

WORSHIP TO GOD, HOMAGE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

CHAPTER II.

FIRST COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

*I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other
gods
before me.*

V. - WORSHIP DUE TO GOD.

(Page 283)

229. *A Sacrilegious Altar Split in Two.* -

You doubtless remember having read in your Sacred History, my little friends, that after the death of Solomon, his states were divided into two kingdoms, that of Judah and that of Israel. Jeroboam, who was at the head of that of Israel, had the sacrilegious intention of changing the religion of his subjects and

(Page 284)

forcing them to worship two golden calves, which he had placed, one at Bethel and the other at Dan, at the two extremities of his kingdom. Whilst he was engaged in this unhappy enterprise, God sent his prophet, some accounts say his name was Ado, to rebuke him for his impiety. This wretched prince, not content with all the evil he had done, carried his audacity so far as to offer incense himself on an altar he had caused to be erected. Ado presented himself before him and pronounced this terrible decree: "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name: and he shall immolate upon you the priests of the high places, who now burn incense upon you: and he shall burn men's bones upon you. And to show that I speak the word of God, Behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." He had scarcely finished these words when Jeroboam, stretching, out his hand, cried "*Lay hold on him!*" But observe, dear friends, how the good God takes care of His servants and punishes the profane and impious - the arm which Jeroboam had extended to point out the holy prophet Ado, immediately withered, so that he could not draw it back again to him. At the same time the altar split in two, as the Lord had caused it to be foretold Every one was seized with horror, but especially the king, who repented of his sacrilege, and asked pardon of the man of God. Ado prayed for him, and his arm was miraculously cured.
- *III. Kings*, (Douay version) Chapter 12 and 13, (*I. Kings* in Hebrew based Bibles).

230. *Heliodorus Beaten with Rods.* -
The worship

(Page 285)

which we owe to God, my young friends, must extend to all that is consecrated to Him. Hence we must be penetrated with a profound respect in churches. Let me tell you, on this head, the tragical story of the impious Heliodorus: He had been sent to Jerusalem by Seleucus, King of Syria, to seize the treasures deposited in the Temple. In vain did the high-priest Onias represent to him that he could not give them up, because the money was a sacred deposit, which had only been given him in trust for the support of widows and orphans; Heliodorus persisted none the less in his design, alleging the king's orders. The whole city was in a state of consternation, seeing the sacrilege that was about to be perpetrated. The priests, clothed in their sacerdotal robes, prostrated themselves before the altar, beseeching the Lord that He would not permit His sanctuary to be violated. Women, covered with sackcloth, filled the streets, praying with arms raised to heaven. The suspense of this confused multitude and the anguish of the high-priest were a sight at once touching and deplorable. But God soon made Heliodorus feel how foolish it is to brave His power, even in, nay, especially in, the holy place. He was already at the door of the treasure-chamber with his guards, when he was stopped by a young man in shining armour, who suddenly appeared mounted on a horse. Heliodorus was trampled under the feet of this furious animal, whilst two angels scourged him with rods. He was carried from the Temple fainting and half dead. But the high priest

(Page 286)

obtained from God his cure, and the two angels who had so cruelly beaten him appeared to him once more, and said: "Return thanks to the high-priest Onias, on whose account God has spared your life; and knowing what things the Lord has done to you, you shall publish everywhere His greatness and His power." Heliodorus, having escaped this danger, went to inform the king of all that had happened to him; and as that prince, still desirous of having the money, sought whom he could send again to Jerusalem, Heliodorus said to him: "Prince, if you have any enemy, you will do well to send him thither, for even if he escapes death, you may be sure he will be so severely handled that he will have no wish to go back again; there is, indeed, a divine virtue hidden in that place. He who dwells in heaven is Himself present there, He is its protector, and He strikes all those who go to harm it." Observe well these last words, my dear children. They merit all your attention.

- *II. Macchabees*, Chapter II.

