

THE
HISTORY OF ST. MONICA.

BY
M. L ABBÉ BOUGAUD,
VICAR-GENERAL OF ORLEANS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY
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“Read St. Monica's Life. You will see her care for her Augustine, and find much to console you.”

From a letter of St. Francis de Sales to St. Jane Frances de Chantal.

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TO THE
CHRISTIAN MOTHERS OF AMERICA,

IN

DEEP APPRECIATION OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, THEIR
ANXIETIES, AND THEIR TRIALS;

AND

WITH THE EARNEST HOPE THAT THEY MAY DERIVE CONSOLA-
TION AND GUIDANCE FROM ITS PAGES,

THIS

Book is Dedicated

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

P R E F A C E
TO THE
A M E R I C A N E D I T I O N .

DESPITE the deep love and devotion which St. Monica inspired in so many hearts, her life remained unwritten until our own day. Although so many centuries have waxed and waned since she lived out her beautiful life on that now silent and desolate African shore, between which and Europe's busy life, stretches a tideless sea; no biography of her has appeared in their course. The reason of this was probably the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient number of facts concerning her; and also because the salient points of her life were always touched upon in the *Life of St. Augustine* in a manner calculated to satisfy the sterner piety and less inquiring minds of the Middle Ages.

But the nineteenth century, which has brought so many desirable things, has brought St. Monica's biographer in the person of the Abbé Bougaud, and it is much to say that this Reverend gentleman's book which we have translated, however imperfectly, is worthy of its subject. He has succeeded in keeping clear and distinct to the mental gaze the personality of Monica,—not an

easy matter in the case of this great mother of a greater son—and created an interest in her distinct from that which she inspires as the mother of Augustine. We feel that even if the latter were not the illustrious doctor, and great saint of God that he is, we would still enter with the same sympathy, into the trials, and the sorrows, and the joys of Monica; pass with her from her happy, pious girlhood into that darksome valley of a wife's and mother's sorrow, and watch her attain from thence by the path of Christian heroism, to the sunny uplands of the pure love of God.

Yes, the conditions in which St. Monica attained to sanctification are those of the major portion of humanity; and this is why so strong a human interest has always attached itself to her. In the Middle Ages, because, as the Abbé Bougaud observes, she had produced the greatest doctor of the Church; and in later times, because she was the mother of a wayward son.

As the tide of infidelity, and sin in all its various forms, rises to its flood, in these our evil days, she shines above it like a star "in the clear blue night of faith."

May her influence become as potent in this new world as in the old! When she lived, and suffered, and prayed in far Thagaste, our land was the home of those mysterious races which have so utterly vanished. Since then the cross has been planted on its soil, and the Church has grown strong and flourishing. But never

was the need of St. Monica's help greater than now
That this book may make this patroness of Christian
parents, this loving consoler of sorrowing mothers,
loved wherever she has not been known, and known
better where she has been loved, is the earnest wish of

THE TRANSLATOR.

JAMAICA,
Long Island, *April 28, 1885.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

WE were the first to conceive the project of writing the history of Saint Monica, and we must confess that the first announcement of our intention, excited surprise, and no little anxiety amongst even our intimate friends. Where was the material to be found for such a work? What interest would it arouse?

As to the material, for more than a year we had directed our studies to the end of amassing it; and this with an ever deepening interest in our subject, for what drama could be more interesting than the drama of a son saved by the tears of his mother, and becoming through this vivifying dew a great genius and a great saint? We resolved, therefore, to proceed, relying on God's blessing, and if temerity there were in our work, on the hearts of mothers to absolve us. Nor have we had reason to repent of our resolve. The first edition of this work, which contained a considerable number of copies, was exhausted in a few weeks, and notwithstanding our most earnest efforts, it has been impossible to satisfy sooner the eagerness of the public, who have been for several weeks demanding a second.

But what even more than the signally kind reception it has met with, appears to us to be the sign of God's benediction upon our work, is the feeling which it has

awakened. Since its publication, not a single day has passed without bringing us letters, the greater part of them bearing signatures unknown to us, expressive of the sadness and the hope of mothers. For six months we have listened to the beatings of their hearts and the cries of their souls, and read expressions of gratitude whose depth and earnestness have astonished us.

The Introduction had hardly appeared when a lady who has experienced many misfortunes, but attained through her trials to a high degree of virtue, begged permission to print one hundred thousand copies of the *Introduction*, in order to procure for a throng of mothers the consolation she had herself derived from its pages.

On the same day we received from the father of a family, one of those faithful, earnest men, of whom there are so few in modern society, the following letter, which its too favorable language compels us to abridge: "A cry went up from every heart upon reading your preface to the 'Life of St. Monica.' Such words as it contains can not fail to console the sorrowing, and effect the resurrection of hope in broken hearts. Every mother feels their influence to the very depths of her being, and the eyes of every father are filled with tears. Yes, reverend sir, I feel that I am but giving expression to the sentiments of every parent, when I confess that you have subjugated us. Your emotion has conquered us. The truth and eloquence of your words, the earnestness of the convictions to which you give so impassioned expression, have made themselves felt within the inmost recesses of our souls, compel us to enter in the way marked by the austere but certain joys of faith, and arouse the dormant energy of our will, by

their appeal to the noblest and purest human affection which the heart of man can know. Thanks, reverend sir, for this priceless service, and if the gratitude of a father has any value in your estimation, deign to accept the overflowing measure of," etc., etc., etc.

Now listen to a mother's language: "If I were to reflect on the presumption which leads me to write to you, I would not take up my pen; but I yield to the impulse of a soul overwhelmed by grief, which dares not permit hope to enter it. I have just read your book, and I have bathed with my tears the page whereon you say a mother can save her son if she determines to do so. But I am only a poor sinner. Can I do so in spite of this fact? I ought to be a saint, having been married to a good man, whom God tried in a thousand ways, who suffered betrayal, calumny, and ruin, with whom I have lived in sorrow for fourteen years, and who, last year, ended his earthly career, the victim of fiery trials. He has left me with one son, but, alas! it is he who was the most bitter source of my poor husband's grief. Pray for this unfortunate youth, that he may have the courage to abandon the life he leads, for which he has sacrificed all—his father, his mother, his name, and his fortune. Entreat that he may at least save his soul. Oh! sir, St. Monica must indeed love you; pray to her for a mother who is dying with grief from thinking of the salvation of her son," etc., etc., etc.

I have before me more than fifty letters bedewed by the same tears, and prompted by the same feelings. I select from them the following, written in an entirely different tone, but which nevertheless has touched my very heart.

It is from a lady who bears a name of no little re-

noun in the world. Hers is a great soul, which once fell, but once more arose, and greater than before,—transfigured by repentance and the terrific sacrifice which the love of God had extorted from her. After some words in relation to the book as a whole, she adds: “Shall I now describe to you my emotion on perusing the pages which afford us a brief glimpse of ‘the unhappy young girl who forgot God for Augustine, as Augustine forgot God for her’? To my sight this veiled figure stands unveiled. It is my soul which struggles for fifteen years, which finally escapes to find repose in God alone; which passes the remnant of life in praying, purifying herself, and loving.

“History says nothing of the grace which was strong enough to draw her from the side of Augustine, and from Adeodatus; my grateful soul can supply this deficiency. History is silent likewise as to the fact that she gave herself to God in order that her son might do the same; that she might be able to surround him with an atmosphere of prayer, so that, if ever he were to learn his mother’s miserable story or fall himself, he would know how to rise again, and that while loving him tenderly, she had never ceased to deplore the misfortune of his birth.

“This, too, I can relate. My wound heals but slowly, but I trust to live out my life, whether with a healed or bleeding soul, in the love of God. Pray for me, and ask for the perfect realization of our Lord’s designs in regard to this ruin. I await their perfecting in unceasing tears and prayer, but in peace.” She closes with an allusion to a passage in the book: “God in heaven, and those that I have loved, offered to God, and ransomed by my tears! This almost satisfies me. For

what more is required, even to enter heaven, than repentance, into which love enters far more largely than fear."

Here is an entirely different letter. It is from a young girl, one of those angels of piety, purity, and modesty, who, in the midst of a numerous family, with small means, sometimes devote themselves to aiding their mother; or, if she be removed by death, to replacing her; and who, while still young, at eighteen or twenty years of age, experience in their virgin hearts all the anguish of maternity.

"A few days ago," she writes, "I read your Preface in the '*Annales d'Orléans*,' and for a while I felt quite sad in contemplating this double life of a mother, from which I seem to be shut out. I made my plaint to our Lord, who accorded me in return a fuller comprehension of your words, and I was already completely consoled, when the perusal of a note, which you have affixed to the preface, filled me with joy.* Oh! I also have Augustines and very little Augustines. The good God has proportioned them to their Monica; and I have realized more clearly than ever, in reading your words, that it is necessary for me to devote myself utterly to them. My weakness, my discouragement, my want of faith in their regard overwhelm me with regret. If I had relied more fully on God, if there had been more of hope in the tears which I have already shed for them, perhaps they would have been saints to-day. And then there are so many souls besides theirs to occupy me, I look around and perceive so many, and I would that the Church possessed their love!"

* Relative to Eugenie de Guerin.

Here we realize that sweet communion of soul with soul upon which Pere Lacordaire dwelt in such elevated language at the beginning of his illustrious apostolate. "Communion of souls," he writes, "began to reveal itself to me,—a communion which constitutes the true felicity of the priest who is worthy of his mission, and which removes all regret at having relinquished for Jesus Christ the ties, friendships, and hopes of this world. I beheld the birth of affection and gratitude which drew their being from no natural source, and which attached man to the priest by ties whose sweetness was as divine as their strength. When a man has once tasted these joys which are a foretaste of those in the life to come, all else vanishes, and pride passes through the mind only as an impure breath whose bitter taste is unmistakable."

I had already experienced this sweet communion of souls at the time of the publication of the "Life of St. Chantal." "St. Monica" reveals it to me to-day in a more profound and moving manner.

It must be supposed, however, that a book of this kind always finds its way into such devout hands. Sometimes it reaches regions essentially worldly, and evokes from thence tones full of a charm peculiar to themselves. "I must confess, Reverend Sir," writes another, "that I have never held the life of a saint to be interesting reading, and if your volume had not been sent to me by my son, who won it in a lottery, I should most certainly never have procured it. I return thanks to heaven for my son's good fortune, and the impulse which led him to present the book to me. He did not foresee that it was going to prove to me a new and signal manifestation of God's nearness to the soul who

seeks Him. For, sir, it is St. Augustine especially who has done me good; for there exists, alas! much more analogy between his troubled, darkened soul, and mine, than between my misery and the incomparable virtue of St. Monica. Will you permit me to say frankly what I think of your work? I fear that the model which you offer to mothers is so perfect that none among them will have courage to imitate it. We are so weak! Our love of God is so feeble! And though we love our children passionately, we love them so little for God!

“I thought that I loved my son as a Christian mother, at least since I received some time ago the grace to become more serious, and managed to surmount all obstacles and place him in a Christian school. I thought, I repeat, when I had done this, that I had done all that was required of me, but how have I been undeceived by the model which you have placed before me! But who, in our day, can attain to such heights! I am almost discouraged. I ask myself whether God exacts such heroic love from all mothers, and if He does, how we can attain it? To love children with a love that would rather see them perish than commit a sin! Sometimes I declare to God in my prayers that I cherish such a desire. But is it with perfect sincerity? I sometimes fear to say it, lest I blaspheme through love.”

Oh, never! You do not blaspheme through love, mother, who begin to perceive the summits of divine affection, though you hesitate to mount thither. Take courage! The hour is not far distant which shall see you a true mother.

What shall I add to all the letters I have just cited?

It is the happiness of a book like this that it addresses it self to the best and noblest sentiments of the soul, that it penetrates into regions completely separated from us, and excites there emotion full of hope. Among my letters there is one from England, written by a protestant minister, one of those souls in search of the truth, of which there are so many in that noble and religious country.

He writes : " I have read with pleasure your beautiful book on St. Monica. Allow me to thank you for it. It appears to gain so much more actuality from the fact that our age is comparable to the agitated Augustine. Oh, may the divine voice resound victoriously in its ears ! *Take up and read*, and may the Scriptures then lead it back to the Church of that afflicted mother, whose mission is to persevere in prayer and tears. For, dear sir, do you not think like myself, that the day is not far off, when, according to the prophecy of Malachi, the hearts of the fathers and hearts of the children shall be drawn nearer to each other ? Seven hundred millions of human beings await our reconciliation to embrace the Gospel. Let us endeavor, as did St. Monica, to hasten their deliverance by prayers, sighs and holy labors. The evening of the day on which I finished the reading of your book, I showed it in a protestant drawing-room, to a lady of very high position in the world, and a great admirer of Mme. de Chantal, from your life of whom she has transcribed many passages for her own edification. When reflecting on the evils of the age, our hearts were deeply touched. It is needful that we experience for it the anguish of his mother's heart for Augustine."

Weariness would never make me put aside these letters in which parental love finds so true, so profound,

and so strong an expression, and which constitutes to-day our supreme hope, and reveals the fact that while parents' sorrows are great, their resources are equally so. Let us cite one more example: "Will you allow a simple woman, a poor Vertdean mother who has been deeply moved on reading your 'Life of St. Monica,' to present to you in the name of all Christian mothers, her heart-felt thanks? No one will read your book, I am certain of it, without being lifted above the things of earth, moved to the very depths of her heart, and fired with enthusiasm at the greatness of her vocation and her sublime duties. Yes, sir, you are right. If it be necessary to be ready to die to save the temporal life of her child, with far more reason ought a mother suffer death in order to save his soul. And once this resolve is taken in the souls of mothers, I believe, I am sure, that they will succeed. I started upon reading in your book that passage where you picture the mother of the Maccabees, the mother of St. Symphorian, and many others, animating their youthful sons to suffer death rather than offend God. But, sir, why have you cited only mothers of antiquity? Do you think those of to-day incapable of such heroism? Have you no modern instances to quote?"

