blessed Francis unto him, "Henceforth be not aggrieved, nor by reason hereof speak a reproachful word unto any, but have faith in the Lord and in my words, and if so be that thou hast less than a score *salme*, I will have it made good unto thee." And thenceforth the priest held his peace and was quiet, and in the time of vintage by divine dispensation he had twenty *salme* of wine out of that vineyard, and no less. And the priest marvelled greatly and all they that heard hereof, saying that had the vineyard been full of grapes, it was impossible that there should be twenty *salme* of wine therein.

But we that were with him do bear witness that in this, as in all else that he spoke, his word was always fulfilled unto the letter.

Chapter CV

Of the soldiers of Perugia that did hinder his preaching

WHEN the Blessed Francis was preaching in the place at Perugia, and many people were assembled therein, behold the soldiers of Perugia did begin to career through the Piazza upon their horses and did play with their arms and hinder his preaching, and albeit some of them that were present did rebuke them, yet not for this would they leave of their sport.

Wherefore, turning toward them, the Blessed Francis with much fervency of spirit said unto them: "Hear ye and understand the things that through me, His little servant, the Lord doth announce unto you, and say not, 'We will hearken not unto him because he is of Assisi.'" But this he said because there is an ancient hatred betwixt them of Perugia and them of Assisi.

And he saith unto them: "The Lord hath exalted ye above all your neighbors, and therefore ought ye the more willingly to acknowledge your Creator by humbling yourselves, not unto God alone, but likewise unto your neighbors. But your hearts are lifted up in pride, and ye do waste your neighbors and slay many; wherefore I say unto you that save ye be quickly converted unto God and do make satisfaction of those things wherein ye have offended, the Lord, who leaveth nought unpunished, shall make ye rise up one against another to sorer vengeance upon ye and to your punishment and to your shame, and in the sedition that shall be raised and in civil war, so great tribulation shall ye suffer as never could your neighbors wreak upon ye!"

For on such wise did the Blessed Francis never hold his peace as concerning the ill-doings of the people when he preached, but did rebuke all publicly and manfully. For the Lord had given unto him such grace that all they who did see and hear him, of whatsoever estate or condition they might be, did so greatly fear and reverence him by reason of the abundant grace that he had of God, that howsoever sore they might be rebuked of him, yet were they always edified by his words, and were either converted unto the Lord or were inwardly pricked of their conscience.

And it came to pass by divine permission that after a few days a scandal arose betwixt the soldiers and the people, such as that the people did thrust out the soldiers beyond their city. And the soldiers, together with the Church that did help them, did lay waste their fields and vineyards and trees, and all the hurt that they could do unto the people they did. And in like manner, the people did waste all the goods of the soldiers, and thus were both people and

soldiers punished according to the word of S. Francis.

Chapter CVI

How he did foresee the hidden temptation of a certain brother

ACERTAIN brother, passing spiritual and familiar with the Blessed Francis, for many days had suffered the most grievous suggestions of the devil, in such sort as that he was brought as it were into the very depth of despair. And every day he was so sore stung thereby that he was shamed so often to confess the same, and for this reason did he afflict himself overmuch by abstinence and vigils and tears and disciplines.

And it came to pass by divine dispensation that the Blessed Francis did go unto that place, and on a certain day, when that brother was walking with the Blessed Francis, the Blessed Francis did perceive by the Holy Spirit his tribulation and temptation, and withdrawing him a little from the brother that did also go with them, he joined himself unto that sore troubled one, and said unto him: “My best-beloved brother, I will that henceforth thou be not bound to confess these suggestions of the devil, and fear not, for that no hurt have they done unto thy soul, but by my leave say thou seven *Pater Nosters* so often as thou shalt be in tribulation.”

And the brother did rejoice greatly of this word that he spoke, to wit, that he should not be bound to confess these things, for that hereby was he most afflicted. Nevertheless, however, exceeding greatly was he amazed, seeing that the Blessed Francis had thus perceived that which was known only unto those priests unto whom he had confessed the same.

And forthwith he was delivered from that tribulation in such sort that by the grace of God and the merits of S. Francis, he did abide thenceforth in the greatest peace and quiet; and because the saint had hoped it would be so, he had without peril absolved him from confession.

Chapter CVII

Of these things that he foretold as concerning brother Bernard,
and how all thereof were fulfilled as he said

WHEN about the time of his death a certain dainty dish had been made ready for him, he remembered brother Bernard, that was the first brother he had, and saith unto his companions: "This dish is good for brother Bernard." And straightway he made him be called unto him. Who, when he came, sat upon the bed whereon the saint was lying. And saith brother Bernard: "Father, I do beseech thee that thou give me thy blessing, and show love for me, seeing that if thou show fatherly affection toward me, I do believe that God Himself and all the brethren will love me the better therefor."