231. *The Holy Water and the Grasshoppers.* -

It would take an entire volume, my dear children, to recount all the miracles which have been wrought by means of holy water. I will now note but one; it is related by the blessed Theodoret, bishop of Cyr, in Syria, a doctor or teacher of the Church, and one of the most remarkable writers of the fifth century. He relates, then, that St. Aphraates having left Persia, his own country, became a solitary in the neighbourhood of Edessa, then at Antioch, one of the greatest cities in

(Page 287)

the world and the capital of Syria. That country is sometimes ravaged in a singular manner by clouds of grasshoppers, who settle down on the fields, devouring everything green that they can find, and, to crown the misfortune, sometimes cause a plague by the multitudes of them that die and corrupt on the ground. In a certain year, when this pestilence appeared in all its horrors in the vicinity of Antioch, a poor man went to St. Aphraates, beseeching him to come to his assistance. "Father," said he, "we are lost. Here are the grasshoppers coming; they will eat up my field of wheat, and it is all I have to feed my wife and children, and pay the Emperor's taxes. I beseech you, man of God, have pity on me!" - "But, my good man, I can do nothing of myself; it is only God who can work a miracle in your behalf. Nevertheless, if you have confidence, bring me a pitcher of water." The poor labourer went out, and quickly returned with the water; St. Aphraates dipped his hand in it, said a prayer over it, and having blessed it, gave it to the man, telling him to take the pitcher, and sprinkle a little of the holy water it contained all around his field. He did so exactly, and the power of the miraculous water was speedily manifested. The grasshoppers arrived, and in a moment

darkened the air and covered the country to a great distance; but not a single one crossed the limits of our good labourer's field; such of them as went in that direction were thrown back as if by an invisible agency. The crop on that field was most abundant, convincing

(Page 288)

every one of the sanctity of Aphraates and the virtue of holy water.

- D. GENEVAUX, *Histoires Choisies*, 257.

232. *The Prayer of Turenne's Soldiers.* -

I once heard a gentleman who, doubtless, thought himself a great personage, saying: "Oh? religion is only good for children, and for ignorant country people." My young friends, that was not the opinion of the learned and the great - Turenne, for example, who was one of the most illustrious generals that France could ever boast. He always knew how, even amid the gravest and most important obligations, to find time and means to discharge his religious duties. He was seen, more than once, some hours before giving battle, in those moments of trouble and anxiety when the mind agitated by a thousand tumultuous thoughts, seems as though it were carried entirely beyond itself, he was seen, I say, imploring, by prayer, the aid and protection of the God of Armies. He quietly retired to a wood, behind a bush or a wall, and there all alone, sometimes in the rain, and kneeling on the damp ground, he adored Him who is the Master of life and death, addressing to Him fervent prayers for victory. When he was on the point of attacking the lines of Arran, in 1654, he caused public prayers to be recited at the head of each battalion and of each squadron, and that for several days, in order to obtain the success of his undertaking. Following his example, almost every one confessed and received Holy Communion, and, according to the testimony of King James the Second, of England, an eye-witness, never

(Page 289)

was an army seen so full of faith and piety. You see by that, my dear children, that devotion is suitable for every one.

- FILASSIER, *Dic. d'Education*, I., 17.

233. *A Church Built by a Poor Man.* -

When we love God well, my young friends, we prove it by the zeal we have for His worship. I have read a very interesting story on this subject, concerning a poor old Chinese man. One day he came to the missionary who was in his village, to represent to him the extreme desire he had that a church might be built there.

"Your zeal is commendable," said the Father, "but I have not the means at present of defraying the expense."

"Oh! I will undertake to raise the money myself," rejoined the villager. The missionary, knowing him for several years, and seeing him living in great poverty, thought there was little chance of his doing what he said, nevertheless, he once more praised his good intention, representing to him that his village being considerable, it would require a church as large as that in the neighbouring town; that, in the course of time, he might contribute to its erection, according to his ability, but that he could never, by any effort of his own, defray all the expense.