And then this mother, urged by a noble jealousy, relates to me an example of two or three mothers whose conduct during the horrors of the Revolution, equalled all that is most sublime in the history of the mother of the Maccabees. Madame de la Roche St. André for example, who, condemned to death along with her three daughters, demanded and obtained from the executioner, that her three daughters might mount the scaffold before her, "in order," she said, "that I may

see all that I love in safety." Also Madame Saillous de Saumur, who, when led to the scaffold with her young daughter aged eighteen years, and of rare beauty, remarking with uneasiness, the attention paid the latter by an officer who was well known to be a *roué*, and the perceptible hesitation of her child, who, by following him, could save her life, offered the executioner a recompense to permit her child to die first. He did so, and when her own turn came, she loosened her tresses and drew forth some pieces of gold, gave them to the executioner, and died happy in the thought of having saved her child's virtue.

Such is the letter of the Vendean mother; and to the noble examples of heroism which she relates therein, she might have added the instance of the Irishwoman, cited by O'Connell. Her son, being pressed to take a vote detrimental to the liberty of his country, hesitated, for he knew that his refusal would probably condemn his aged mother, his wife, and young children to beggary. The prospect was too terrible. He yielded, and went forward to deposit his false vote in the urn, when his aged mother suddenly appeared beside him, and, seizing him by the arm, cried out, "Remember your soul and the freedom of your country."

I wept while reading the above letter and said to myself: "Yes, the present age is indeed one of unrest, but the souls of mothers are inspired with such sublime thoughts, that we may continue to hope. Yes, an age of Augustines shall be ransomed by an age of Monicas."

It is to aid this movement that I have written this book. I thank God for its having awakened an echo in many a soul; and I bless the mothers who have read my thoughts with their hearts, and, by the intuition

of love have been enabled to find in this book far more than my poor talent was able to infuse into it.

Too well do I realize that my book is far from equal to the greatness and beauty of its subject. Alas, it does not even come up to my own ideal! But among the criticisms to which it is undoubtedly open, there is one whose justice I shall never be brought to admit. It is that of having dwelt too much upon St. Augustine. "All that can be said," wrote one of our greatest orators to me, "will never alter the fact that the history of St. Monica can never be anything save the history of her son. And this is precisely what makes it so grand and beautiful, and constitutes the originality and peculiar charm of your book." And a mother likewise says: "Those who are led to complain that in the history of St. Monica, St. Augustine is accorded the first place, knows not what it is to be a mother. It constitutes the happiness of mothers to put their children in the first place, and conceal themselves behind them. But though concealed, they still continue to support them. She lives in them, and for my part I can not conceive of the history of a mother which would not be the history of her children."

Therefore, instead of having lessened, in the new edition of my work, the place accorded to St. Augustine in the former, I have enlarged it; and this in accordance with the advice given me in a letter whose kindness was far beyond my merits, and written by one of the greatest champions which the Church has known in this century.* After having expressed his friendly apprehensions, on hearing the history of St. Monica an

* Auguste Nicolas.

nounced, he goes on to say: "Thanks be to God who has blessed your disinterestedness and the piety of your zeal, these fears have given place to the liveliest satisfaction. In truth, the 'History of St. Monica' is written as well, and even more graphically, than the 'Life of St. Chantal.' There is more vigor, though no less refinement in the style. You have been equally fortunate in overcoming the difficulties attending your work, for you have gained in depth and elevation what it did not afford in either variety or extent. Neither in outline nor in detail so rich as 'St. Chantal,' neither depicting an epoch nor a great religious movement, it does less, and at the same time more, than did your preceding work. In 'St. Monica' one figure relieves the other, as in the picture by Ary Scheffer. But the figures are a son and a mother, and it is because of this that you have been able to attain to so perfect a knowledge of Christian humanity. The very simplicity and attenuation of your subject will serve to make St. Monica a winged arrow, of which St. Augustine shall be the quiver." And after these very kind words he adds: "May I suggest to you that a chapter portraying briefly the development of Augustine's genius and sanctity after the death of his mother, would have probably served as a golden background from which she would have stood forth in still higher relief?"

Accepting the suggestion of so great a master, I have endeavored to write the chapter suggested, but to make it "a golden background" would have required the pen of the eloquent apologist who originated the idea.

This is the only addition that I have made to this second edition of my work, and if I except some 12-

touches on difficult passages, and the introduction of some niceties of sentiment or of taste suggested in kindness and accepted with gratitude, constitutes the only difference which exists between the first and second editions.

So let it go forth to perform its mission, this book which God has deigned to bless! Let it commence anew to console and strengthen mothers! Let it teach them to become great by remaining devoted, to be the saviors of the age, and work out their own salvation, by loving the souls of their children. A Protestant historian said of the France of early centuries that it was a kingdom formed by bishops. Alas! neither bishops nor priests can remake modern France if Christian mothers come not to their aid! God has confided to mothers the cradle of man—that is to say, almost everything.

MEURSAULT, July 29, 1866.

INTRODUCTION.

A HISTORY, such as the one I undertake to relate, should not be written, but sung! For it is a poem, a poem of the most beautiful love that perhaps ever existed; a love the most profound and most tender, the most noble and most pure; also the strongest, most patient, and most indomitable; a love that during twenty-five years of tears and trials, never for an instant wearies, but rather strengthens with trial, becoming more ardent and more persistent as its obstacles increase; a love which, triumphing at last (for who could resist such love?) ends happily in a species of transport and ecstasy.

Have you ever seen Ary Scheffer's beautiful picture, representing St. Monica and St. Augustine seated on the sea-shore? St. Augustine is in the foreground, a young man about thirty years of age. His face is pale, refined, still slightly sad in expression, as that of a person just recovering from a serious illness; his eyes are dark and deep, a little lacking perhaps in softness and tenderness, but suffused with the most beautiful light; the pensive lips are closed, as those of one accustomed to mental labor. The hair is short, cut close to the head, and revealing a broad forehead, on which falls a ray of light, emblem of this powerful mind. The elbow of the right arm is resting on the knee, and

the forearm seems lifting itself to support a wearied head; but the head no longer needs support; it is erect, slightly thrown back, in order that it may gaze heavenwards. With his left hand Augustine presses his mother's hands, as though saying that if after so many errors, deceptions, and struggles, he can now raise a purified and happy look towards God, it is to his mother that he owes it all.

And this mother, how radiant is she by his side! She is in full light, whilst Augustine is still a little in shade, as befits a penitent; she is a head taller than her son, to denote that she has preceded him, and, until now, has soared higher in the paths of virtue and of love. Beneath the radiant joy suffusing her countenance, I should have liked to discern the trace of her past tears; but how beautiful are her eyes, as indeed all eyes are that gaze heavenwards; these half-open lids tell the tenderness of the loving soul, and express the pure, calm, grateful joy of a mother who has found her son! Clad in white, and enveloped in long veils, which lie like folded wings, she appears but awaiting the signal for flight, and in her present state, having led back to God her Augustine, who is now a Christian, a penitent, and on the road to sanctity, she would indeed fly away did she not clasp her son's hand in hers; this it is that retains her still; but in closely looking at these hands, more clasped than clasping, and about to re-open, we feel that this final embrace will not retain her long.

It is of this mother that I write. I would relate her story for the consolation of so many Christian mothers who weep to-day as they wept of old; to warn the younger among them who are a prey to vague disquietudes, to reveal to all how divine is the strength with

which God has endowed them in the interest of their children's eternal salvation; how unexpected and un-failing are the resources concealed by Him in that wonderful thing we term paternity and maternity.

Leibnitz said: "We should reform the world if we reformed education"; and I say, we should reform education, children, youths, and men, and extricate the present age from the redoubtable religious crisis it is traversing, could we but transform mothers. And what is required to effect this? A very simple, but rare thing, wanting in nearly every mother, even in the best. I mean the consciousness of their God-given strength, and the courage to exercise it to the very utmost when the soul of their child is concerned.

Generally but very few individuals tax their powers to the utmost. For example, what thinker does so as regards his reasoning faculties? What orator is able to draw from his soul her every word? What public or private individual, what Christian, who knows how to apply his whole being to any work, whether temporal or spiritual? To tax one's spiritual or mental powers to the utmost demands a painful effort, from which almost every one recoils; hence the rarity of heroes and saints. On the other hand, the misery and alarming danger of the present day is, that there are scarcely any mothers now who exercise to the utmost the divine powers attached to maternity.

I made this remark one day to a Christian mother, who was disquieted about her young son's future, and who confided to me her anxieties. I replied: "Why fear? Your son will be what you make him: good, pure, noble, generous, brave, fearing nought but God, if you possess these virtues, and know how to plant

them in his soul so deep that no power shall be able to uproot them." "You believe so?" she asked me. "But think of the passions of the human heart, the pestilentious atmosphere of the age, the many dangers which a mother can neither foresee nor ward off." "Dangers a mother can not foresee; yes, doubtless such there are," said I; "but dangers that she can not ward off, there are none such, if she knows how to use the strength which God has given her. Even should her child succumb to evil for a moment, if the mother but will so, he will arise from the abyss, and return to virtue's path." "If the mother wills it?" "Yes, only will it." "And if I will so with all the powers of my soul, I shall save my child?" "Yes, certainly." "Ah, well, I will it," she replied, in a tone that I shall never forget. Noble and Christian mother! she has willed it, and wills it still; and though the work be not yet completed, and the child, as a feeble bark, is exposed to the storms of early life, all augurs that the will of his mother will be stronger than the winds and the waves. Such is the doctrine of the book which I now offer to the Christian public.

But before bringing forward a memorable example in support of this doctrine, I crave permission to dwell on it a little; for this doctrine, so simple, so elementary, and apart from which maternity is but a heavy burden inasmuch as it is only a powerless ministry; this idea, formerly so popular, and which caused so many a noble heart to beat with sublime enthusiasm, is one of those most ignored at the present day; and I avow that I can neither comprehend why this should be so, nor console myself for the fact.

Look at the earthly life, and behold how God has

arranged so that in this respect even paternity and maternity should possess a species of omnipotence. The child is the offspring of a pre-existing affection, and one which excels all others in tenderness, depth, and sweetness. Long before making his appearance in this world, he lives in his father's thoughts, in his mother's blissful dreams, and when at last he takes his place at their hearth, he is neither a stranger nor unknown. He is the very substance of his parents; their blood flows in his veins; he bears their double likeness, so that in gazing at him his father traces on his lips and in his smile something of the charm of her who gave him birth; and the mother, in her turn contemplating the child, also perceives in his eyes and brow something of the intelligence and nobleness of him whose son he is.* And, as if these all-powerful ties were inefficient to assure efficacious protection, at the moment when the child issues, so to speak, from his parents' hearts, God inflames them with a love, nobleness, tenderness, unselfishness, and devotion, truly admirable; and since nothing would be more sad than such a love, if powerless, He adds a strength not of this world. This young man, so volatile, thoughtless, and ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, whence comes it that he is so changed? He is a father. This young girl, "yesterday she required delicate food, costly apparel, and a soft couch: the faintest breath of air incommoded her; to-day, coarse bread, a rough garment, and a handful of straw

* Who does not remember the admirable words addressed to St. John Chrysostom by his mother, and related by him in the first book of his work on the Priesthood? "My son, I could not turn my eyes from you, for you seemed to me the living image of my dear departed husband." (*De Sacerd.*, lib. 1, n. 5.)

suffice her, so long as her breast affords one drop of milk to nourish her babe, and her ragged mantle one corner wherein to wrap him." * Yesterday the slightest look alarmed her; where are the armies, thunderbolts, or perils that can blanch her cheek to-day? It is told of one who, on hearing that her son had been borne away by savages, threw herself into their midst, and by the majesty of her grief, and the august cry of her love, compelled them to retreat. Who but has heard of that other mother, who, seeing her child carried off by a lion, followed him in her distraction, and by her very grief moved the savage beast to pity?

This strength and love are so profound, so evidently do they proceed from the very Heart of God, and from the bowels of His infinite goodness, that we may without exaggeration say that a parent's heart is the most beautiful work of His hands. All else may perish, but so long as there remains in the world one mother's heart, there will be an irrefutable proof of divine goodness; for if weak woman can do so much for her children, what will not God do for His? What miracles of generosity and power will there not issue from this ocean of boundless mercy, if but one drop of this love, placed by God in a weak human heart, can work such mighty wonders?

Therefore the Church, distrustful of all terrestrial affection, because she knows its weakness, says even to the child of the best mother: "My son, love thy mother, and forget not the womb of her that bore thee." She says to the young man and to the maiden, at the very moment that they, enraptured, approach the altar

* Chateaubriand, "Génie du Christianisme."

to vow an eternal love: "Children, ever love one another." The Church, who, as those old in years do, scarcely believes in the eternity of vows or the duration of earthly friendships, experiences no shadow of fear or disquietude for the most lowly mother; she counts on that maternal heart, for that love is the sole earthly love that she does not distrust. And God Himself, when He wishes to arouse our confidence, and make us comprehend the magnitude of His love for us, and consequently the certainty of His omnipotent aid, seeks no other type than maternal love: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee."*

Behold the father and mother, such as God created them; behold the incomparable love, the indomitable strength, beneath whose shadow the children grow up in peace.

These miracles, has God wrought them but for this miserable, terrestrial life? Is it but for the transient, fleeting things of time, for a life soon to be quenched in the grave, that God has made paternity so grand and noble a thing? Has He done nought for the soul? When the divine life He has implanted within, of which so many a foe strives to rob us, is at stake, can it be possible that He has left maternity an unarmed, defenceless spectator of dangers she can not avert, of ruins she can never repair? Ah, let us not thus blaspheme the divine work. As regards the life of the body, a mother can do much; with regard to the soul she can do all; and the world would be saved could we succeed in convincing mothers of this truth.

* Isaias xlix. 15.

The Count de Maistre wrote as follows to his lively and witty daughter Constance, who complained of the rôle assigned to woman in society, and desired that they should take up the pen and become authoresses: "My dear child, how you deceive yourself respecting woman's real power and mission. Neither the 'Iliad,' 'Æneid,' 'Jerusalem Delivered,' 'Phœdrus,' 'Athalia,' nor the 'Treatise on Universal History,' nor 'Tele-machus,' were written by her; but she performs greater things, for on her knees is fashioned the world's most precious treasure." Foremost among the divine powers attached by God to motherhood is that, not merely of forming the child's body, but the more signal one of moulding his soul.