The Blessed Francis could not see him, for that by the space of many days before he had lost the sight of his eyes, but stretching forth his right hand, he set it upon the head of brother Egidio that was third brother, believing that he had set the same upon the head of brother Bernard that sat next him. And straightway perceiving the same by the Holy Spirit he said: "This is not the head of my brother Bernard."

Then brother Bernard drew himself nearer yet, and the Blessed Francis, setting his hand upon his head, gave him his blessing, saying unto one of his companions: "Write that which I shall say unto thee. The first brother that the Lord did give unto me was brother Bernard, that did first begin and did most perfectly fulfill the perfection of the Holy Gospel by giving all his goods unto the poor, by reason whereof and by reason of many other prerogatives I am bound to love him better than any brother in the whole Order. Whence I will and enjoin so far as I am able, that whosoever shall be Minister General shall love and honor him as myself. Let the ministers, moreover, and all the brethren of the whole Religion hold him in my stead."

And hereby were brother Bernard and the other brethren much comforted. For the blessed Francis, having regard unto the exceeding great perfection of this same brother Bernard, did prophesy concerning him in the presence of sundry brethren, saying: "I say unto you that unto brother Bernard have been given certain of the great and most subtle devils to exercise him, the which do send upon him manifold tribulations and temptations. But the merciful Lord nigh upon his end will take away from him all tribulation and temptation, and will set his spirit and his body in so passing peace and

comfort as that all the brethren who shall see these things shall marvel greatly, and hold it for a great miracle; and in this quiet and with the consolation of every man shall he pass over unto the Lord.”

But all these things, not without passing wonderment of all the brethren that did hear them from the Blessed Francis, were thereafter fulfilled to the letter in brother Bernard himself. For brother Bernard, being sick unto death, was in so great peace and comfort of spirit that he was fain not to lie down, or if he lay, he lay as it were sitting, and not the lightest fume arising to his head did hinder his meditation on God by sleep or by reason of any illusion.

And if at any time this did befall him, straightway he would rise up and smite himself, saying: “What was it? Wherefore did I think thus?” Nought would he take by way of medicine, but would say unto him that offered it: “Hinder me not!”

And that he might die even yet more freely and peacefully he did transfer all care for his body from himself into the hands of a certain brother that was a leech, saying: “I am fain to have no care of eating nor of drinking, but I commit everything unto thee. If thou givest it unto me I will take it, if not, I will not ask for it.”

From the time that he began to be sick, he wished always to have a priest near him until his dying hour, and whensoever aught did come into his mind that was a burden to his conscience, he did straightway confess him.

But after his death he did become white and his flesh soft, and he did seem as though he smiled. Whence comelier was he dead than alive, and more delighted were all to look upon him dead than alive, for that he did seem verily a saint that smiled.

Chapter CVIII

How, near his death, he sent word unto S. Clara that she should see him, and how it was fulfilled after his death

IN the week that the Blessed Francis did pass away, the Lady Clara, the first sapling of the poor Sisters of S. Damian of Assisi, the chiefest rival of the Blessed Francis in the observance of Gospel perfection, fearing lest she should die before him, for that at that time both lay grievously sick, wept most bitterly and would not be comforted, for that she thought she should not see before her departure her one father after God, the Blessed Francis, her comforter and master and her first founder in the grace of God.


And therefore did she signify this unto the Blessed Francis by a certain brother, which, when the holy man did hear, forasmuch as he did love her above all others with fatherly affection, he was moved with pity toward her. But considering that the thing she would, to wit, to see him, could not be brought about, for her consolation and that of all the sisterhood he did write unto her his blessing in a letter, and did absolve her of all defect in case she had done aught against his admonition and against the commandments and counsels of the Son of God. And so that she should lay aside all sadness and grief, he said unto the brother whom he had sent: “Go and tell sister Clara to lay aside all sorrow and sadness for that she cannot see me just now, forasmuch as in truth let her know before her departure both she herself and my sisters shall see me and shall be greatly comforted as concerning me.”

But it came to pass when a little afterward the Blessed Francis had passed away in the night, that on the morrow the whole people and clergy of Assisi came and took away his holy body from the place where he had passed away with hymns and lauds, each one bearing aloft branches of trees, and thus did they carry the same by the will of the Lord to S. Damian’s, so that the word might be fulfilled which the Lord had spoken by the Blessed Francis for the comfort of His daughters and His handmaidens.