"Excuse me, Father," said the old man, "but I think I shall be able to do what I propose." - "But, do you know that it would take at least six thousand francs?"

"I have them all ready, and if I had not, I would not come to trouble you with such a request." The Father was delighted to learn that this worthy man, whom he had believed very poor, was really in possession

(Page 290)

of so much ready money, and wished to employ it so usefully; but he was still more surprised when, having had the curiosity to ask him how he came to have such a sum, the good old man replied simply: "Father, it is now forty years since I got this notion in my head, and ever since I have deprived myself of a portion of my food, and done with as little clothing as I possibly could, so as to have the consolation, before I died, of seeing a church raised to the true God in my village." Is not this admirable, my dear children? See what one man can do, even if he be not rich, if he only loves the true God with all his heart, and is full of zeal for His worship:

- REYRE, *Anecdotes Chretiennes*, 234.

234. *The Pilgrimage of Two Famous Philosophers.* -

There is nothing so beautiful, nothing so affecting, my dear friends, as the ceremonies of religion. The celebrated Bernardine de St. Pierre and Jean Jacques Rousseau have themselves spoken of them with enthusiasm. "One day," says Bernardine de St. Pierre, "having gone to walk with Jean Jacques on Mount Valerian, at a short distance from Paris, when we arrived at the summit of the mountain, we took it in our heads to ask a dinner from the hermits who live there. We soon reached their dwelling; it was not yet their dinner hour, and they were still at church. Jean Jacques proposed that we should go in and say our prayers. The hermits were reciting the Litany of Providence, which is very fine. After we had prayed a while in

(Page 291)

the little chapel, and the hermits were gone to their refectory, Jean Jacques said to me with much feeling 'Now I realize what is said in the Gospel: *Where two or three are assembled together in My name, behold! I am in the midst of them.* Here there is indeed a feeling of peace and happiness which penetrate the soul.' I answered him - 'If Fenelon lived, you would be a Catholic.' - 'Certainly,' he replied, with tears in his eyes, 'if Fenelon lived, I would be his lackey, hoping one day to become his *valet de chambre*, that I might speak to him freely!'." Such were the sentiments and the admissions drawn from these infidel philosophers by the beauty of our worship and of our religion. Let us take delight, then, my dear young friends, in practising its duties all our lives.

Children, let us follow in the footsteps of the holy and learned Bishop Fenelon and in the footsteps of that great promoter of the Holy Name of Jesus, that towering figure of the fifteenth century, Saint Bernardine of Sienna.

- DELACROIX, *Histoire du Mont-Valerien*, 43.

235. *A Soldier Profaning the Sacred Vessels.* -

Let us beware, children, of ever forgetting the respect which is due to the house of God; evil would be sure to follow. Listen, now, to what I am going to tell you. In the time of the first French Republic, several regiments of soldiers who were in Italy were passing through a village, when a violent storm suddenly arose, followed by a heavy fall of rain. Some of the soldiers, finding the church open, went in for shelter. It was one of those unhappy years when every effort was being made to destroy religion, and when all those whose faith and piety were not deeply rooted, made a boast of impiety and irreligion. Many of these unhappy soldiers behaved in the Lord's

(Page 292)

temple as though it were a profane place. Some proposed to have wine brought thither. It was brought in large jars. But, as there were not enough of goblets or cups to drink from, there was one of the soldiers impious enough to provide himself with a sacred ciborium, by a horrible sacrilege. He goes up to the altar, breaks in the door of the tabernacle, dares to take the consecrated vessel in his hand, throws on the ground the sacred Hosts it contained, and goes back to his comrades with his prize, as though he had done something great. But the moment of God's terrible vengeance had arrived. Just as the wretch dipped the holy ciborium in the jar of wine he fell down dead, and, lest any one should doubt that his death was the act of divine vengeance, the ciborium which he had profaned could not be taken from his hand by any one till the pastor of that afflicted parish was brought, and he removing it without any difficulty, replaced it in the tabernacle. Several inhabitants of the village, who were in the church, were witnesses of the sacrilege committed by the soldier and the terrible chastisement inflicted upon him. One of them, a bad Christian, was converted on the spot, and went to confession the same day. Several others, even amongst the soldiers, did all they could to repair the horrible scandal given on that sad occasion. I have this fact from a French priest who was then in the country, and who related all the circumstances just as I have now.