Undoubtedly, if the father be wanting in elevation of character, and the mother be engrossed with trifles, they will imprint the same character on their child; but, given a true mother, one of those noble and faithful souls who would rather die than belie their God or their conscience, in accordance with the spirited motto of our fathers: *Potius mori quam fœdari*; and picture to yourself the influence to which her child's soul will be subjected during the nine months that he slumbers within a womb sanctified by such an affection; and during the two or three years in which, whilst tending his cradle, she awakes him to honor and to virtue; and during life's sweet spring, when the child believes in his mother, and, so to say, in none but her; also, later on, during the perilous season of youth, when, though the world deceives us, we still listen to the truth from the lips of a Christian mother; and so on through the whole of life; for so long as one's mother lives, there radiates from her heart, as from a gentle luminary, a

light-giving, warming, vivifying influence. The character imprinted by such a mother on the soul of her offspring will be indelible and proof against all the assaults of the enemy. The child will either unswervingly tread the paths of truth and virtue, or, should he for one moment deviate therefrom, he will at least preserve some vestiges of the sacred fire, some sparks of probity and honor, and in the midst of surrounding evil will experience a sadness and disquietude that clearly prove he was made for something better; a thousand divine stigmata revealing to the most careless observer that a Christian mother has been there; like those beautiful marble antiques mutilated by the Vandals, which, amid their degradation and their ruins, retain the stamp of the great master who chiselled them.

Would that I had time to unroll here the annals of Christian paternity and maternity; I should then bring forward, in order to fire the hearts of my readers with a noble enthusiasm, the two generations of great souls: those who never swerve from the path of light and virtue, and those, alas! who only attain it, as M. de Maistre says, by an *ellipse*, which brings them back to the spot whence they started;* and in both the one and the other you would see how profound is this divine character when imprinted on the soul by a true mother. Who moulded St. Bernard? Who made him so pure, so strong, and so inflamed with divine love? His father, Texelin; his saintly mother, Aleth. And St. Chantal? Ah! she was motherless; but she had, shall I say, a father, a mother, or both at once, in that incomparable magistrate, President Frémyot. And St

* De Maistre, "Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg," tom. I., p. 87

Symphorian, to whom did she owe her heroic life and death, save to her intrepid mother, Augusta?

How utter the name of Origen, that great yet tender genius, without beholding his venerable father, Leonides, bending over his cradle, and reverently kissing his child, as the temple of the Holy Ghost? And St. John Chrysostom, whose noble thoughts and magnanimous resolves were due to his courageous and sublime mother? And St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory the Great; and later on, St. Louis, St. Edward, St. Francis of Assisi; and in modern times, St. Francis of Sales and St. Theresa? One need cite all the heroes and all the saints, for there is scarcely one to whom God did not give, in a father or mother worthy of him, a precursor fitted to prepare him for his lofty destiny. And if the shades of history do not always allow us to discern the venerable hands that have moulded his soul, I do not hesitate to affirm their existence; just as when I see a statue by Michael Angelo, or a picture by Raphael, it matters little whether they bear the artist's signature or no. I look at them, and through the obscurity that veils their origin, and which at most conceals but a mere name, I hail the genius which has conceived them, and which alone could have given them birth.

It was said long ago by a writer, brilliant and profound, in spite of his apparent levity: "*Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis.*"—The strong spring from the strong; the good are created by the good.* And holy Scripture irradiating this beautiful thought with heavenly light, expresses it still better: "*Generatio rectorum*

* Horace.

benedicetur.”—The generation of the righteous is blessed. To the honor of Christian mothers this will be always true.

As for those souls, so beautiful also, who, ere refinding the path of light, remain an instant in darkness, but who are sad, uneasy, and restless, because they have wandered from the truth, and from their mother's teaching; to them I present in this volume such an example that I deem it useless to cite any other. In it we shall see how this divine character is imprinted on the child's soul, and how impossible it is even for the most violent passions ever to efface it when it has been imprinted by a true mother.

But, O mothers! to influence thus deeply the soul of your child, how great must be your sufferings! The pangs of childbirth are nothing in comparison, and this is just, inasmuch as that which you have to fashion is the grandest thing the world contains. An author, on completing his book, said: "I have just concluded my task, which has been written during the silence of seventeen nights. Still shuddering at the suffering it has cost me, I gaze at it with anxiety, and wonder whether the world will heed my words." O mothers! can you say as much? Do you shudder at the recollection of the sufferings you endured in forming your child's soul? Will the world be able to say of you what St. Augustine said of the admirable mother whose life I now lay before you: "She suffered more in begetting me to truth and virtue than she suffered in giving me birth"? This is the first lesson contained in my book, and I feel persuaded that in the sad times in which we live it will neither be inopportune nor devoid of interest.

It contains a second lesson, likewise very important, and the necessary consequence of the first one. Of what avail for God to endow mothers with power to imprint a sacred character on their children's souls, if at the dawn of passion He did not invest them with a second power, omnipotent and infallible also,—the power of efficaciously protecting their children, and snatching them, if they will, from every peril? Is not this the reason why God has made this admirable law, that when the young man ascends the scorching summits of the hill of life, the father descends the same; that when the young girl is about to taste of life's enchanted cup, which at sixteen seems synonymous with happiness, the mother has quaffed it even to the dregs, and has learnt the hollowness of the world's vanities and illusions, at the very hour in which her children are in danger of being dazzled by the same? Why is it so, save that they may learn from lips whose sincerity they will never question, the sole words capable of disabusing them of their illusions?

Is not this the reason, too, why God has endowed parents with a kind of intuition, enabling them to discern the real dangers which await their child, and the road whereby he may avoid the same? Is it not that the child may be directed aright on his perilous journey that God has rendered paternity so holy a thing, and that He has subjected so many fathers to those sublime contradictions which daily meet our gaze, which we can not define, and which awake both smiles and tears?

I know a magistrate, an honorable, amiable, and clever man, but who had rarely used his intellect save to rail at holy things. I went to see him a short time ago, and found him with his charming little daughter

of eleven or twelve years of age sitting on his knee, and whom he was preparing for her first communion. He was hearing her say her catechism, and as I entered he was just explaining to her the meaning of the word mystery, telling her that there were mysteries everywhere, in nature, in society, in man especially, and therefore it was not to be wondered at that there were mysteries in the Divinity; and so delighted was he at the quickness with which his little child had caught the meaning of her lesson, that he repeated to me her answers, and some of those remarks that fall so sweetly when they proceed from children's lips. On beholding this charming scene, I thought of Diderot taking his daughter to catechism at Saint Sulpice, and explaining to her each chapter; of another, who shall be nameless, for he is still living, who forbids his children ever to enter his study, lest their gaze should be sullied by the papers lying on his table. He is willing enough to corrupt the world, but he is a father, and he will not sully his daughter's mind. So true and touching contradictions, occurring continually in days such as these. Too often the *man* is frivolous, sceptical, impious, a railer at holy things; but the *father* is always holy. God has willed it thus, and that for the children's sake.

But especially at the hour of their children's danger has God placed within each parent's heart that invincible strength of which I have just cited such noble examples. Thanks to divine goodness! whatever sufferings mothers have endured to save their children's temporal life, they have done more to save their souls. They have suffered to spare them suffering; they have cast themselves into the lion's jaws; have braved hostile armies; have spent whole days, nights, and weeks

by their child's sick-bed, without food or sleep. This I have seen them do, and I have wondered more at their love than at their strength; they have laid down their lives on their children's behalf, and what more can one do for those one loves? Yet, I repeat, that they have done a thousand-fold more to save their children's souls. To die for those we love is not the highest sacrifice. We can do more than die for our loved ones; a mother's greatest martyrdom consists in giving up her children's life; in holding truth, virtue, honor, true beauty of soul, her child's eternal life, in such high esteem, that rather than see these holy things tarnished or withered, she would see her child die.

I know not who the philosopher was who, on asking himself the question, "What is man?" gave this sublime reply: "Man is a being capable of yielding up his life in the cause of justice." The Christian mother is a more wondrous being than this. She is capable of giving up her child's life in the cause of justice; who so intensely loves justice, truth,—that is to say, God's indwelling presence in her child's soul,—that rather than He should quit the sanctuary where she herself has placed Him, she would see the material tabernacle break and disappear. What say I? She is a being who, when persecution breaks out, and evil is in the ascendant, rather than see her child's eternal happiness imperilled, and thus lose him forever, hesitates not one moment to hand him over to the executioner, preferring to see him dead than sullied. Behold what a wondrous spectacle our Lord Jesus Christ has exhibited to the world in creating the Christian mother.

Scarcely had He appeared here below, than we see lowly women taking their little children on their knees,

and mingling austere lessons of faith with kisses and caresses, say: "My child, I would rather behold thee lying dead at my feet, than ever see thee commit one mortal sin."

Sublime creature! What she has said she has also done. Behold her as the mother of the holy twins of Langres, descending into the dungeon where her little children were imprisoned for the faith, and going from one to the other, with a countenance beaming with joy, exclaim: "Oh! of all my glorious ancestors, not one has conferred such splendor on my name as that which the immortal honor of your deaths is about to do."

Then again, as the mother of St. Symphorian of Autun, who, learning that her son was sentenced to be beheaded for Christ's sake, and that he was already being led to martyrdom, trembling lest in the early bloom of his sixteen years he should for one moment regret bidding adieu to life, ran to meet him, and as soon as she caught sight of him, cried: "My son, look up to heaven; they do not rob thee of thy life, they but give thee a better one in its stead."

Then again, as did St. Denise, she stands at the foot of the instrument of torture, by her looks sustaining her dear child amid the agonies of the blows inflicted; and then, when life was extinct, she carried away his little lacerated corpse, burying it with songs of Christian joy, mingled with a mother's lamentations.

And if looks and exhortations did not suffice, if supplications and tears were needed, we behold her fall at her child's knees, conjuring him to die courageously for his mother's sake; as that heroic mother of the Machabees, who, though born before our Lord's advent, was

already consumed by the fire which He was about to kindle upon earth. After she had encouraged her six eldest children to die, and with grief in her soul, but serenity on her brow, had at the death of each received that incurable wound which the loss of a child inflicts, when it was the turn of her seventh son, a child of thirteen, her Benjamin, trembling lest his courage should fail, she cast herself at his knees, and pointing to her breast, exclaimed: "My child, remember that for nine months I bore thee in my womb, and that for three years I nourished thee at my breast; for my sake fear not the executioner, but die courageously, as did thy six brethren." What a mother's agonies at such a moment as that must have been, no pen can tell, nor yet describe the sufferings of a Sympliorosa, a Felicia, and many others who followed in their train. One feels that an eternity of bliss, with their children folded in their arms, is the due of such mothers as these.

Undoubtedly it is but rarely that God demands such sacrifices. But it is none the less true that she who is incapable of sacrificing her child's temporal life is no Christian mother; and that she who hesitates to sacrifice herself in order to save her child from acts of sin and cowardice, is a degenerate parent, and unworthy the noble name of mother. But when she has resolved to give up all,—time, ease, even her child's life,—rather than see him stained by sin, can it be possible that her child should perish? The storms of an evil age may bear him away; he may be driven before the tempest and drift from his moorings; but perish, never! His anchor fails not. Do you know where it is? In his mother's hands, therefore nought can sever him from it. This truth stands prominently forth in the following

touching story; and I venture to promise myself that no mother will end its perusal without learning how to hold, when the tempest is fiercest, the anchors which will save her children's frail bark from foundering. And yet, necessary as it is to remind mothers of the double power God has given them of moulding and shielding their children's soul, if this book contained no other lesson, I should perhaps never have written it. I wished to draw attention to a higher doctrine, and reveal to mothers a more important secret, too much ignored at the present day, which constitutes the august grandeur of Christian paternity, and is also its greatest aid in critical times.

Never shall I forget the emotion I experienced when I first attended the death-bed of a young man. I can even now see the father pacing the room, speechless and sad, overwhelmed by that tearless grief that is so injurious in its effects; by the death-bed sat the poor mother, whose sobs, repressed during her son's agony, at last broke forth. I was sitting at her side, my heart rent with grief, but speechless, for I knew not how to console her. I well remember that during the long silence, such as ever follows poignant sorrow, (for at such times what can one say?) I asked myself how it was that God, who is goodness itself, could permit such things, and inflict such cruel wounds on a mother's heart? I learnt the answer to my question two years later, when in the same chamber, and, alas! at the foot of the same bed, I aided that mother in her dying moments, and was startled by hearing these words, almost her last: "I am going to join my child." Light broke in upon me, and I then saw that this life is not all; and that if, in order to elevate and purify souls, and render

them rich in virtue, God sometimes severs loving hearts, it is that He may reunite them in a region where their mutual affection will be deepened, and parting will be unknown. Trembling with emotion, I closed that mother's eyes, and many a time since then, thinking of her and her son, both vanished from our gaze, both now reunited in heaven, I ask myself what trace remains of their painful wound? Scarcely a memory, and who can tell but that this memory is itself a happy one?

But allow me to say there is another death-bed, beside which I can not think that God will leave a mother powerless. Suppose that, instead of being parted from her child for a day or for years, a Christian mother beholds him on the point of being lost to her for eternity; picture to yourself a holy mother, one loving God above all else, seeing her child fall away from God, and become the object of His eternal hatred: is it possible that at the moment when the terrible separation is about to be accomplished, she can do nought to save him? I do not appeal to the sacred writings for a reply: I listen to the voice of reason, of common sense, above all to the voice of my heart, which can not be more tender than the Divine Heart, and I say with certainty: No; that is not possible; God has not left a mother powerless at such a moment. It must be that somewhere within the most divine part of her soul, in the profoundest depths of her maternal love, He has hidden something, I know not what; some deep impulse; a cry, a tear, or a sob, which, though every mother may not be able to give it utterance (as it was not every mother who could utter the cry which melted the heart of the Florentine lion), is nevertheless there, and which, if it but proceed from the soul, as it surely

will do where reigns the two-fold love of God and of her son, will infallibly save her child's soul. This is my belief.