And removing the iron lattice whereby the sisters were wont to communicate and to hear the word of God, the brethren took the holy body from the bier and held it between their arms for a long space at the opening, until the Lady Clara and her sisters had been comforted by the sight thereof, albeit they were overcome and full of sorrow and many tears seeing themselves made orphans of the consolations and admonitions of so dear a father.

Chapter CXX

How he did foretell that his body would be honored after his death

 ONE day, when he was lying sick in the Bishop’s house at Assisi, a certain spiritual brother said unto him by way of a jape, half-laughingly: “For how much wouldst thou sell all thy sack-cloths unto the Lord? Many baldachins and cloths of silk shall hereafter be set upon this little body of thine!” For at that time he had his cassock covered with sack-cloth and even his coverlid was also of sack-cloth.

And the Blessed Francis made answer, or rather, not he but the Holy Spirit by him, and with much fervor and gladness of spirit said: “Thou speakest truth, seeing that so will it be for the praise of my God and by His grace!”

Part IJ

The Eleventh Part, of the Divine Providence in Outward Things Relating Unto Him

Chapter CX

And first, how the Lord did provide for the brethren sitting at a
sorry table with a leech

WHILST the Blessed Francis was at the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo near Rieti, the eye-leech one day did visit him for the infirmity of his eyes. And when he had stayed there some space and would now be gone, the Blessed Francis said unto one of his companions: "Go and give the leech to eat of the best." His companion made answer unto him: "Father, we are shamed to say that we are so poor just now that we are ashamed to invite him to eat." The Blessed Francis thereupon said unto his companions: "O ye of little faith, let me not have to speak twice unto you!" And the leech saith unto the Blessed Francis: "Brother, because the brethren be poor, the more willing am I to eat with them." For that leech was exceeding rich, and albeit the Blessed Francis and the companions had oftentimes invited him, yet never would he eat with them.

The brethren therefore went and made ready the table, and with shame did set thereon a little bread and wine and a little dish of herbs that they had made ready for themselves. And whilst they were sitting at this sorry table, so soon as they had begun to eat, behold, there was a knocking at the door of the place, and when one of the brethren went and opened the door, behold, there stood a woman carrying a great vessel full of fair bread and fishes and pasties of crevisses, and honey and grapes that had been sent to the Blessed Francis by the Lady of a castle some seven miles away from the place.

When they saw this, the brethren and the leech did mightily marvel and rejoice, having regard unto the holiness of S. Francis and ascribing it all to his

merits. And saith the leech unto the brethren: "Neither you nor I do meetly acknowledge this man's holiness!"

Chapter CXX

Of the fish that he did fancy in his sickness

ANOTHER time, when he was grievous sick in the Bishop's palace of Assisi, the brethren did beseech him that he would eat somewhat. Who made answer: "No will have I to eat, but if I could have a bit of chub, haply I could eat a little." And just as he spoke, behold, a certain man came carrying a tray whereon were three large chub fairly garnished with roundels of crevisses, whereof the holy father did gladly eat.

And this did brother Gerard, that was minister at Rieti, send him. And the brethren, marveling on the divine Providence, gave praises unto the Lord that had made provision for His servant in these meats that it was impossible could be had at Assisi at that time, for that it was winter.

Chapter CXXI

Of the meats and cloth that he did fancy about the time of his death

WHILST he was in the place of S. Mary of the Angels, sick of the ailment whereof he died, he one day called his companions, saying: "Ye know how that the Lady Jacqueline of Settesoli was and is exceeding faithful and devoted unto me and unto our Religion, and I do therefore believe that she would hold it as a great grace and consolation were we to notify her of mine estate, and specially send her word that she send me some religious cloth that is like unto ashes in color, and with the cloth let her send also of the marchpane that many a time she hath made for me in the city." That confectiō the Romans do call *mostacciuolo*, and is made of almonds and sugar and other things.

For that lady was right spiritual, but a widow of the best and richest in all Rome, that by the merits and preaching of the Blessed Francis did obtain such grace of the Lord as that evermore was she so full of tears and devotion for the love and sweetness of Christ that she did seem as it were a second Magdalene.

They therefore wrote the letter as the holy man had said, and a certain brother did go seek another brother to carry the letter to the foresaid Lady, and

straightway there was a knocking at the door. And when one of the brethren had opened the door, behold, there was the Lady Jacqueline that had come in great haste to visit the Blessed Francis. Whom, when one of the brethren did recognise, he went in haste unto the Blessed Francis, and with much gladness did announce unto him how the Lady Jacqueline had come from Rome with her son and many others to visit him. And saith he: "What shall we do, father? Shall we let her enter and come unto thee?"