- LASSAUSSE, *Explic. du Cat. de l'Empire*, (*Explanation of the Catechism of the Empire*), 540

FIRST COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

(Page 293)

VI. - HOMAGE DUE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

236. *Origin of the "Regina Coeli." ("O Queen of Heaven").* -

Devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, my dear friends, has always been rewarded by miracles of grace and virtue. At the time when St. Gregory the Great was Pope, that is to say, about the year 590, there came upon Rome such a fearful calamity as had never been seen before. Every day thousands of persons were seen to die almost instantaneously, so that at last the survivors were not sufficiently numerous to bury the dead. The holy pope ordered prayers, fasts, penances; but all appeared useless. He then resolved to invoke the Blessed Virgin. He ordered that the clergy and the people should go in procession to the Church of St. Mary Major, and bear thither a picture, representing the Mother of God, painted by St. Luke, according to a pious tradition. Wonderful to relate, this procession suspended the ravages of the plague; wherever it passed, no more new cases were seen, and the old were gradually cured. But what most astonished the assembled crowd, was to see in the air, above the pillar built by the Emperor Adrian (or Hadrian), an Angel in human form, seeming to hold in his hand a bloody sword, which he was in the act of replacing in its sheath, as if to indicate that the divine justice was going to suspend its rigor. Other angels soon appeared with the first, and they were heard singing, in praise of the Most Holy Virgin, the well known anthem: *Regina Coeli laetare, alleluia.* (*O Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia*). The

(Page 294)

holy pope, Gregory the Great, hearing it like all the rest, cried out with all possible fervour: *Ora pro nobis Deum! alleluia!* (*Pray for us to God! alleluia!*) That, my dear friends, was the origin of the *Regina Coeli*, which we say through all the Paschal time, that is to say, from Holy Saturday till the eve of Trinity Sunday. - NOEL, *Explic. du Cat. de Rodez*, I., 152.

237. *A Prayer Eaten by a Condemned Criminal.* -

A criminal, sentenced to be broken on the wheel, (this cruel punishment was quite common in past centuries,) would not hear of confession. Word was brought to Father Bernard, who ran immediately to the prison. He has himself conducted to the criminal's cell, salutes him, embraces him, exhorts him, suggests to him sentiments of confidence, and, finally, threatens him with the wrath of God. But nothing could move the unhappy man; he would not so much as raise his eyes, and appeared deaf to all that was said to him. The confessor begs him at least to recite with him a very short prayer to the Blessed Virgin, which he declared he had never said without obtaining what he asked for. "*Let me alone with your prayers; go away!*" Bernard recites the prayer himself, from ; beginning to end. But, seeing that the obdurate sinner had not as much as opened his lips, his charity takes fire, his zeal is animated to new fervour, and, putting to the hardened felon's mouth a copy of the prayer, which he always carried about him, he tries to force it in, crying - "*Since you will not say it, you shall eat it!*" The prisoner, encumbered with his chains, and unable to defend himself from this harmless