Yes; when in order to reclaim her erring son, she has exhausted counsels, warnings, and reproofs; when there seems nought else that can be done, she has still one resource left, and that the most mighty power of all,—her tears. Let her pray and weep; within those depths where the heart of the mother and the Christian meet, let her search until she finds a certain tear, made expressly by God; and behold! her child is saved. We daily see young men who have abused all their opportunities, whose life has been one scene of ignominy and vice, returning to the paths of virtue, and that because of their mothers' tears.*

*What I say of mothers, I say, to a certain extent, of wives, daughters, and sisters, and will cite one touching instance, that I may enlist in the noble crusade of prayer all souls worthy of entering those ranks. Who has not heard of that charming brother and sister, too soon vanished from this world, Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin? Maurice, led away by the dissipations of Paris, had for an instant forgotten the God and the faith of his childhood. What did his sister do meanwhile? She trembled for him; she groaned and prayed. "Maurice," she wrote, some time after his decease, "I believe thou art in heaven. Thy own religious sentiments and the infinite mercy of God inspire me with this confidence. Must not God, so good, compassionate, loving, and paternal, have had pity for His returning son? There are three years of thy life that grieve me. Would that I could efface them with my tears! I placed all my hopes in thee, as if thou hadst been my son. I was less thy sister than thy mother. Dost thou remember that when we were speaking of my grief at thy dear soul's errors, I likened myself to Monica weeping for her Augustine? How earnestly have I entreated God for thy salvation! A saintly priest said to me: '*Your*

Holy Scripture is also in harmony with these consoling thoughts. In the days of your deepest sorrow, read the story of Agar banished from Abraham's tents, fleeing to the desert, and leading her child by the hand. Overhead is the scorching sun; her feet tread the burning sand; her child, parched with thirst, groans, and is at the point of death. She stops a moment, and looks anxiously round for help. The horizon is one blaze of fire: nowhere can she find that drop of water for which she would give her life. Then, filled with despair, seeing death approach, she lays her child down beneath a palm tree, and departs, saying: "I will not see the boy die." But soon (for she was not far off, and though she could not see him die, she wished to behold him still), when the unhappy mother hears her son's sighs growing weaker and weaker, mad with grief, she falls on her knees and utters a cry,—what cry I know not, but it reached the Heart of God,—and at the same moment a well of water sprang up at her feet, as if God intended to show us that He can not withstand the sorrow of one who entreats for her child's life. How much more surely then will He give ear when she weeps over an erring, guilty one, who is in danger of eternal death.

But it is specially in the New Testament that this consoling lesson stands forth with more marked tenderness and love. Have you observed that the Saviour's loving Heart was never deaf to the cry proceeding from a parent's heart? When the centurion, for instance, came to Him, saying, "Lord, my son is dangerously sick," what does the good Master reply? "Go, thy

brother will return. Oh yes, he did return, and then left me for heaven,—for heaven, I hope."

son is healed." Jairus and his wife throw themselves at His feet, weeping (they had lost a child of twelve years of age, that pleasing time when waning childhood and approaching youth lend so sweet a charm); our Lord, moved with compassion, leaves all, follows them, enters the house, and taking the child by the hand, restores her to her mother. It is true that He did not instantly grant the request of the Canaanitish mother; He feigned indifference, but only that a still deeper cry of faith might issue from her heart; and when that cry has gone forth, He exclaims: "O, mother, great is thy faith; go, thy daughter is healed." Who has not read the touching story of the widow of Nain? She does not go in search of our Lord, does not even see Him; but overwhelmed by grief and blinded by her tears, follows the bier of her only son. It is Jesus who beholds her who, touched by her grief, draws near, and stopping the bier, says, "Weep not, O mother," and gives her back her child. Why did our Lord multiply such miracles as these? That He might make mothers understand the august power He has entrusted to them; that He may teach them to utter that cry which He can not resist: and consequently make them resolve never to be discouraged, whatever storms assail their children's youth, but follow them with their tears, and lead them back to God by their own prayers, sufferings, and self-sacrifice.

But, so important is this lesson, so deeply must it be graved on the soul, that these examples, touching though they may be, might have proved insufficient. A still more abundant light was needed in order to enkindle in maternal hearts the fire of unquenchable hope, and for this end God resolved to give the world an example which it could never forget.

We shall therefore behold a young man, trained by the holiest of mothers, whose tender years were most lovingly, vigilantly, yet strictly guarded; one, gifted with a genius of the highest order, and a heart even superior to his intellect; consequently one whose spotless childhood should have been succeeded by the happiest and purest youth; and so it would doubtless have been had his education been confided solely to his mother. Unfortunately she was married to a madman, for what other term can be applied to a man who, as careless of his son's virtue as he was of his own, unreasonable and despotic in his wishes, appeared for fifteen years to make sport of his child's innocence, willingly exposing him to every kind of peril? Victim of his father's rashness, we shall watch this poor youth fall from one sin into another, a prey to every storm that rends the heart; and, after being but too easily drawn aside by the tenderness of his affections, freeing himself from that first chain, ennobled, if vice can be ennobled, by a certain degree of honor and an inviolable fidelity; then fettering himself with new ties, wholly ignominious, passing sixteen years of his life in the most lamentable slavery.

Then, as mental darkness is ordinarily the just punishment of ill-regulated affections, after first quenching, and then openly abjuring the faith of his childhood, we shall see him tossed by every wind of doctrine; enamored, but soon dissatisfied, with ancient philosophy, and rightly so, since it offered but shifting sand, on which his lofty intellect could erect nothing stable. After this he falls into the meshes of a seductive, vile heresy, and for nine years vainly seeks the rest it could never afford; then, weary of so many fruitless efforts,

despairing of the truth without ceasing to love it, discouraged, sad, and sick at heart, he sinks into the lowest abyss of all, that of absolute doubt; and heart, conscience, genius, all are on the verge of destruction; and instead of being Augustine the saint, he is in danger of becoming a sophist, perhaps a Libanius, or at most a Symmachus.

But, wondrous sight! Arrived at that point where all seemed lost, we shall behold him suddenly resume his flight, at first slowly, like a wounded eagle, then quickening his speed, and soaring aloft; beating his wings at the dawn of the light, hailing the newly-found truth with cries of the most sublime eloquence, or rather, with tears and sighs humbly receiving that beauty, always ancient and ever new, which he had known and loved too late; and from the abyss of passion and of doubt soaring, victorious at last, to the loftiest summits of divine light and love.

And when you seek for, or question him as to the cause of this wondrous conversion, there is but one reply,—his mother's prayers, tears, and groans. For after having moulded her son's heart as no mother had yet moulded a child's heart, when warned of the dawn of passion in Augustine's soul, she had, for his sake, gained her mother-in-law's heart, converted her husband, and purified, alas! too late, the noxious atmosphere of his home; and after having followed him to Carthage, Rome, and Milan, joining the most energetic course of action to the most tender and winning words, seeing all was in vain, and that her son, deaf to her entreaties, was falling from abyss to abyss, she resolutely turned to God, and one day, when the danger was most imminent, there issued from her soul, as from

that of the unhappy Agar, a cry so profound and so touching that it moved, as such a cry ever will move, the very Heart of God, and He gave her back her child. She died of happiness, bequeathing to all mothers, who weep as she wept, the secret of her own consolation. It is this side of St. Monica's history that I desire to record, if God, who has graciously inspired my design, will deign to bless and guide my pen.

I may perhaps be asked where I have found the materials for such a history. I rejoin: is it credible that God works such wonders only to leave them in the shade, and kindles such lights but to hide them under a bushel? He Himself has prepared an historian worthy of St. Monica, and who else could this be, save "the son of so many tears"? Augustine loved his mother passionately, spoke of her incessantly, and has embalmed her memory in almost every work that issued from his pen. More than twenty years after her death, his locks silvered by arduous labors and penance rather than by advancing years, the moment having arrived when divine love, which had broken down every barrier and inundated his soul, would seem to have destroyed all other love, his mother's name, his mother's memory, would suffice to move his heart and fill his eyes with tears, even when in the pulpit. Yielding to the charm of these souvenirs, he would discourse of them to his people at Hippo, and his sermons, where one would hardly have looked for such allusions, are full of words of touching beauty, bearing the impress of filial gratitude, and the two-fold mark of genius and of sanctity. It is needless to say that nowhere has he spoken of his mother so fully, with such heartfelt joy and deep emotion, as in his "Confessions." And yet,

in perusing this work, we feel that St. Augustine does not tell all. A species of modesty restrains his pen, and in several passages it is evident that he designedly veils the halo surrounding her, lest a ray of the same glory should be reflected on his own brow. But the heart divines that which he withholds; tradition indicates it, and the Church often hymns the same. She who is herself a Mother, and knows not how to speak coldly of her children, has celebrated St. Monica's memory with eloquence peculiar to herself. The spouse of our Lord; saints; doctors; pontiffs; virgins; celebrated writers; and orators of renown, have each in their turn praised her throughout the long flight of ages, in words worthy of being known. These gems I have gathered, and now present them as an offering to Christian mothers.

The idea of this work did not originate with me, but with one to whom I owe much, a great and holy bishop, who for many years has shed much light and peace upon my path, and who, among other gifts, which I treasure in the secret depths of my heart, has taught me to apply my soul to the science of true greatness, which is nought else but true sanctity. Those who have read the "Life of St. Chantal" will not need to be told that I allude to St. Francis of Sales. In studying his writings I have been struck with his devotion for St. Monica, and the tender enthusiasm with which she had inspired him, and proofs of this will be found in that history. We will only say that he speaks of her in every page of his writings; that he gives her as a model to women living in the world; to wives, mothers, and specially to such as have Augustines for their sons. That when he desired to form Madame de Chantal to

that degree of perfection which God demanded from her, he gave her no other patroness, but desired her to fix her gaze constantly on St. Monica during those first years of widowhood when she was learning to be a saint, even whilst in the world; and she it was whom he gave her as an example when he wished to turn her thoughts aside from the religious life at an epoch when her children were too young to forego a mother's care. Need I say that later on, during the brilliant and perilous youth of Celsus Benignus, when she beheld him forming those friendships and engaged in those duels which made her tremble for his soul, St. Francis de Sales reminds her more frequently and in more touching terms of St. Monica? On the walls of her cell, by the side of the Mater Dolorosa, which he had given her, and which hung beneath her crucifix, he desired her to suspend, and frequently contemplate, the image of that afflicted mother, on whose heart was reposing the son she had saved by her tears. And also, which is not so well known, that when he had quitted this terrestrial scene, leaving the Venerable Mother de Chantal alone with her sorrows and anxieties,—a foundress' anxieties and a mother's griefs,—one day, when the latter were pressing heavily upon her (for it was reported that Celsus Benignus was in danger of being executed, as the Duke de Boutteville had been, on account of his unhappy and incorrigible propensity for duelling), St. Francis of Sales issued, as it were, from his tomb, in order to persuade her to re-peruse the Life of St. Monica. At least, while kneeling weeping at the foot of the altar, she heard a voice, which she recognized as that of her sainted father, saying to her: "Read the Eighth Book of St. Augustine's 'Confessions.' " And in

studying these wondrous pages, in which St. Augustine is seen saved by his mother's tears, she had a presentiment that she too would save Celsus Benignus by dint of prayers, tears, and self-sacrifice, which also came to pass, as will be seen in the above-mentioned life.

This suffices to explain my reasons for writing the present book, and to acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to the amiable and holy bishop who inspired me with the idea. If St. Francis de Sales supported, comforted, and strengthened so many weeping mothers by citing St. Monica's example, why should not this same example produce the same fruits now? The world was in a sad condition then; the reformation was rending the bosom of the Church; scandals were multiplying; open and secret apostasy was filling every heart with fear; every mother trembled; and in order to reassure, console, and teach them that there is no peril that a mother can not avert from her child, St. Francis of Sales bid them: "Read St. Monica's Life; you will see what she did for her Augustine, and many things which will console you."

The world is not much happier now than at the close of the sixteenth century; the dangers are scarcely less imminent; a change of principles has been accompanied by a change of manners. The atmosphere with which our young men are surrounded is impregnated with sophisms. The hearth is threatened; the cradle is no longer safe. Never perhaps have wives and mothers, worthy of their mission, been called to such important duties. Will they permit me to tell them, not with the authority of St. Francis of Sales, nor with his charm of language, but at least with a heart which understands and can sympathize with their sorrows: Read

St. Monica's Life; learn from this wife and mother how to pray and weep as she did; never to lose hope, and never to be discouraged; and remember that if the young men of the present day are in such imminent danger, it is because their wives and their mothers do not weep as they should weep.

EM. BOUGAUD,
Vicar-General of Orleans.

ORLEANS,
Vigil of All Saints, 1865.

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THE HISTORY OF ST. MONICA.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY AND BIRTH OF ST. MONICA—THE FIRST YEARS OF
HER YOUTH—HER MARRIAGE.

332—353.

THE road leading from the ruins of Carthage to those of Hippo, in passing through the territory of which the ancient city of Sicca Veneria was the centre, traverses one of the most beautiful parts of the earth. The ancients boasted of its fertility, and justly; for in our own day, and after the desert had rolled its sterile flood upon it for a dozen centuries, a few blows of the mattock have sufficed to re-create olive, citron, and orange groves, thickets of roses and vines, along with rich harvests. It has needed no greater effort to raise from their sandy graves countless monuments of the finest Roman art; fragments of statues, shafts of columns, sarcophagi covered with inscriptions, the débris of theatres, baths, temples, of Roman roads; all the vestiges, in short, of a brilliant civilization. After having journeyed for some hours through this *renaissance* of nature, and amid these beautiful ruins of art, one is transported in thought back to the epoch in which nature and art united their marvels; his imagination re-peoples this wonderful

land with that proud race who in Hamilcar, Hannibal, and Jugurtha caused at different times the power of Rome to tremble in the balance; and who later, after having refused all other yokes, accepted that of Jesus Christ, and gave to His church Tertullian, St. Cyprian, Lactantius, Arnobius, and St. Augustine; to her throng of virgins and martyrs, St. Perpetua, St. Felicita, and many others; and the traveller feels that he indeed presses one of those fruitful soils where, as Virgil sings, the harvests attain a later and less beautiful maturity than man.