But this he said because, by the will of S. Francis, it was ordained that at that place, by reason of the great seemliness and devotion thereof, no woman was allowed to enter the cloister. And the Blessed Francis said: "This regulation is not to be observed in respect of that Lady, whom so great faith and devotion hath brought hither from parts so far away."

The Lady therefore did come in unto the Blessed Francis, shedding many tears in his presence. And, a right marvellous thing, she did bring with her the shroud-cloth, to wit, the cloth of ashen-grey color for his habit, and all the things that were contained in the letter she had brought with her, as though she had received the letter.

And saith the Lady to the brethren: "My brothers, it was said unto me in spirit whilst I was praying: 'Go and visit thy father the Blessed Francis, and haste thee and tarry not, for if thou tarriest long thou wilt not find him alive: and carry unto him such a cloth for his habit, and such other things and confectiions, and likewise take with thee a great quantity of wax for lights, and of incense also.'" For all these things save the incense were contained in the letter that should have been sent.

And thus it came to pass that He which did inspire the Kings that they should go with their gifts to honor His Son on the day of His Nativity, did also inspire this noble and holy Lady that she should go with her gifts to honor His best-beloved servant in the days of his death, yea, rather, of his true nativity.

That Lady, therefore, had made ready the marchpane whereof the holy father did desire to eat, but very little did he eat thereof, forasmuch as he was fast failing and did draw nigh unto death. Howbeit he had many candles made that after his death should burn before his most holy body, and of the cloth did the brethren make for him the habit wherewith he was buried. Moreover he bade the brethren sew a sack-cloth thereupon in token and in example of humility and of our Lady Poverty, and in that week wherein the Lady Jacqueline did come, did our most holy father pass away unto the Lord.

Part XXX

The Twelfth Part, of His Love Toward Creatures and of Creatures Toward Him

Chapter XXXIII

And first, of the love that he had specially toward the birds that are called crested larks, for that in them was the similitude of a good Religious

WHOLLY wrapped up in the love of God, the Blessed Francis did perfectly discern the goodness of God not only in his own soul, now adorned with every perfection of godliness, but also in every creature whatsoever, by reason whereof he was affected with a singular and overflowing love toward the creatures, more especially those wherein seemed to him to be a figure of aught that is of God or aught pertaining unto Religion. Whence above all other birds did he love the crested lark, the little bird that in the vulgar tongue is called *lodela capellata*, and he would say of her: “Sister lark hath a hood like the Religious, and an humble bird is she, for she gladly goeth by the way to find her a few grains of corn, and so she findeth them even among the dung, she taketh them therefrom and eateth them. When she soareth, she doth praise God right sweetly, even as the good Religious that doth look down on earthly things, whose conversation is evermore in Heaven, and whose intent is always toward the praise of God. Her garments, to wit, her feathers, are like unto the earth, and she giveth example unto the Religious that they wear not delicate and gaudy garments, but such as be vile in price and color even as the earth is viler than the other elements.”

And for that he did perceive these similitudes in them, he did most gladly look upon them. Therefore it pleased the Lord that these most holy birdies should show some token of the love they bore unto him in the hour of his death. For on the Saturday evening after vespers, before the night wherein he passed away unto the Lord, a great multitude of birds of this kind that are called larks came above the roof of the house wherein he lay, and flying a little

way off did make a wheel: after the manner of a circle round the roof, and by their sweet singing did seem to be praising the Lord along with him.

Chapter CXXV

That he would fain have persuaded the Emperor to make a special law that in the Nativity of our Lord men should make good provision for the birds, for the ox and the ass, and for the poor

WE that were with the Blessed Francis and have written these things do bear witness that oftentimes have we heard him saying: “If I ever have speech with the Emperor, I will entreat him and persuade him and tell him that for the love of God and of me he ought to make a special law that none snare nor kill our Sisters the larks nor do any evil unto them. In like manner, that all the Mayors of the cities and the Lords of the castles and towns be bound every year on the day of the Nativity of our Lord, to compel their men to throw wheat and other grain along the roads beyond the cities and walled towns, so as that our Sisters the larks may have whereof to eat, and other birds also on a day of so passing solemnity, and that for reverence of the Son of God whom on such a night the most Blessed Virgin Mary did lay down in the stall betwixt the ox and the ass, whosoever hath an ox and an ass be bound on that night to provide them provender, the best that may be, and in like manner also that on such a day all poor folk should be given their fill of good victual by the rich.”

For the Blessed Francis had a greater reverence for Christmas than for other festivals of our Lord, saying: “After that the Lord was born for us, it did become a matter of necessity that we should be saved.” Wherefore he would that every Christian on that day should exult in the Lord, and that for the love of Him which did give Himself unto us, all ought not only to make abundant largesse unto the poor, but likewise also unto the beasts and birds.