(Page 295)

attack, promises then to say the prayer, in order to get rid of the good Father's importunities. Father Bernard kneels down with him, and begins the prayer again. O wonderful prodigy! the prisoner had scarcely uttered the first words when he felt himself entirely changed.. A torrent of tears flowed from his eyes; he sighed and groaned as though his heart would break. Father Bernard, overwhelmed with joy, embraces him, crying "It is to the Blessed Virgin, my brother, that you owe your salvation." - "Ah! I see it all now, Father," replied the prisoner, "would to God that those words had made more impression on me when you first spoke them." - "Is it possible, brother, that I have seen you before now?" - "Alas, yes, Father, I still wore a religious habit when

you met me one day, and running up to me without knowing me, seized suddenly with a transport which you have doubtless forgotten, you said, embracing me: 'Brother, rejoice, you shall obtain your salvation through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.' My apostasy and the numberless crimes to which it led, may show you how I then despised your prediction; but the sentiments of regret and compunction which I now feel, make me hope that it shall be accomplished." After saying these words, the poor criminal begged Father Bernard to give him some time to prepare for confession; but, as he recalled, in the bitterness of his heart, the transgressions of his life, he was so touched by the sight of his crimes and the greatness of the divine mercy, that he expired of grief the

(Page 296)

same hour. Would you wish to know what famous prayer it was that Father Bernard would have made the prisoner eat? Well, my friends, you all know it, it is the *Memorare*; or, "Remember, most pious and tender Virgin!" Say it every day, and it will bring you happiness.

- LEMPEREUR, *Life of Father Bernard*, 86.

238. *I was Born a Jew, and I will Die a Jew.* -

Thousands of volumes have been written on the miracles wrought by the intermediation of the Blessed Virgin. Here is one that made a great noise some years since; I have myself seen the person to whom it occurred. It was, in Rome, in the end of Autumn of 1841. A Jew of Strasbourg, named Alphonse Ratisbon, very rich and very learned, was travelling for his health and also for pleasure. One of his earliest friends was a young Protestant named Gustave de Bussiere. It sometimes happened that they discussed the question of religion, but their conversations always ended with - "Bigoted Protestant!" from the one, "Obstinate Jew!" from the other. The Baron de Bussiere, Gustave's father and an excellent Catholic, undertook, in his turn, the conversion of M. Ratisbon, but all he could get him to say was - "My lord baron, I was born a Jew, and I'll die a Jew." - "Since that is the case, Sir, will you, at least, do me the favour of wearing this medal on your neck?" - "How! my lord! do you mean to mock me that you propose such a thing?" - "Not at all, Sir, I am very far from being in jest, and when you are so sure of

(Page 297)

yourself, as you say you are, I do not see what you have to fear from hanging this medal around your neck." - "Oh! of course, I have nothing to fear, and I will take your lordship's medal were it only to let you see that we Jews are not so obdurate as people say." For some time nothing more was said, and the whole thing seemed to have been forgotten. One day, our travellers having entered a church in Rome, dedicated to St. Andrew, M. Ratisbon examined it carelessly, seeking only curiosities and works of art, but M. de Bussiere had gone aside a little, and left him alone for some moments. What was his surprise, on rejoining him, to find him prostrate before the altar of St. Michael! He calls him, no answer; he shakes him by the shoulder, but Alphonse appears to take no notice of anything. "Ah! how happy I am," he cries at length with sighs and sobs; "how good is God! what happiness! how unhappy they are who do not believe!" At the same time he drew his medal from his bosom and covered it with tears and kisses. He desired to go immediately to a priest and be baptized. The Baron, much rejoiced, conducted him to Father de Villefort, to whom M. Ratisbon related the marvellous change which had been wrought within him. He was baptized some days after, and the *obstinate Jew* subsequently became a priest full of zeal and ardour for the worship of God and the devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. It was the miraculous medal that had converted him.

- NOEL, *Cat de Rodez*, I., 232.