Toward the middle of this route, on the slope of two hills, which the rising sun gilds and olive thickets shade, lies an unpretending village, which the Arabs of our day call Souk-Arras.* Its few white cottages have been built on the site of the old Roman city called Thagaste, but they occupy only one portion of it. In the other, which is quite extensive, there is a large plain, formed of several mamelons. Here mighty ruins sleep in the sun, half buried in the sand. Thickets of acanthus, of the carob-tree, and the beautiful angelica grow here and there amid them, and impart a little shade.

From the foot of this plateau stretch vast prairies that are refreshed by numerous rivers hastening to lose themselves in the Medjera, which was the Bragadas of the Romans. Beyond lie sandy wastes which man has not yet reconquered from the desert. A vast forest of mighty oaks closes in the horizon with a curtain of foliage. Beyond it lies the unseen sea, with its calms and its storms.

* That Souk-Arras really occupies the site of Thagaste can be proved from authentic documents at the close of this work.

Here, on these unfamed hills, for, notwithstanding the beauty of its site, no ancient author has mentioned Thagaste, if we except Pliny, who in one choice sentence alludes to the pride of the race which inhabited it; here in the face of these luminous horizons, God placed the cradle of the Saint whose life I have undertaken to relate. It would appear, from His choice of this spot, as if His mind were already occupied with Augustine, as if for him this plateau had been constructed, which rises like an eagle's-nest from an immense plain. And he places St. Monica's cradle here to teach us that in a mother everything is made co-ordinate to her children, even the spot in which she inhales the life which she is one day to impart to them.

Our Saint was born in the year of our Lord 332, eighteen years after the accession of Pope Sylvester, and twenty years after Constantine, the conqueror of Maxentius, had raised the Christian religion to the throne. The Church had just issued from the catacombs; and, as after a long winter, under the first beams of the spring sun, a universal quickening is observed throughout nature, so three hundred years of humiliations and sorrows had prepared the Church to bring forth a number of great saints. The self-same year in which Monica saw the light at Thagaste, St. Jerome was born at Stridon, in Dalmatia. Four years before St. Gregory Nazianzen had been born, one year previous to the birth of St. Basil, and St. Gregory Nyssen was two years old. St. Hilary of Poitiers, and St. Martin of Tours, were a little older than this group of saints,—the former being, at the time of Monica's birth, about to enter his sixteenth year, and preparing for baptism. The latter had almost attained the priesthood.

Neither St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, nor St. Paulin of Nola, were yet born. The pious maidens, whom God destined to the honor of being their mothers, were preparing themselves, by humility and prayer, for the great mission which they did not suspect. Alone, of that brilliant group, had St. Athanasius attained to manhood, and, at twenty-seven years of age, to the See of Alexandria, to govern it for half a century, upright and invincible, and bearing the brunt of the struggle, as if to afford his fellow saints time to attain their maturity. While martyrs were still suffering death in the local persecutions, which Constantine himself could not prevent, and just before the birth of great Doctors of the Church, there appeared in the bosom of a Christian family,—in the home of peace, honor, and antique virtues,—a child privileged beyond all others; for God had chosen her to be the mother of the greatest Doctor of the age, St. Augustine. She received at her birth the name of Monica, a name which no other saint had received, and which she was to make so touching a synonym of consolation and of hope. Of her father's name we are ignorant. Her mother appears to have been called Faconda.* Both were pious Christians.

It is more difficult to define precisely their rank in life. Apparently, they belonged to one of those noble families, such as we see or read of in revolutionary periods, who possess a brilliant past, but little fortune; who keep a retinue of servants, and form fine alli-

* Such is the general tradition in all the Orders which follow the rule of St. Augustine. She is called Feconda, or Facundia, in all the Augustinian Liturgies.

ances, and count illustrious relatives ;* but who, nevertheless, through necessity as well as principle, lead a quiet and secluded life. Twenty years before the time of which we write, when the whole city of Thagaste had been drawn into the schism of Donatus, this family remained devoutly attached to the Catholic Church, a fact which augmented their isolation, while the misfortunes of the empire accelerated their ruin. For a while, it is true, the accession of Constantine and the advancement of Christianity brought to them, in common with all other Christian families who were crushed by heavy taxes, an abatement of these evils ; but in the end the efforts of Constantine proved as abortive as those of Diocletian, and the father and mother of St. Monica saw plainly that of all the antique splendor of their family their daughter would possess only the memory and their name.

With such thoughts, which then filled the world with discouragement and sadness, the father and mother of St. Monica were forced to imbue deeply the soul of

* This is what results from a deep study of the Confessions, and from the corroboration of many important texts ; those, for example, where mention is made of numerous domestics in St. Monica's house (Book 9th, Chapters 8th and 9th), of constant intercourse with the best families (Book 9, Ch. 11), and certain relations of the highest and noblest rank (Letters of St. Augustine, 39th in Edition Benedictine). And alongside those texts are those in which St. Augustine says his patrimony was small (Confessions, Book 2, Ch. 3), and that he was born of poor parents (Sermon 356). This must not be understood literally, for he proclaimed it in his sermon through a sentiment of humility. Noble, but ruined by evils of the times, like all the nobility of that epoch, is what seems to us to have been the true position of St. Monica's family.

their child; and to them, and probably to such circumstances, she owed that early disregard for the world which perishes, and the burning desire for eternal things, which lasted to the end, one of the most beautiful traits in her character.*

However, when St. Monica speaks of her early education, she not only praises the zeal of her mother, she also recalls with gratitude the services of an old servant to whom was confided the care of her infancy. This servant had been the nurse of St. Monica's father; she had carried him on her shoulders as young mothers are accustomed to carry their little children, † and had seen him grow up to manhood and assisted at his marriage. Regarded by him with veneration and honor on account of this, and also because of her age and the purity of her morals, she was chosen to be the servant, or rather the second mother, of his children. Zealous, prudent, austere, somewhat cross and peevish, but ever devoted to her young mistress—a true type of those faithful old servants whom Christianity produced in the world, not the least of its beautiful creations—

* St. Augustine has left us very few details of the youth and the first years of his mother. Happily, tradition supplies them, and makes known to us a certain number of facts of great interest, which tend to delineate accurately the character of St. Monica. These facts are found to be everywhere the same in the oldest documents, especially in the different religious orders who follow the rule of St. Augustine. The Canons regular, of whatever congregation, the Hermits of St. Augustine, the Servites of Mary, the Religious of Prémontré, the Friars Preachers, all preserve and celebrate the remembrance of these facts with such accord that it is impossible to doubt their authenticity.

† Confess., Book IX., Ch. VIII.

she watched with intense vigilance over that cradle which contained destinies so holy and so glorious. Thus guarded from all danger and cultivated with such loving care, flowers and fruit soon crown this tender plant.

While yet very young, Monica would contrive to elude the vigilance of her nurse, and steal away to the church, to seek out a lonely corner in which to stand with clasped hands and head bowed down, finding so sweet a solace in conversing with God as to forget the hour for returning home. When she did return, timid and embarrassed, because she had been out alone and late, she was severely corrected, and sometimes even beaten. But neither blows nor reproaches could draw from her a single plaint, much less diminish the affectionate regard she had for her nurse. Sometimes, when playing with her companions, she would suddenly disappear, and they would find her absorbed in deep meditation at the foot of a tree, having forgotten the sport in prayer.

Often during the night she would rise in secret, and kneeling upon the floor, with clasped hands, recite, with recollection and precocious fervor, the prayers her mother had taught her.* It would appear as if God, by speaking so intimately to her pure heart, desired to familiarize her from her infancy with that divine art of prayer, of which in after life she was to make so wonderful a use. He taught her early how to handle this powerful weapon, with which later she was to strike such wonderful blows.

At this period of her youth, another phase of her

* Boll., 4 Maii.

character developed itself: her intense love for the poor.* Often, at table, she would conceal a portion of the bread served to her, and when she thought she could elude notice, run to the entrance door, seeking for some person on whom to bestow it. There were two kinds of poor for whom she had a great predilection; these were the travelling beggars and the sick poor in hospitals. When she caught sight of the former approaching the hospitable roof of her father, she made them seat themselves on a bench provided for that purpose, and claimed the privilege, according to antique custom, of washing their feet. She visited the latter in their sick-rooms at the hospitals; to both she rendered services extraordinary for one of so tender an age.† Sweetness, gentleness, and heavenly peace beamed from her countenance. When she played with her little companions, it required but a word from her to adjust their little disputes. Her face, her voice, and even her gait, were so calm that she communicated calmness to others much older than herself.‡ To these gifts which came direct from Heaven, and which were God's preparation of her to be the mother of a great saint, other virtues were added which the active and severe vigilance of her nurse made her acquire.

St. Augustine tells us of this nurse in his Confessions: "By exercising strict discipline over her moral conduct, and using a holy prudence in educating her, she inured the child's tender heart to the practice of noble virtues. Be-

* *Breviarium Canonicorum Regularium, etc., ad. prim. Noct. lect. ii.*

† *Boll., 4 Maii.*

‡ *Brev. Heremit Diri. Augustine, 1 vol., 1475, black-letter.*

tween the hours of her modest repasts at her father's table, she was not permitted, were she thirsty, to touch a drop of water," thus habituating her to sobriety, penance, a strength of soul, and a spirit of sacrifice, without which there can be neither true Christian, true spouse, true mother, nor saint. "Behold, O my God, how Thou didst form her, when neither father nor mother suspected what she would one day be. Thou didst place her cradle in the bosom of a pious family, one of the best regulated in Thy holy Church, and therein, under the guidance of Thy Divine Son, she grew up in the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom."*

Amid this sweet refulgence of budding virtue there was visible in Monica's character—I will not say a flaw, but rather a slight shadow—one of those light and trivial faults, which God permits sometimes in order to make the saints more watchful and holy. The maiden was charged, according to the prevailing custom which demanded that young girls should be taught house-keeping, to go to the cellar to make provision of wine for each day. "Now," says St. Augustine, "it happened sometimes that having lowered her small vessel and filled it, before emptying it into the flagon, she would carry it to her lips. But as it is by despising little faults that we fall gradually into great ones, it so happened that by daily drinking a drop more, she finished by drinking almost a cupful. But where was her wise old nurse? What had become of those strict moral rules she had taught her? And what means would have eradicated an evil so concealed, if it

* Confessions, Book IX., Ch. VIII.

were not, O Lord, that Thou didst tenderly watch over her, in the absence of father, mother, and all who had care of her? Thou who art always present, and dost save souls even through the instrumentality of the wicked.

“It was generally the custom to send a servant-maid to the cellar with Monica, who consequently had been the complaisant witness of her fault. It was from this servant’s lips that God drew forth a bitter and piercing rebuke, which was the invisible steel that God made use of to cut out this gangrene. As often happens in cases where the mistress is young and inexperienced, one day Monica and this maid, when alone together, had a dispute, during which the latter bitterly and tauntingly reproached her for this fault, calling her, in the most insulting manner, ‘*a wine-bibber.*’ Pierced to the very heart by this poisoned arrow, Monica blushed. She recognized the gravity of her fault, and resolved to commit it no more.”* It is even said that she resolved to never taste any liquid but water throughout her life. Let this be as it may, her fault, as almost always happened in the lives of the saints, was productive of the happiest results.

It drew the first tears of penance from her eyes, kindled in her heart the love of mortification, made her humble and distrustful of herself, and remotely prepared her to exercise the most active vigilance over the glorious cradle which was one day to be confided to her care.

In the meantime, about the year 348 or 349, Monica witnessed an event which filled her with intense joy,

* Confessions, Book IX., Ch. VIII.

and helped to ripen in her heart the fruits of her beautiful youth. Thagaste, as we have said, had been drawn into the heresy and the schism of Donatus, but this violent heresy had been the cause of great troubles to her for twenty years. At the point to which we have arrived in this history, the troubles had grown so alarming and so constant, they had become so fruitful a cause of murder and pillage, that the emperors were obliged to interfere. Constantine passed a law forbidding the public profession of this heresy. A great number of the cities then returned to the Catholic faith, and among them Thagaste, evincing so deep, sincere, and unanimous a faith, that it was evident the fear of schismatic violence alone had kept her from its manifestation. "Some years later," says Saint Alypius, "one would have sought vainly in Africa a city more happy and more united in obedience to the Roman Church." *

St. Monica must have been about the age of sixteen years when this happy deliverance of her native city from fanatical oppression was accomplished, and the holiest of liberties—religious liberty—accorded to her. No doubt a deep and sweet enthusiasm filled her being when assisting at this new embracing of her country and the Church, and if this happy time were also, as some have believed, the time chosen for her baptism and First Communion, there must have been aroused in her soul those lofty and heroic emotions which dig an eternal grave for the love of this world.

Time was developing her natural gifts in St. Monica. Her intellect, which was acute, lofty, and penetrating

* August. Ep. 48; Labbe conc., tome II., Cap. CXXXVI.

has been made the subject of the most delicate and unexpected eulogiums by him who was the most capable of judging of it, and who, assuredly, would not have exalted even his mother, at the expense of truth. St. Augustine asserts in several places that St. Monica almost possessed genius. We shall find her later taking her part in the discussion of the profoundest philosophical and religious questions, while St. Augustine and his friends form a circle around her, "as if," says the former, "some great man were in the midst of us." This rare and lofty mind of Monica already began to grow active; she exhibited an insatiable thirst for learning; while very young, she would leave the games of her companions to listen attentively to the conversations of older persons, especially when the persons were serious or learned.