Chapter CXY

Of the love and obedience of the fire unto him when he made himself be burned by cautery

WHEN he had come to the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo near Rieti for the cure of the infirmity of his eyes, whereunto he was compelled on his obedience by the Lord Bishop of Oſtia and by brother Elias the Miniſter General, one day the leech came unto him.

Who, after examining his infirmity, ſaid unto the Blessed Francis that he wiſhed to make a cautery over the cheek as far as the eyebrow of the eye that was worſe than the other. But the Blessed Francis would not that he ſhould begin the operation ſave brother Elias were there, for that he had ſaid he would fain be preſent when the leech ſhould begin that operation, for the Blessed Francis was afraid, and right grievous was it unto him that he ſhould have ſo great ſolicitude about himſelf; wherefore he would that the Miniſter General ſhould be the one to have everything done as concerning him.

When, therefore, he had waited for him, and he came not by reaſon of the many hindrances that he had, the Blessed Francis gave the leech leave to do as he would. And when the iron was ſet in the fire for making of the cautery, the Blessed Francis, being fain to comfort his ſpirit leſt he ſhould be overmuch afraid, ſpoke thus unto the fire: “Fire, my brother, noble and uſeful amongſt other creatures, be thou gracious unto me in this hour, ſeeing that of old have I loved thee and yet will love thee for the love of Him that did create thee. Earneſtly, moreover, do I pray the Creator that did create both thee and me, that He will ſo temper thine heat as that I may be able to abide it.” And when he had ended his prayer he did ſign the fire with the ſign of the Croſs.

But we that were with him at that time did all flee away for pity and compaſſion toward him, and only the leech did remain with him. But when the cautery was made we returned unto him, who ſaid: “O feeble-hearted and of little faith, wherefore did ye flee? In truth I ſay unto you that I felt neither pain nor any heat of the fire. Yea, and it be not now well ſeared, let him again ſear it better!”

And thereat did the leech marvel greatly; ſaying: “My brethren, I tell you that I ſhould fear, not only for him that is ſo feeble and ailing, but for any man, even were he the ſtrongeſt, leſt he ſhould not be able to endure ſo great a cautery; yet truly did this man never flinch nor ſhow any the leaſt ſign of pain.”

For it was necessary that all the veins from the ear as far as the eyebrow should be cut, yet, nevertheless was he thereby nothing benefited. In like manner did another leech pierce both his ears with a hot iron, yet naught did he profit thereby.

Nor is it a marvel that the fire and other creatures were at times obedient unto him and did reverence him, for, as we that were with him have full oftentimes seen, he had so great affection toward them and did so greatly delight in them, and his spirit was moved with so great pity and compassion for them, that he would not see them treated unfairly, and he would so talk with them with gladness both inward and outward, as if they had reason, whence by occasion thereof was he oftentimes rapt up to God.

Chapter CXXVJ

That he would not quench nor allow to be quenched the fire that
did burn his hosen

AMONG all the inferior and insensible creatures, he had a special affection toward fire, by reason of the beauty and usefulness thereof; wherefore he would never hinder it in doing the office thereof. For once on a time, when he was sitting nigh the fire, without his knowledge the fire did catch upon his linen cloths or hosen nigh the knee, and when he felt the heat thereof, he would not put it out. But his companion that did see his hosen afire ran unto him intending to quench the fire, but he forbade him, saying: "Nay, dearest brother, harm not the fire!" And thus would he not by no means that he should quench it.

Howbeit, he went hastily to the brother that was his warden and fetched him to the Blessed Francis, and he did forthwith against the will of the Blessed Francis put out the fire. Whence, however urgent were the necessity, he would never put out a fire nor a lamp nor a candle, with so great pity was he moved toward them.

Moreover he would not that a brother should fling away a fire nor move a smoking log from place to place as is wont, but should simply set the same on the ground out of reverence to Him whose creature it is.

Chapter CXXIII

How he would never wear a pelt for that he had not allowed it to be burned

WHILST he was keeping Lent at Monte Alverna, one day his companion, at the hour of eating together, did make ready a fire in the cell wherein he ate, and when he had kindled the fire went for the Holy Francis unto another cell wherein he was praying, carrying with him the Missal, so as that he might read to him the Gospel for the day, for he would always hear the Gospel that was read in the Missal for the day before he would eat, when he could not hear Mass.

And when he came to the cell wherein the fire had been kindled to eat, behold, the flame of the fire had already climbed up unto the roof of the cell and was burning it; whereupon the companion began to put out the fire the best he might, but he could not do so single-handed. Howbeit the Blessed Francis would not help him, but took a certain pelt that he did wear over him of a night and went therewith into the wood.