(Page 298)

239. *The Lamp Miraculously Lit.* -

It is not only in France, dear children, that the Blessed Virgin has been pleased to reward the faith of her servants by miracles. Here is a very curious fact, attested by the Deacon Peter, a religious of the celebrated abbey of Monte Cassino, in the kingdom of Naples in Italy. In 1114, some of his brethren were sailing on the Mediterranean, returning from Sardinia, when they were carried off by fanatical followers of the Moslem religion, known as Mohammedan pirates, and conveyed to a little town which is believed to have been the present Guelma in North Africa. There was there a small congregation of Christians, formed in a suburb and

governed by a priest or a bishop. Thanks to the intervention of Roger, the powerful Count of Sicily, the poor slaves were not long without being liberated. Their dean, Azon, having died during his captivity, his monks had buried him before the altar, in a church which bore the name of St. Mary. A lamp was placed to burn perpetually on his tomb ; but the Moslem Arab chief would not allow it to remain lit, and had it extinguished every evening. Wonderful to relate, the lamp lit of itself every night, without any one being able to account for how it was done. The Arab chief, supposing it to be a stratagem of the Christians, caused the oil to be stealthily taken from the lamp and replaced by water. But what was his surprise on seeing that the lamp was burning in the morning as brightly as ever, and that the water burned as well as the best oil. By his orders the lamp is again extinguished, and the Christians are strictly forbidden to enter the

(Page 299)

church, which is even surrounded by soldiers. Nothing happened till midnight; but at that moment a star was seen by the guard coming down from the heavens, and resting directly over the tomb of the venerable Azon; they quickly opened the door, and found the lamp again lit. Their chief refused at first to believe this prodigy; the following night he repaired to the house of the Catholic priest and watched there till midnight. He, too, had the advantage of seeing the star descend and light with its rays the funeral lamp. This incontestable miracle removed his suspicions with regard to the Christians, whom he thenceforward permitted to enter the church when they pleased, and to keep lit night and day the miraculous lamp that burned before Mary's altar, symbolical of the sentiments with which our hearts should ever be animated towards her.

- MGR. PAVY, *History of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin in Africa*, 51.

240. *A Woman Cured by the Archconfraternity.* -

You have all heard, my dear children, of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victory, the church belonging to which, in Paris, I have many times had the honour of visiting. Incredible prodigies are wrought there every day. Here is one, related by the pastor himself who founded this holy association. "One Sunday morning, in the month of October, a gentleman who appeared to me very anxious and much distressed, accosts me in the sacristy some moments before Grand Mass, and says to me: 'I wish to speak with the pastor.' - 'I am he, sir.' - 'Oh, indeed?

(Page 300)

'Well, sir, good pastor, I have a wife whom I love; she is the mother of three little children. She is very ill, I believe at the last extremity; the doctors told me last night that they could do no more for her. My poor wife is dying. Oh! but it is hard to be separated from one we love so well!' The worthy man could say no more; the tears were in his eyes, and I saw by the working of his features that he was trying hard to restrain his emotion. I spoke to him of his wife, hoping to soothe his mind. He shed some tears, then added: "I was told that people came to you when there was sickness in their families, that you had prayers said by an Archconfraternity, and the sick were cured. I do not understand all that, but if you can do anything, I beseech you, cure my wife.'" It is not we that will cure her, but we shall beg of God to do it, and this evening we shall pray for her.' - 'And my poor wife shall be cured?' - 'I do not know, but I hope so.' Two weeks after, and again on Sunday morning, the same person came to me. This time, his face was radiant. 'Sir,' said he, 'I come to discharge a debt of gratitude, and to thank you in the name of my wife and for my little children. My wife is quite recovered, and what is very extraordinary is, that the Sunday I came to see you, just two weeks ago, the physicians would order nothing for her; she could take nothing all day, and towards evening she became quite insensible. We expected only her death, when, at nine o'clock at night, she fell into a peaceful slumber, which lasted for several