She passed hours together at the feet of her grandmother, a woman venerable both for her age and her faith, and a contemporary of martyrs, of whom her moving recitals awakened the holiest enthusiasms of the pious maiden. Along with these gifts of intelligence which God had bestowed on her in order that she might exert over Augustine all kinds of influence, Monica possessed others better still; an unvarying sweetness joined to a rare firmness, and a peace which nothing could disturb. Her nature was fearless, and at the same time enduring; with a heart overflowing with tenderness, she was energetic in love and in action. Hers, in short, was one of those rich natures which we occasionally see, in which the rarest harmonies are evoked from the most astonishing contrasts.

As to her external gifts, about which we involuntarily ask, even when there is question of a saint, it is difficult

to completely satisfy the legitimate curiosity of the reader. It seems, however, that she was rather tall, and her face very beautiful. At least, between the ages of eighteen and twenty years, piety, modesty, love of God and men, imparted such a radiance to her face, that the author of one of the oldest documents relative to the history of St. Monica, declares himself unable to describe it.*

Of the beauty of the saints, must be said what Holy Scripture says of their peace: *Exsuperat omnem sensum*. It is of an order apart, and beyond all our ideas. The beauty of the just, says the Psalmist, resembles that of temples: it elevates the soul to God.

In Monica its charm was enhanced by the most amiable modesty. Her parents were proud of her, and like the generality of parents, even the most Christian, were anxious to enhance her beauty. But the maiden refused with gentle firmness the precious, perfumed tissues in which they would have clothed her.† She had learned of the great Doctors of Africa, Tertullian and St. Cyprian, the price of simplicity and modesty, and how hard it is to preserve a mortified heart, and a spirit of self-sacrifice, beneath luxurious garments. So she preferred to all these gorgeous stuffs the simple, loose, white robe, without fringe or border, common to all youthful Christian women, and of which the

* I can corroborate this. I once saw a picture of the Saint. Her countenance, naturally, appeared pale and emaciated from her great austerities and fasts; but yet there emanated from it an expression so divinely beautiful, that I could not paint it were I required to.

† Bollandists, 4 Maii.

paintings of the Catacombs afford such numerous illustrations.

And so the earliest youth of Monica passed, a beautiful dawn announcing a more beautiful day. Hardly has she entered the period of maidenhood, than she is sought in marriage. Her parents give their consent to the suitor, and, in the incomprehensible design of God, this youthful virgin whom we should have expected to see follow in the footsteps of Agnes and Agatha, or if remaining in the world, at least contract a happy union, is given to the man who appears to be the least worthy of such an alliance.

Patricius, of whom it now becomes necessary to gain some knowledge, was born at Thagaste. His family and birth are wrapped in a mystery which no writer seems to have been able to clear up; but it is probable that he belonged to an old and noble family, nobler even than that of St. Monica herself. Such at least is the conjecture of ancient writers, who know not how to otherwise explain this marriage; for Patricius was not rich, and the office which he held at Thagaste was less honorable than many historians have declared it to be. He was a Curial, that is to say, one of the municipal magistrates. But this was an office which came with the acquisition of twenty-six acres of land; and which, of no great consequence at any time in small towns, became here extremely onerous, by reason of a law which obliged the curials to collect the impost at their own risk and peril, and supply its deficiencies out of their own earnings. Every one, therefore, strove to elude the formidable honors of the magistracy, in the midst of a needy population which could no longer pay, and in the face of a needy fiscal who would

accept no excuses.* Ruined, then, or on the point of being so, like nearly all the curials of his time, but noble and of an ancient race, such would appear to have been the position of Patricius.

As to his personal qualities, St. Augustine assures us that Patricius had a heart greater than his fortune, † and so it appears in the sequel. But those qualities which we shall see developing themselves, little by little, under the delicate hand of the angel whom God was now about to give him as a companion, were then not only buried in the depths of his soul in a darkness which rendered it difficult to detect them at all, but were also stifled by the most shameful qualities. To begin with, he was a pagan, and that he should have been so, in the middle of the fourth century, shortly after the Council of Nicæa, in the very time of an Athanasius, a Paul, and an Anthony, argues either a most deplorable indifference on his part to the great questions of life, or a blindness caused by secret sins. And, indeed, both of these existed in the soul of Patricius; such indifference to religious things that it required eighteen years of union with a saint to arouse

* Possidius, in his life of St. Augustine says positively that Patricius was a *Decurion*; which is to say, that he was a member of the magistracy, who, in the colonies and municipalities, administered the city affairs. For that purpose they formed a municipal council, *curia decurionum*, and their decrees are referred to in the archives by the signs, "D. D. Decreto Decurionum."

A candidate for the office of civil magistrate had to possess in his own right more than twenty-five acres of land, and be twenty-five years of age.

† Confess., Book IX., Cap. IX.

him from it ; so little perception of vice and of virtue, that to satisfy his pride, he exposed his son to corruption a thousand times ; and joined to this, a violence of character of which we can to-day form no idea. So common was it for visages of noble ladies, relatives and friends of St. Monica, to exhibit bruises, which testified to the brutality of their husbands, that the fact was not thought worthy of comment, and, nevertheless, everybody trembled at the news that Monica was to be united to Patricius, for he enjoyed the reputation of being the most violent and brutal of all.

But this was only a portion of her bitter cup. A man, to be worthy of Saint Monica, to render her happy, and be so himself in her companionship, would have required to experience the Christian love, which filled her heart, to possess the delicacy, the reserve, the modesty, the respect, all those exquisite things which go to make up the honor, the charm, and the holiness of marriage. Now, the life of Patricius had been dishonored by the most shameful weaknesses, into which, alas, we shall see him fall again, almost on the morrow of his marriage.

Let us add, in order that the reader may more fully understand this sad situation, that Monica was twenty-two years of age, and Patricius more than double that number. Taking this fact into consideration, along with the difference of age, and the greater difference of mind, of heart, of character, of taste, and of principle, there is little place left for hope of happiness. All, on the contrary, presaged inevitable sorrow, solitude of mind and of heart ; and because of this solitude, many perils, and perhaps faults. To bear nobly the one, to avoid the other, to transform the shadows into light, required

that this young wife should rise to the practice of the most heroic virtue.

As we read the story of Monica, we involuntarily ask how her parents could have consented to such a marriage. For in truth, life is bitter enough without having its bitterness distinctly augmented, and human nature is too fragile to be thus lightly pledged to heroism. Moreover, since they were Christians, and even pious, it can not be urged that they did not know what marriage should be; and that to chain a pious young girl to a libertine, is to crown her with thorns instead of roses, and to condemn her in her youth to a life-long martyrdom.

The ancients used a punishment which resembled this: they attached a living culprit to a dead body, and enclosed both within the same dungeon.

If the parents of our Saint had considered all those things, which faith, and in default of faith, reason, experience, or surely their hearts must have told them, they would have probably recoiled at the prospect. But I know no circumstances of life in which parents permit themselves to be so easily blinded, as when there is question of marrying their children. Patricius was a pagan, indifferent and utterly unprincipled, but Monica would convert him. He was violent, choleric; but he possessed a good heart. His manners were light; but then he was no longer young, and would, doubtless, grow more sober; besides which, he was of noble blood, of an ancient race, loyal, honest, and honorable; what more was required? And so they doomed a young girl to a life of tears, the more bitter that they must be shed in secret. As for Monica, it is probable that she was ignorant of many of these sad facts. She

believed in her mother, and confided in the judgment of her father. And, like the greater number of young girls, when she laid her hand in that of her affianced husband at the foot of the altar, she was only accomplishing an act of obedience.

There are, however, authors who assert that St. Monica expressed a most intense repugnance to this marriage, that she humbly and respectfully remonstrated with her parents, and that obliged to yield, for God had willed that she should purchase with bitter trials the honor of being St. Augustine's mother; she consoled herself with the thought of helping this poor soul, and sacrificed herself heroically. At least it is certain that after having prayed and received in return—for no prayer is lost—treasures of faith and generosity, she went, ignorant or resigned, to the foot of the altar, bright with the radiance of a virtue which impressed all the beholders.

“Oh! who can describe this young girl at the foot of the altar, pronouncing the sacred vows which devote her life. What holy modesty! What beauty of soul is expressed in her face!”* But such things can not be described; they must be seen, to be realized.

* Bollandists, 4 Maii.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF A FAMILY WHICH IS NOT CHRISTIAN
—GENTLENESS AND PATIENCE OF ST. MONICA—GOD CON-
SOLES HER BY MAKING HER THE MOTHER OF THREE
CHILDREN.

355—369.

SAD and heart-rending are the days immediately succeeding an unhappy union. Every day a dream vanishes. Illusions go, one by one, like leaves before an autumn wind. Asperity and opposition in feeling are discovered. If it were not for faith and the love of God, one would succumb to despair.

Previously to her marriage St. Monica had enjoyed peace and tranquillity of mind in her paternal mansion. She little suspected what misery and wickedness reign at the domestic hearth, when God and His religion are discarded, and where wicked passions unchained, make life as stormy and cruel as the raging sea.

Her mother-in-law was yet living, and as if everything tended to make her life more painful, circumstances obliged Monica to live with her. Like Patricius, she was a pagan, and resembled him also in her disposition and character. She was an imperious and violent woman, of a wicked disposition, full of jealousy, such jealousy as mothers-in-law generally manifest. The servants were not behind their mistress in envy and dislike of the innocent Monica. Not daring to vent their anger in the presence of their young mistress, they em

ployed the tongue of calumny to damage her unsullied reputation. For a young woman, twenty-two years of age, meekly and steadfastly bearing with the tyrannical disposition of her husband, this was indeed cruel. It was her deep piety and unshaken devotion to God that buoyed her up against this sea of persecution.

How much more each day revealed to St. Monica the abyss that separated her from Patricius! He understood nothing about the life of his saintly companion. Her prayers and devotions annoyed him; her alms appeared to him foolish and excessive. He considered her eccentric if she visited the poor, the sick, or manifested a sympathetic regard for poor slaves. At every step our Saint encountered a thousand obstacles on her heavenly route; and Tertullian describes those obstacles and severe trials which every Christian woman must encounter who is allied to a man without the saving faith of Christ our Lord.

“How,” says that great observer of men and things, “can a Christian woman serve God and have a man at her side who does not adore Him? If religion calls her to perform her duties at the church, he will appoint a rendezvous at the baths earlier than usual. If she is obliged to fast, he orders a feast on that very day. If she is obliged to go out on some holy errand, the servants were never so busy as on that day. Will this husband allow his wife to go from street to street visiting the poor, her brethren, in their wretched homes? Will he permit her to get up in the middle of the night to assist at the Paschal solemnities? Will he permit her to approach the table of the Lord to receive the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ if it be derided among the pagans? Will he per-

mit her to enter the prisons to kiss the chains of the martyrs for the faith? If she gives anything to strangers or travelers, the granary, the wine-cellar will be closed." (Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*; Lib. iii., Cap. 4.) Sixteen centuries after Tertullian, a celebrated writer* and keen observer, notes the same trials, sorrows, and divisions among families in which the one faith does not reign or exist.

Such was the daily life, or rather suffering, of St. Monica. She would have been resigned to her sad condition, were it not that her soul's purity was in danger.

"But, alas!" continues Tertullian, "how can it be possible that a Christian woman can be allied by marriage to a pagan husband and not be contaminated? She must play the part of a pagan wife. She must display before him all the deceitful charms of beauty, fire his unbridled passions by a meretricious display of gaudy ornaments, her body must be pampered and

*This writer is M. Michelet, who recently said: "The family is the home where we would all wish, after so many useless efforts and vain deceits, to be able to repose in sweetness, calmness, and comfort. We return wearied and fatigued to our cozy little mansion. What are we going to talk about to our mothers, to our wives, to our daughters? The subjects which we speak on are things indifferent in themselves, trivial affairs—the news of the day; but by no means do we speak about what touches the heart, the moral and upright life. We do not speak about religion, the immortal soul, or God.

"If you dare to say a word about these things at table, at fire-side, or in the drawing-room, your mother shakes her head, your wife contradicts you, your daughter, though remaining silent, disapproves of your conversation. They are seated at one side of the table, and you at the other."

adorned to gratify his lascivious eye, and she must lavish on him all that sort of affection which God does not sanction."*

Monica experienced all this almost from the very first moment of her nuptials; and though yet young and peculiarly innocent, she read with wonderful sagacity the heart of her haughty and disdainful pagan husband. A gleam of heavenly light pierced her soul, and she was inspired with the desire of saving this soul not yet moved by the grace of Jesus Christ. Instead of being disheartened, as so many Christian women are; instead of going away from her husband's roof, as the noble Roman lady Fabiola—married to a fearful pagan who pretty closely resembled Patricius—was compelled to do, Monica comprehended that God had not sent her this poor soul for her to abandon it, but that on the contrary it was her mission to cure it, to convert it, and illuminate it. What is the good of marriage, and to what end its dignity, its graces, its supernatural relationship, if they be not for the illumination and sanctification of both souls?

And what avails even natural love, let alone supernatural love, which He never refuses, save to convert the indifferent, the lukewarm, to transform and illuminate the darkened soul with the fire of divine love? "Let him who possesseth the light shed it on him that gropeth in darkness. And let him who is strong in faith aid him who is weak in faith," says the apostle. "And let the dead be raised by him who possesses life." To suffer, sigh, to pour out torrents of tears for the salvation of a soul sitting in the shadow of death,

* Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*, Lib. II., Cap. IV.

even to offer one's heart's blood for that benighted soul, is noble and precious work in the sight of God. Such thoughts filled the mind of Monica. Her life in relation to her husband was a living martyrdom.

St. Augustine, who relates to us this noble thought of his mother, puts it before us in a more luminous manner in a very few words. Telling us how she succeeded in such a difficult enterprise, he says: "Educated in virtue and wisdom, obedient to God and her parents, as soon as she attained the marriageable age, she obeys with profound regard the husband that Providence had chosen for her; and as she ardently desired Thee to conquer him, O my God, she endeavored to afford him a revelation of Thee in the purity of her manners." To convert him to God she used neither discussions nor reproaches. She endeavored to be sweet, humble, patient, modest, and devoted. Instead of preaching religion with her lips, she made it permeate her life. And a day came when Patricius was no longer able to resist, but was forced to yield to an influence so strong, so discreet, and so true. But time and heroic virtue were required for this.