Howbeit the brethren of the place that dwelt at a distance from the cell, so soon as they perceived that the cell was being burnt, came straightway and did quench the fire. The Blessed Francis did afterward return to eat, and when he had eaten, he said unto his companion: "Never more will I have that pelt upon me, forasmuch as by reason of my covetousness I would not that brother fire should eat it."

Chapter CXXIII

Of the special love that he had toward water and stones and wood and flowers

NEXT to fire, he did specially love water, wherein is figured holy penitence and tribulation, whereby the uncleannesses of the soul are washed away, and also the first ablution of the soul that doth take place in the water of baptism. Whence, whensoever he did wash his hands, he would make choice of such a place as that the water which fell should not be trodden by his feet. Moreover, when he did walk over stones, he would walk with great trembling and reverence for the love of him that is called "the Rock," whence, whensoever he did repeat that word of the psalm: "Thou didst

exalt me upon a rock,” he would say out of his great reverence and devotion: “Under the foot of the rock hast Thou exalted me.”

The brother, moreover, that did cut and make ready the wood for the fire, he bade that he should never cut up the whole of a tree, but should cut it in such sort as that of such a tree some part should remain whole for the love of Him that did work out our salvation on the wood of the Cross.

In like manner also he told the brother that did the garden not to dig the whole of the ground for eatable herbs only, but to leave some part of the ground for growing green herbs that in their due times produce the Brothers flowers for the love of Him that is called “the flower of the field” and “the lily of the valley.”

Yea, he said that brother gardener ought always to make a fair little garden in some part of the garden land, setting and planting therein of all sweet-smelling herbs and of all herbs that do bring forth fair flowers, so as that in their time they might invite them that did look upon the herbs and flowers to praise the Lord. For every creature doth cry out, saying: “God hath made me on account of thee, O man!”

Whence we that were with him saw that he did so greatly rejoice both inwardly and outwardly as it were in all things created, that in touching them or looking thereon his spirit did seem to be not upon earth but in Heaven. And by reason of the many consolations that he had and had aforesaid had in the creatures, a little before his departure he did compose certain Praises of the Lord as concerning His creatures, to encourage the hearts of those that should hear them to the praise of God, and that the Lord might be praised of men in His creatures.

Chapter CXXII

How he commended the sun and the fire above other creatures

ABOVE all creatures lacking reason, he did love the sun and fire with most affection, for he would say: “In the morning when the sun ariseth, every man ought to praise God that did create him for our use, for that by him are our eyes enlightened by day; but in the evening, when the night cometh, every man ought to praise Him for brother fire, for that by him are our eyes enlightened by night, for we be as it were all blind, and the Lord by these two brethren doth enlumine our eyes; and therefore specially

for these and the other creatures whereof we do daily make use, ought we to praise the Creator.” The which he himself did always unto his dying day.

Yea, when he was grieved of a sore infirmity, he did begin to sing the *Laudes Domini* that he had made as concerning the creatures, and afterward did make his companions sing, so as that in meditating on the praise of God, he might forget his pains and the bitterness of his infirmities.

And for that he did deem and say that the sun is fairer than other creatures and a nearer similitude of our Lord, and that the Lord Himself is called in Scripture the “Sun of justice”, when he would give a title to the Lauds that he made of the creatures of the Lord, to wit, when the Lord did certify him of His Kingdom, he did therefore call them “The Song of Brother Sun.”

Chapter CXX

These be the Lauds of the Creatures that he made when the Lord did certify him of His Kingdom

MOST high, almighty and most gracious Lord, Thine be the praises and the glory and the honor and every blessing, for unto Thee alone, O most highest, do they belong, and no man is worthy to make mention of Thy Name.

Praised be Thou, O Lord, of all Thy creatures, and above all of Brother Sun, my lord, that doth illumine us with the dawning of the day. For fair is he and bright, and the brightness of his glory doth signify Thee, O Thou most highest.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Moon and the stars that Thou hast shapened in the heavens, bright and precious and comely.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Brother Wind and the air, and of the clouds and the clear, and of all the times of the sky, whereby Thou dost make provision for Thy creatures.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Water, for manifold is her use, and humble is she and precious and chaste.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Brother Fire, by whom Thou dost lighten our darkness, and comely is he and joyful and masterful and strong.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Earth, our mother, that doth cherish us and hath us in keeping, and doth bring forth fruit in abundance and flowers of many colors and the grass.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of them that do show forgiveness unto others for love of Thee, and do endure sickness and tribulation. Yea, blessed be they that do endure in peace, for of Thee, O Thou most highest, shall they be crowned.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Death, the death of the body from whom no man living may escape, but woe unto them that shall die in deadly sin, and blessed be they that shall walk according unto Thy most holy will, for unto them shall the second death do no hurt.