(Page 301)

hours, and she awoke free from pain, complaining only of weakness. She eat with a good appetite, recovered her strength, sat up at the end of eight days, and is now perfectly recovered.' - 'Well, my dear sir, it was just at nine o'clock that we recommended her to the prayers of the Archconfraternity, two weeks ago.' - 'Oh! now I believe that there is a Supreme Being!' - 'How! did you not believe before now that there is a God?' - 'Excuse me -- if -- but I confess I did not trouble myself much about Him. . . . ' - 'But, my dear friend, it was He who gave you life, and preserves it to you; it is from Him you have your strength, and the means of

earning your own livelihood, and that of your children. If He abandoned you a moment what would become of you? And it is He who has restored your wife to life and health; it is He whom you ought to thank for that favour. How will you do that, if you do not think of Him?' - 'That is all very true, sir, but how can one do it? Engaged in business from morning till night, I have no time to think of anything else. But, pray tell me, how you managed to cure my wife so quickly; you say it was at nine o'clock that you recommended her to the Archconfraternity, and it was just at nine o'clock that she got the favourable turn. . . . What, then, is this Archconfraternity? They are, doubtless, priests?' - 'I tell you it was not we that cured your wife, but the goodness of God who granted that favour to the prayers of the Archconfraternity; and the Archconfraternity is a

(Page 302)

society of good Christians, who unite to ask of God, by their prayers and good works, the conversion of sinners, the cure of the sick, the relief of all the miseries which afflict their fellow-creatures. There are many priests in the society, but there are many more of the laity, yes, millions' - 'But, sir, they prayed for my wife, without knowing anything of her; I did not even tell you my name.' - 'That is not necessary; Christians know that all men are children of God, consequently, their brethren, and that God commands them to love them as they love themselves. In order to please God, they render to their neighbour all the services they can, and they beg of the Holy Virgin to obtain from God the graces and helps which they cannot themselves procure for them. That is what the Archconfraternity did for your wife.' - 'How beautiful! Ah, sir, I will tell my wife all about it. But these good works you speak of, where are they done?' - 'Here in the church, every Sunday evening, at seven o'clock.' - 'Ah! sir, I knew nothing of all this, nor my wife neither, but I am going to tell her; she may not be able to leave the children at that hour, but I will be sure to come myself. Oh, sir, will you thank those good Christians for me? they have made me doubly happy!."

- ABBE MULLOIS, *Mois de Marie de tout le monde*, 73.

241. *A Conquest of the Archconfraternity.* -

Another very interesting story of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. This, too, is connected with Our Lady of Victory. It is a worthy tradesman who speaks:

(Page 303)

"I am the father of a family, and nearly sixty years of age, residing some hundreds of miles south from Paris, the capital. Being unhappily given up entirely to business, I had totally neglected my religious duties for years long. During all this time I never once thought of the sad state in which I was living. Business called me to Paris, where I spent some months. From time to time I met some pious persons who took much interest in me. Every time I saw them they spoke to me of being converted, encouraging me with the assurance that in practising religion I should have every sort of consolation; I listened, however, with the greatest indifference, and sometimes even ridiculed what I heard. So things went on for three months. The persons of whom I have spoken thought they would have recourse to the prayers which the Association is accustomed to say for poor sinners. I was recommended to them in a very particular manner, by my kind friends, and my name, at the same time, inscribed as a member of the Archconfraternity; it was on the 25th of October. Next day one of my friends told me of what had been done. I regarded it all as a jest; however some three or four days after my enrolment, that is to say, on the following Saturday, this person asked me to go and see the chapel. Having some business to transact in the neighbourhood, I went in, in passing, and still very carelessly. I was struck by the collected and respectful demeanour of the people who were in the church, and I could not help imitating them. Nevertheless

(Page 304)