Monica was perfectly aware of the weaknesses and infidelities of her husband, but never uttered a word concerning them; she suffered in silence. She wept and prayed when he was absent, but she knew it was folly to expect a man who was unfaithful to his God to be faithful to a creature, and contented herself with imploring the gift of faith and divine love for her husband, for she well knew men can not be chaste without these two gifts. When he raged in furious fits of passion, it was always her custom to observe silence, patience, gentleness, and kindness. What could be

said to a man beside himself? She waited until his rage had passed, and profiting by the return of reason and those moments of tenderness by which violent but affectionate and kind-hearted men seek to efface the memory of their rage, she would speak to him, confidently and gently, some words of expostulation and tender reproach, which were nearly always well received. This method of sweetness, this secret of silence and abnegation, she recommended to all her friends when they came to visit her with their faces disfigured and bruised by their young husbands. "Take care of your tongues," she would say to them; and it was manifest that she could well advise them on this point, for there never was a man of more violent temper than Patricius, who yet in all his rage never struck her. At times, in the height of his passion, he would make furious bounds at her, but he never went further. Her benign look always restrained him. And not only did she subdue him, a fact which aroused the admiration of all who knew him at Thagaste before his marriage, but by employing faithfully and patiently this method of meekness, silence, and prayer, she gradually became adorned in the eyes of her husband with a beauty he had not suspected.

This sweetness of disposition; this delicacy of manner; these thousand drops of devotion, falling day by day on the soul of Patricius, formed therein an abyss of love whose depth his wife did not suspect till long afterward. His affection for her—for even at the height of his rage and infatuations he loved Monica—insensibly transformed him. He became elevated and noble, because there entered into his character an element of respect which hitherto had been lacking to it.

“Every day she appeared more beautiful in his eyes,” says St. Augustine, “and that beauty born of virtue began already to gain for her the respect and love and admiration of her husband.” Certainly, Patricius was still far from a reformation in his morals; his conversion was far from being perfect. Many years were to pass away before the germ planted by Monica was to begin to develop. It required a flood of tears to water it, and bitter sacrifices to ripen it. Happily, Monica learned daily by prayer how souls are purchased, and to the virtues we have enumerated she added another, which is the queen and mistress of all, an unbounded confidence in God; an unshaken hope in His assistance, with such a certainty of obtaining it that nothing was able to discourage her.

Amid these sorrows and these first faint hopes, as a consolation for Monica and a link to bind her more closely to Patricius, God sent her three beautiful children. She began to smile through her tears. Her first-born was the son afterward so celebrated under the name of Augustine. He came into the world on the thirteenth of November, 354, when she had herself only attained the age of twenty-two years. It is said that she had a revelation before his birth of the great things he would one day accomplish, if she but knew how to make him faithful to God. And it must be admitted that an attentive study of the Confessions seems to confirm the idea of some such mysterious presentiment, together with the wonderful zeal of St. Monica for her son's conversion, which found expression in incessant prayer and tears, and the tenacity with which she held to the anchor of the hope that she would one day behold her renowned son converted to the true faith.

St. Monica's second child was called Navigius, a sweet and tender youth, who never knew the storms of his brother, and never experienced his penitence and his transports. He never attained to the heights of virtue which his brother reached; but still he has left in the church a veiled memory which is not without charm.

Navigius was well educated, but timid, quiet, and almost always in ill health. He was one of those beings who pass through life more occupied with others than with himself. We shall meet him again throughout the course of this narrative, always at St. Monica's side, her tender consoler and faithful guardian, especially during the wanderings of Augustine.

He appears to have been the father of St. Augustine's nephew, named Patricius, who was sub-deacon of the church at Hippo, and of two nieces of the holy Doctor, who, when quite young, took the veil of the spouses of Jesus Christ. Navigius, at least, caused Monica few fears or troubles, and great consolation.

No mother was ever more solicitous for the temporal and spiritual welfare of her children than St. Monica. It was her daily care to instill into their tender hearts sentiments of piety. Her heart and mind and conversation were in heaven, so it was her sole desire to raise thither the hearts and minds of her dear offspring. Besides Augustine and Navigius, she had a daughter, whom she named after one of the most popular saints of Africa, Perpetua, the celebrated martyr of Carthage.

Unfortunately, history tells us nothing of her life, so that it is impossible to portray her character. It is said she was like her mother, very pious, and was early given in marriage. But that being while still quite young, left a widow without children, she went to dwell with

her brother, Augustine, until the day of his ordination. But on that very day, St. Possidius relates, she left him, for he would henceforth suffer no woman, not even his sister, under his roof. She consecrated herself to God in the religious life, and became superioress of one of the convents founded by St. Augustine. We learn from the letters of St. Augustine that he always gave his sister the title of saint, and that her life from the cradle to the grave exhaled sweet odors of great virtue.

She had, and still has, as well as Navigius, altars dedicated to her honor in Rome and many other places, and her sacred relics, like those of her two brothers, are enshrined in many altars throughout the Christian world.

Such is the faint portrait of St. Monica's family. In vain the pagan husband, the pagan mother-in-law, the male servants and female servants conspire to thwart her holy efforts in endeavoring to bring up her children and give them a sound Catholic education.

Her three children became canonized saints. By this we perceive what a devoted mother, aided by the grace of God, can do when she places her whole dependence on God. What a happiness for children to have been conceived in a heart where the love of God dwells with all other virtues.

St. Monica had been, if not made happy, at least consoled on receiving from God this pious little family. If a sorrow more bitter than what she had already experienced, could afflict her heart at this time, and mingle itself with her joys, and embitter the happiness of her life, it was the renewed recklessness, profanity, and dissipation of her pagan husband.

Patricius plunged deeper and deeper into the mire of

wickedness. Neither the beauty of the heart and soul of his holy wife, the tenderness and force of the affection she exhibited to him, nor the birth of her holy little children could subdue the tyranny of his passions; and, in spite of the entreaties and tears of St. Monica, Patricius began to parade his vices. How can we describe her sufferings as a wife, a mother, and a Christian?

Hers was the martyrdom of soul of which St. Ambrose speaks, whose scene is the household, but whose intensity of suffering is as deep as any martyrdom of the body. But nothing could make our Saint swerve from the line of conduct which she had marked out for herself. Forsaken in the flower of her age, betrayed by the father of her children, Monica, who saw vanish, at twenty-seven years of age, all the sweet hopes which she had cherished, redoubled her fervor and confidence in God; and far from changing her wonted modesty and silence, her discretion, and sweet and devoted affection in regard to her husband, increased them, and began to devote her time and attention to the moral and religious education of her children.

Every mother naturally loves her child, but those who have experienced in the marriage state only abandonment and cruelty, love their children with a love which mothers blessed with kind and loving husbands, can not comprehend.

And if the age in which God made them mothers, and unhappy ones, is a wicked age: if in bringing them forth on the scene of a wicked and corrupt world they feel they are soon to deposit them among the wicked and corrupted; far more dangerous to their innocence when their fathers will not shield and protect them

from the baleful influence of a wicked world; nothing can give any idea of their tender care, of the vigilance of their prayers, and the precautions they have recourse to in order to protect and save the souls of their children. This is the spectacle that will be presented to our view in the course of this recital. Unfortunately a thick veil hides from our view the youthful lives of Navigius and Perpetua.

Let us then, though unwillingly, take leave of these two children of our Saint, and fix our attention on the cradle and boyish years of St. Augustine.

It is needless to say that Monica did not wait to begin her son's education until he was able to speak. She had not even waited until he was born. At the first intimation of the happiness which God was about to bestow on her, she began to reflect on her duty, and having learned from the "Lives of the Saints," a book she continually studied, that during the long months before her child's birth she could sanctify it and baptize it in the love of God, she redoubled her vigilance, piety, and purity of heart, in order that this soul should receive only holy impressions.

Alarmed, and with reason, at the responsibility thrown on her, she flew to God for light and strength to enable her to accomplish the great work undertaken by her. Night and day she offers to God, on the altar of her pure heart, her dear child. What a model she is to all Christian mothers for imitation and example.

"St. Monica," says St. Francis of Sales, "being pregnant of the great St. Augustine, dedicated him, by many offerings, to the Christian religion, and to the service of God's glory, as he himself testifies, saying that he had 'already tasted the salt of God in his mother's womb.'"

This touching, feeling expression, *ab utero matris meæ*, from my mother's womb, recurs in almost every page of the Confessions. If St. Augustine learned to love Jesus,—if the fibres of his heart continually vibrated for God and truth; if in the midst of his unhappy wanderings there yet remained in his heart the sparks of honor—that could not be extinguished—if he had contempt for whatever was low and mean, he never ceases to repeat that he acquired these traits from the womb of his mother,—as if he desired us to know what had been, during those nine months, the beauty, the elevation, and the saintly grandeur of the thoughts and sentiments of his mother.

As soon as he was born, Monica had him brought to the church, for though it was not then the custom to baptize children or infants at the moment of their birth,—as we see by the history of Constantine, Theodosius, St. Ambrose, St. Martin, St. Eusebius, and a host of others,—she desired that at least his name should be placed on the list of Catechumens,—that is to say, of those who aspired to holy baptism. In the meantime, while waiting for Jesus Christ to take possession of His temple, which, after its brief dedication to strange gods, was to become so glorious, the cross was engraved on his brow, and the symbolic salt placed on the lips which were to interpret one day so sublime a faith.

It is needless to state that such a mother would not permit her child to be nourished on strange milk. She would have dreaded lest some baleful influence should render all her efforts unavailing to accomplish a work whose difficulties she justly estimated. She therefore kept Augustine on her own chaste heart, tasting what he terms felicitously, “the delights of maternal milk.”

With this milk, he drank in the Name and the love of Jesus Christ, and he who already in the womb of his mother, had been subjected to the mighty influence of that mother's profound faith, had the happiness of receiving amongst the caresses of his infancy, a second impression no less mysterious and more profound than the first.

Happy the children who thus begin their heavenly life with their earthly one, and who from the moment of their entrance into this world read faith, purity, honor, and virtue in the eyes of their mothers.

St. Augustine paints this happiness of his infancy in some words full of charm: "Whence came I, O my God, into this dying life, or, if it be preferable, this living death? I am ignorant; what I know is that at my entrance here I was received into the arms of Thy tenderness, as I have learned from my father and mother, in whose heart I reposed for a time." And after this delicate tribute he adds: "Then I received a second grace which was the sweetness of tasting the milk of my mother. Be Thou blessed, O my God, for it was not she who placed this nourishment in her breast. It was Thou who gave me this nourishment through her. Thou didst incline me to desire it in the measure in which I needed it; Thou didst incline her to impart it to me. Love inspired her to communicate to me without measure what she received without measure; and by an admirable law, in making me happy she became happy herself. And with the milk which I drank with so much delight, my heart drank lovingly the name of Jesus Christ. I know all this now. But then, ingrate, what did I know? To drink the milk, to relish its sweetness, to weep when I suffered. Nothing more!"

But the care so affectionately manifested by St. Monica for her darling child was but a prelude to that great work with which God had charged her. What was above all—and that quickly—to be accomplished, was to form and direct the tender conscience of Augustine. The time was not far distant when he was to pass from maternal instructions to witness and partly imitate the example of his father; when he was about to step down from his mother's lap and tender caresses, to enter a society deeply corrupted, and highly capable of corrupting; through which assuredly he could not pass safe and sound without having a conscience finely and piously tempered.

Thus, in order to form this conscience, Monica constantly placed before the eyes of her child the grand principles of faith, the brilliant and steady light of the Gospel.

She endeavored to transmit to him a treasure which she had received from her ancestors; it was the despising of earth and all that passes away. She unceasingly directed his thoughts to heaven, and endeavored to dig abysses in his youthful soul which nothing save God should be able to fill. We know how she succeeded. That delicacy of perception which ever brought disenchantment to his heart, the perpetual return of his soul upon itself, the profundity, and the melancholy, which give so much even of human beauty to the soul of Augustine, expressed in those sublime exclamations, "O my God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are so agitated that they can not repose in Thee!" all was imbibed from the teachings of his mother.

To this teaching, which, renewed each day, could not fail to do its work in the heart of her son, Monica joined

another, designed to fill his heart with tenderness. She spoke to him unceasingly of God's love, of the cradle into which "it made him descend," the cross on which it hung him bleeding, that we might receive its full measure. Let us imagine such teaching from the inspired lips of a saint sinking into so tender and loving a heart as Augustine's. So profound was the impression it made that never, even in the midst of the errors and passions of his youth, could Augustine forget this sublime and appealing picture of our Lord "descending through humility to our pride."

To make him reject with disgust even the most beautiful book, it was sufficient, as we shall see, for him not to find therein the name of Jesus Christ.*

At the same time, before arousing this tenderness in her son's heart, Monica endeavored to inspire him with a horror of evil, a hatred of all that could stain the heart and degrade it. And with the self-abnegation of mothers, who dread no humiliation where there is question of preserving their children, she confessed to him her own faults. She related to him in particular, the affair of the wine, the cellar into which she descended, the small vessel which she carried to her lips, all the humiliating story, in short, happy if, at this price, she succeeded in inspiring her son with a fear of the least peril, and a horror of the lightest faults.

It was by speaking to him in this way while holding him on her lap, by dwelling frequently on the vanity of the things of earth, the infinite love of God, the malice of evil, the horror of vice, that she developed, little by little, the soul of Augustine; that she formed the con-

* Confessions, Book III., Chap. IV.

science of which he could never rid himself, although he strove to do so in the hope of peace, at least, if happiness were unattainable; which made itself heard everywhere, and, like the bloody arrow in the vitals of a stag, tormented him without ceasing, until he returned, vanquished and penitent, to receive peace, honor, dignity of soul, purity, and joy from the God of his cradle and of his mother.

An incident of St. Augustine's youth which has come down to us shows that, despite the infidelity of his father, the sentiments of faith were deeply implanted in his soul; but shows us also how difficult, notwithstanding her piety and wonderful tact, was the position of St. Monica.