Praise ye and bless my Lord, and give thanks unto Him and serve Him in all humbleness.

Part XXX

The Thirteenth Part, of His Death, and the Joy that He Showed When He Knew for Certain that He was Nigh unto Death

Chapter CXXI

And first, how he made answer to brother Elias that did rebuke him for showing so much joy

WHILST he was lying sick in the palace of the bishopric at Assisi, and the hand of the Lord did seem made heavier than of wont upon him, the people of Assisi, fearing in case he should die in the night, lest the brethren should take away his most holy body and carry it away unto another city, made ordinance that every night diligent watch should be kept by their men in the circuit without the palace-wall.

But the most holy father, that he might comfort his spirit lest he should at any time swoon by reason of the violence of the pain wherewith he was continually afflicted, did oftentimes in the day make the *Laudes Domini* be chanted throughout by his companions. The same also did he by night for the edification and comfort of the lay-folk that were keeping watch without the palace on his account.

But brother Elias, perceiving that the Blessed Francis in his sore sickness did thus comfort himself and rejoice in the Lord, said unto him: “Dearest father, of all the cheerfulness thou dost manifest in this sickness on behalf of thyself and thy companions have I great comfort and edification, but albeit that the men of this city do reverence thee as a holy man, nevertheless, for that they do firmly believe thee to be full nigh unto thy death by reason of this thine incurable malady, when they hear Lauds of this kind chanted by day and night, they may haply say among themselves: ‘How cometh this man to manifest such cheerfulness when he is nigh his death? He ought rather to be thinking about his death.’”

The Blessed Francis said unto him: “Rememberest thou, when thou didst see the vision at Foligno, how thou didst say unto me that a certain man had told thee that I should not live but two years longer? Before that vision, thou sawest how by the grace of God, that doth suggest every good thing unto the heart and doth set the same in the mouth of His faithful, I did oftentimes by day and night bethink me of mine end. But from the hour that thou didst see the vision, even yet more anxious was I to bethink me daily of my dying day.” And straightway with great fervency of spirit saith he: “Give me leave, brother, to rejoice in the Lord and in His praises and in mine own infirmities, seeing that by the grace of the Holy Ghost, I am so joined and made one with my Lord, that by His mercy, well may I be glad in Him, Most Highest.”

Chapter CXXIII

How he did induce the leech to tell him how long he should live

IN those days, in the same palace, did a certain leech of Arezzo visit him, by name John Good, that was exceeding familiar with the Blessed Francis; and the Blessed Francis did question him, saying: “How seemeth thee, goodman leech, of this mine infirmity of hydropsy?” For he would not call him by his right name for that he would not name the name of any that was called “good”, out of reverence to the Lord which said: “None is good save God only.” In like manner he would not call any “father” nor “master”, nor so write in his letters, out of reverence to the Lord which said: “And call no man father upon earth, nor be ye called masters.”

And the leech saith unto him: “Brother, by the grace of God it shall be well with thee.” Again the Blessed Francis said unto him: “Tell me the truth. How seemeth it unto thee? Fear not to tell me, seeing that by the grace of God I am no craven that I should fear death, for by the grace of the Holy Ghost that worketh with me, I am so made one with my Lord that to live or die I am equally content.”

The leech therefore said unto him: “Manifestly, father, by all rules of our leech-craft thine infirmity is incurable, and I do believe that either at the end of September or on the fourth of the Nones of October thou wilt die.” Then the Blessed Francis, lying back in his bed with great devoutness and reverence, spread out his hands toward the Lord, and with much cheerfulness of mind and body said: “Welcome, my Sister Death!”

Chapter CXXIII

How, when he did hear that he should die so soon, he did forthwith make be chanted the Lauds that he had made

AFTER these things, a certain brother said unto him: “Father, thy life and conversation was and is a light and a mirror not only unto thy brethren but unto the whole Church, and that same thing shall thy death be; and albeit unto thy brethren and unto many others, thy death shall be a matter of sadness and sorrow, yet shall comfort be thine and a joy that is infinite, for thou shalt pass away from sore travail unto exceeding rest, away from these many pains and temptations unto everlasting peace, away from this temporal poverty that thou hast loved and perfectly hast observed unto the true riches without end, away from this temporal death unto the life that faileth not, wherein face to face shalt thou behold thy Lord God whom in this world thou hast loved with so great fervency of love and desire!”