I went away without making any other reflections. Next day, Sunday, I went again to the ceremony, at seven o'clock in the evening; I waited for all the prayers and instructions. I confess I was a little more attentive than the first time; I said a few prayers, and then retired to my lodgings. I lay down, but I could not sleep. Do as I would, I could not help thinking of what I had seen and heard. I was really vexed to find that the more I tried to banish these thoughts and compose myself to sleep the more importunate they became. In short, I scarcely slept a wink the whole night. I spent four days and four nights in the same restless state On Thursday

morning I determined to go to Our Lady of Victory, with the intention of approaching the tribunal of penance, if I met a priest. I found none then, but on Sunday I was taken to a worthy priest who received me with inexpressible kindness and took me to his own apartment. I already experienced an emotion that was by no means natural to me; after I had spent two or three minutes kneeling before a crucifix and an image of the Blessed Virgin, I was entirely overcome. The graces wherewith the divine goodness had loaded me caused me to shed a torrent of tears, and, consequently, to postpone my confession; twice I was obliged to interrupt myself. Even when my confession was ended, I still felt the same sentiments, the same emotion. My charitable director had the goodness to conduct me to the church, where I made my thanksgiving. It was there that my heart experienced

(Page 305)

the most inexpressible emotion: the Immaculate Heart of Mary had effected a marvellous change in me. And how could I fail to hope for pardon from her Divine Son Jesus, when I was as happy as to have for my protectress that charitable Mother? Yes, I received the signal favour of being reconciled with her Adorable Son, who received me as another prodigal, and admitted me to His holy Table."

That is an interesting story, my dear children, but I might tell you thousands of the same kind, did time permit.

- MULLOIS, *Mois de Marie de tout le monde*, 27.

242. *A Little Taper to Mary.* -

A very touching fact took place in Belgium during the month of May, 1853. I hope, children, you will hear it with pleasure, and that it will incite you to celebrate more and more the beautiful month of Mary. Two old people lived with great difficulty in a miserable little garret, for which they paid twenty francs a year. They often went to bed supperless, and very often, too, their breakfast consisted of some hard crusts, soaked in water. They did not care to make their poverty known, for they had once been better off. One Saturday they found themselves without a *sou* or a penny, without bread, or food of any kind. The wife was utterly helpless, and the husband was sick that day and could not leave his bed. The day passed sadly enough, night came on and they had eaten nothing. All they could do was to weep and pray. All day on Sunday things grew worse and worse. It was now forty-eight hours since they had tasted food. The cold

(Page 306)

sweat poured down over their pale and ghastly faces. "We are going to die, my poor wife," said the old man. "God has abandoned us!" She made no answer. Some time after, however, she raises her head, and, as if struck by a sudden inspiration: "Husband," says she, "let us invoke the Blessed Virgin: she is the comfort of the afflicted, and the refuge of those who suffer. She will save us. Here, I have one little taper left, let us burn it before her image, she will come to our assistance." The poor old couple, animated with this last hope, made an effort to rise; it was in the middle of the night. They find the taper, light it, and place it before a statue of the Blessed Virgin which had found no purchasers, because it had no material value. They knelt down, and, leaning one on the other, besought the assistance of Her who is never invoked in vain. They wept bitterly. A neighbour woman having occasion to rise in the night to give drink to her sick child, observed the light in the old people's room. "They must be sick," she said to herself, and, moved by a mysterious impulse, she takes her lantern and goes up to where they lived. She opens the door. What a pitiful sight was there! The two poor creatures, panting, and exhausted, could scarcely hold each other up, and were rather lying than kneeling before the image of the Redeemer's Blessed Mother! They acknowledged their utter destitution. The charitable neighbour hastens to bring them some nourishment, and the small quantity of provisions which she could spare. Next day

(Page 307)

she went to inform the pastor and the president of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, who lost no time in bringing relief to the sufferers. To crown all, some days after, a small legacy came into their hands, and thus placed above the reach of want, they delight to tell over and over the truly miraculous assistance they received from the Blessed Virgin, in return for a little taper which they had burned in her honour. I hope, dear children, that during the fair month of Mary, you will present to that good Mother not only the flowers of your gardens, but those of your hearts, that is to say, good prayers, good actions, tender affections.

- *Daily Rewards*, No. LVII., 8.