And when he had spoken thus, he said unto him plainly: “Father, know this of a truth, that save the Lord should send thee healing from heaven, thine infirmity is past all healing, and thou hast but a brief space to live, even as the leeches have said but just now. But this I have said unto thee for the comforting of thy spirit, that thou mayst ever both inwardly and outwardly rejoice in the Lord, so as that thy brethren and others that come to see thee may find thee ever rejoicing in the Lord, and that unto them that shall see it and unto others that shall hear thereof after thy death, thy death may be a memorial forever, like as hath been and ever shall be thy life and conversation.”

Then the Blessed Francis, albeit that he were weighed down by his infirmities beyond his wont, yet did seem nevertheless to put on new gladness of mind, hearing that Sister Death was so close at hand, and with great fervency of spirit gave praise unto the Lord, and said unto the brother: “Therefore, if it please the Lord that I am soon to die, call brother Angelo and brother Leo unto me, that they may sing to me of Sister Death.”

When those two brethren had come into his presence, full of grief and sadness with many tears, they chanted the “Song of Brother Sun and of the other creatures of the Lord” that the holy man had made. And at that time, before the last verse of the canticle, he added certain verses as concerning Sister Death, saying:

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Death, the death of the body, from whom no man living may escape, but woe unto them that shall die in deadly

sin, and blessed be they that shall walk according to Thy most holy will, for unto them shall the second death do no hurt!

Chapter CXXV

How he gave his blessing to the city of Assisi when he was carried unto S. Mary's that he might die there

THE most holy father, being now certified as well by the Holy Spirit as by the opinion of the leeches that he was nigh unto death, whilst that he was still in the said palace, and did feel that he was evermore waxing worse and that his bodily strength was failing, did make him be borne in his bed to S. Mary of the Little Portion, that he might end the life of the body there where he had first begun to experience the light and life of the soul.

But when they that did carry him had come as far as the Hospital that is in the road halfway betwixt Assisi and S. Mary's, he bade the bearers that they should set the bed on the ground, and because by reason of the long and passing sore infirmity of his eyes, he could as it were no longer see aught, he made the bed be turned round so as that they might set his face toward the city of Assisi.

And lifting him up a little in the bed, he gave his blessing unto the said city, saying: "Lord, whereas this city of old was, as I believe, the place and habitation of wicked men, so now do I see that by reason of Thine abundant mercy, in Thine own good time, Thou hast shown forth the multitude of Thy mercies therein above all other cities, and by reason of the goodness thereof alone hast chosen her unto Thyself to be the place and habitation of them that in truth should acknowledge Thee and give glory to Thy holy Name, and make manifest unto all Christian people the sweet smell of good report, holy life, and Gospel perfection. Wherefore I beseech Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, father of mercies, that Thou remember not our ingratitude, but ever bear in mind the abundant pity that Thou hast shown forth in her, that she may be forever the place and habitation of them that do truly acknowledge Thee and glorify Thy blessed and most glorious Name from everlasting unto everlasting. Amen!"

And when he had spoken these words he was carried unto S. Mary's, wherein in the forty-first year of his age and after he had fulfilled twenty years

of perfect repentance, in the year of Our Lord 1227,¹ on the fourth of the Nones of October, he passed away unto the Lord Jesus Christ, whom with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength he loved with the most ardent desire and with the fullest affection, following Him most perfectly, running after Him most swiftly, and in the end most gloriously overtaking Him that with the Father and the Holy Ghost ever liveth and reigneth from everlasting unto everlasting. Amen.

Here endeth the Mirror of Perfection of a brother Minor; to wit, of the Blessed Francis, wherein we may most sufficiently behold as in a glass the perfection of his calling and profession.

All praise, all glory be unto God the Father and unto the Son and unto the Holy Ghost. Honor and thanksgiving unto the most Blessed Virgin Mary and unto Her holy martyr Kuntera; magnificence and exaltation unto Her most Blessed servant Francis. Amen.

Done in the most holy place of S. Mary of the Little Portion, and completed this fifth of the Ides of May in the year of Our Lord 1228.

¹St. Francis's death actually occurred in 1226, meaning that this work was finished in 1227; your editor has not found an explanation for this work's mistake. —Ed.

COLOPHON

This text was electronically produced from scans of the original text, then carefully proofread for correctness. It has been updated to conform with modern punctuation standards, and some more archaic words and expressions have been substituted with modern equivalents. The detailed historical preface, interesting chiefly to scholars, was removed. It is set in EB Garamond 12/15 in the body, with headings and lettrines in Yannis Haralambous's Gothic fonts. The whole is processed by a variety of interlocking Unix scripts before being compiled with the Lua^AT_EX document preparation system. All tools used are free software.