Let us cite a few words from the Confessions. They afford a perfect picture: "When I was yet a child, one day I was suddenly seized with so terrible an illness of the stomach, that they thought I was going to die. In this condition Thou knowest, O my God, Thou who hast ever been my protector, with what a transport of love and faith, I asked to receive the baptism of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, my Lord and my God. I besought it of my mother; I asked it of the Church, which is my mother also; I begged them to hasten."

Behold this child between the ages of seven and eight years, in a dying state, tormented by terrible suffering, yet thinking of nothing but God, his soul, and eternity. Perhaps the mother, under such circumstances, is more admirable: "My mother was overwhelmed with grief," says St. Augustine. "And why? What affected her to such a degree? Was it the fear of seeing her son die? Yes, without doubt, for she was a mother; but Thou, O my God," continues St.

Augustine, "knowest she was more anxious that my soul should enter into the joy of the Lord than she had been to behold me come into the world; her pure heart hastened to bring me forth a second time by procuring for me through baptism eternal life. So she became like one distracted, asking with loud cries for the grace of baptism for me, in order that I might be purified from my childish faults, and that I might make a profession of believing in Thee, O Jesus, who art my Saviour."

In presence of so vivid an outburst of faith on the part of the child and the mother, what St. Augustine adds is astonishing: "In the meantime, the pains had ceased, and when they found the danger had passed they thought no more of baptizing me"; and in fact he was not baptized until twenty years later.

We should say rather that this would be astonishing were it not that, in spite of the discreet and delicate reticence of St. Augustine, we see here the interference of Patricius. In the hour of Augustine's danger, he had allowed Monica to have her way. He was too indifferent at heart to the concerns of religion, and, be it added, too much a man of honor, and too generous, to restrain liberty of conscience in his child on the border of the tomb, and add to the mother's sorrow in losing him the infinitely bitterer woe of seeing his eternity shadowed and his salvation compromised. But as soon as the danger had passed, the pagan reappeared in Patricius, and he signified his wish that the baptism should be deferred until later.

Monica did not insist, for with Patricius she knew insistence was not advisable; and so long as the Church tolerated this custom, and she was not free to follow

any other, she resigned herself in silence. Let us add that the sad state of the society into which Augustine was to enter, the schools which he was obliged to attend, the books, the theatres, the games from whose influences it would be absolutely impossible to keep his mind and heart, helped her to accept her disappointment courageously. For, if such was the utter corruption of society, that only by fleeing to the desert and refusing to learn to read, as St. Anthony had done shortly before, could a young man hope to avoid succumbing to its temptations, and if the words of St. Paul, which make all Christian mothers tremble, are true, that faults committed after baptism are more grave, falls are greater, stains more difficult to efface, why hasten to administer baptism? Were it not better to reserve this all-powerful grace for the day in which Augustine, if he chanced to wander, should return to faith and virtue? "My mother thought of all this," says St. Augustine, "and knowing for what temptations, for what floods and storms I was necessarily reserved, she consoled herself by thinking that in place of delivering up to them the image of Jesus Christ, she would abandon to them only the rude clay which was one day to be imprinted with His image."

Only, in resigning herself to this perilous plan, that the will of her husband imposed on her, Monica felt that she contracted an obligation yet more strict than before, to watch over the soul of her son. Warned, therefore, by the danger he had just passed through, rejoiced also and encouraged by the brilliant flame, she had beheld in Augustine, she resolved not to lose one moment of life. Sacrificing more and more the sad pleasures of the world, she became his guardian angel

and visible providence. But she did not confine her watchfulness to this point alone. So that nothing might be a barrier to her in the prosecution of her great work, the moral and religious well-being of her son, St. Monica applied herself more than ever to gain over by her meekness, patience, and mildness her pagan husband, her pagan mother-in-law, relations, and domestics, and make them—who could tell?—auxiliaries, perhaps, in her great work.

Her mother-in-law was the first she gained over to her cause. This woman was haughty, disdainful, and imperious. The false reports of her slaves had embittered her against her daughter-in-law.

By the gentleness of her manner, the sweetness of her disposition, and her respectful attentions, Monica overcame her mother-in-law's repugnance. The latter's prejudices melted away little by little. Without St. Monica's knowledge, she went to Patricius to denounce to him the malice of those wicked tongues which had sought to destroy their domestic peace. Patricius' ire was roused and he had the servants flogged, after which she warned them publicly that whoever should hereafter dare to prefer any charge against her daughter-in-law should receive the same correction. From that time their tongues were silent concerning Monica, who began to live in peace and harmony with her mother-in-law. But the servants had been silenced by fear; Monica strove to silence them through love. She gained their hearts, and saw herself tended by them with a fidelity full of tenderness.

It was not only over her relatives and servants that she soon gained an ascendancy. "Thy faithful servant, St. Monica, whose womb, thanks and praise be to Thee,

O my God, gave me life," says St. Augustine, "had now obtained from Thee a more precious gift. Amid dissensions and animosities, she intervened to pacify." Thus she became by degrees the confidant of the whole neighborhood. Everybody came to her to expose sorrows and domestic trials. Some, filled with resentment, came to her to give vent to it. She heard them patiently and meekly, and dressed their wounds with most delicate touch. No one knew better how to reconcile and settle family quarrels. Her great art consisted in silence. Whatever was confided to her sank deep into her soul, as into those fathomless wells whence nothing flows. If sometimes she repeated something of a former conversation, it was only when it was of a nature to calm resentment or to cicatrize a wound.

St. Augustine continues: "I here praise my mother for a virtue which would appear to me quite insignificant, if a sad experience had not taught me how vast is the number of those who take delight in repeating the words of an excited enemy to an offended and irritated man. But what is worse, so as to fan the flame of dissensions, they embellish and magnify them; while, on the other hand, it would not be difficult to quench these flames of anger and bitterness if they would but use soothing words between the irritated parties. It was in this way my mother always acted," adds St. Augustine, "because Thou, O my God, instructed her, in the secret school of her heart." In a word, peace radiated from her, and her house resembled those sanctuaries which are guarded by silence, and which fill with their calmness those who carry thither their griefs and their agitations. But it was especially in relation

to her husband that she employed the energies of her beautiful soul and the richness of her admirable method. He was a pagan—she wished to lead him back to God ; he was a father—she wished to associate him in her work, or obtain, at least, that he should not oppose her.

St. Augustine has depicted, in a few words full of charm, this gift and the art by which St. Monica triumphed over the extreme difficulties of her position. "At that time," he says, "I believed ; my mother also believed ; the whole house believed with us ; my father was the only one who did *not* believe." Behold the interior of a family in the fourth century. Alas ! it is the interior of many families in our own day. But listen to the words that follow—how beautiful and true they are—with what consolation they are capable of filling and consoling certain souls : "Nevertheless," continues St. Augustine, "my father was never able to conquer in my soul the ascendancy my mother had gained over me ; and powerful as was the example he gave me, he could not succeed in turning away my thoughts from believing in Jesus Christ, in whom he did not believe."

That is what will always happen when the mother is a true Catholic woman. Between the father who does not believe and the mother who believes, the child will never hesitate ; it will believe with its mother.

Monica, who knew that later it perhaps would not be so ; that passions attack and carry away more rapidly the young man who has a precedent in the conduct of his father, and who knew also how propitious a time is childhood for forming the heart of the youth, took advantage of every opportunity. "She taught me," says

St. Augustine, "to put God above all, even above my father; to listen to Him only; to love Him with a love superior to all other love."

She exhibited toward her husband thoughtfulness and infinite delicacy. Obligated sometimes to contradict and resist him in things concerning faith, she served him with all the greater humility and sweetness. Better than he—that is to say, more intellectual and more virtuous—she declared that her greatest joy and delight was to be his servant; and if she often made great sacrifices, she found a recompense in the liberty which she obtained to engender a deep religious faith in the heart of her boy. To this end she devoted all her time, and with her whole heart, so that her life was spent for God and her child.

Her child on earth; her God in heaven! To educate one, to contemplate the other, to love both; this sufficed her. And what more was needed to console her for all that was lacking in her life?

But, alas! anxiety begins to mingle early with a mother's joys. The period during which she has her child to herself is so brief! Augustine had hardly passed his infancy, and already they began to talk of his commencing his studies. St. Monica, who dreaded lest in forming his mind they should deform his soul and heart, was in no haste to part with him. She confided him to the masters who inhabited Thagaste, and who were charged with teaching him, under her direction, the first elements of letters.

One would have thought that a genius so brilliant and so profound would have kindled, so to speak, at the very first words of a teacher, and that in his capacity of pupil, at least he would give only joy to his mother

but it was not so. What first appeared was an insurmountable laziness, a disgust for study, which nothing could overcome. To learn to read, to write, to repeat continually: one and one make two; two and two make four, appeared to him insipid and odious. The study of grammar was equally distasteful, and if we except the Latin language, the knowledge of which he acquired without effort, and almost unconsciously, amid the caresses, the smiles and play of his boyhood, and the Punic tongue, which he loved because it was the tongue of his mother and of his country; he evinced the most decided distaste to all study. His masters, employed, by turns, menaces and chastisements to force him to work. But these severities only served to redouble the boy's horror of study, and made him employ ruses and falsehoods to deceive his father, mother, and masters.

Alarmed by these first indications of evil in the soul of Augustine, and sensible that some other incentive than fear was needed for so noble a nature, Monica conducted her son to the "servants of God"; "men of prayer," that they might supply him with higher motives through which to surmount his aversion to study.

"I learned of them," says St. Augustine, "to conceive of Thee, O my God, as a supreme being, who, without appearing to our eyes, can nevertheless come to our aid. I commenced then to implore Thee to become my refuge and support in my troubles, and I prayed to Thee, child as I was, with no little fervor, to save me from being whipped at school. Alas! Thou didst not always save me, and this was for my good. And all, even my parents themselves, laughed at my terror of the ferule—a bagatelle to them, but for me at that time a great trouble and terror."

Unhappily, this aversion to study was not Augustine's only fault. An intense pride manifested itself through the timidity and reserve which were natural to him, along with a passionate love of success and praise, and a peculiar appetite for play and pleasure. "I deceived my parents and my masters with a thousand falsehoods. I grieved them by my love of play, my violent passion for shows, and desire of imitating what I saw there. I stole from the store-room and the table of my parents, either to satisfy my greedy appetite, or to give to children who procured me pleasures which we enjoyed together. At play, I gained the victory by unfair methods, such was my desire to excel all others. But although I employed deceptions myself, I had no intention of permitting myself to be deceived. If I detected my companions endeavoring to overreach me, I overwhelmed them with reproaches. Were I detected myself, I took refuge in anger from the admission of my fault."

In a word, all the old pagan blood which had come to him from his father, was beginning to boil in his veins.

Let us hasten to add, that along with these faults, Augustine mingled some fine qualities. He loved truth. He was sensible, affectionate, and grateful. He returned with interest the affection manifested toward him. He loved his mother. And all alike, good qualities and bad, evil instincts and good, were becoming active in his soul as he entered boyhood. Which would triumph? The old pagan blood of his father, or the Christian sap which his mother had mingled along with it? Or rather, which would have triumphed had he not been subjected, in the first years of his life, to a holy and penetrating influence; and if with his increasing peril,

the ardent prayers and vigilance of Monica had not increased?

It was in the midst of this uneasiness that our Saint found herself obliged to part with her son for the first time. Augustine was growing, and Thagaste was a small city, and possessed insufficient resources for the education of a young man. Moreover, Patricius was proud of his son; for, in spite of his indolence, Augustine was already considered a boy of great promise. He therefore resolved, in spite of his small fortune and the sorrow it would cause Monica, to send the boy where he would receive an education commensurate with his talents.

There was a city, six leagues from Thagaste, which possessed traditions of taste and some degree of culture—Madaura,* the city of Apuleius. Its Forum, enriched with statues of all the gods, was bordered with celebrated schools. Monica conducted Augustine thither, and after having counselled him with fervor, and shed the tears which all mothers shed under such circumstances, left him, her only consolation the thought that he was not far from her, and that at the first intimation of peril she could hasten to him. She did not dream that the evil from which she had so carefully preserved him in childhood, but whose first symptoms she had already detected, was to assume such proportions in the soul of her son during this brief separation from her.

* Called in our day Madaourouche, and distant twenty-eight miles from Souk-Arras. Ptolemy calls it Maduros. In a sketch of Numidia a bishop of Maduros is mentioned (Mataurensis Episcopus.)

CHAPTER III.

YOUTH OF AUGUSTINE—BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS OF HIS PASSIONS—ITS CAUSES, ITS PROGRESS, ITS CULMINATION—TO CONSOLE ST. MONICA, AND AID AUGUSTINE, GOD INSPIRES PATRICIUS TO TAKE HIS FIRST STEP IN RELIGION—HE ABJURES PAGANISM.

368—370.

“I WILL recount my past faults and the miserable pleasures which destroyed the beauty of my heart. And I am led to the recital of them, O my God, not through love of them, but that I may not cease to love Thee. For I love Thee now, O my God, and it is through the influence of this love that I will go over in memory, with bitterness and sorrow, the disorders of my youth, in order that the sad remembrance of them may cause me to relish thy sweetness, O, true delights, of which I enjoy to-day so much assurance.” It is in these humble and magnificent words that St. Augustine begins to depict the awakening of passion in his soul; that formidable crisis which began in secret at Madaura about 368, which progressed openly at Thagaste during 370 and 371, and culminated, finally, at Carthage, in 372, in a miserable infatuation which lasted for fifteen years. But we must hear portrayed by himself, with all his eloquence, the origin of this crisis, its progress, its fearful consequences, and so gain some insight into what are sometimes the sufferings of a mother.

When Augustine arrived at Madaura he could not have been more than thirteen or fourteen years of age. We are ignorant of what gave the impulse to his genius, or whether it had already begun to grow active at Thagaste; but it is certain that after Augustine had mastered the elements, and begun to acquire knowledge of the great masterpieces of eloquence and poetry, he changed completely. His repugnance to study vanished. He opened Virgil, Homer, Cicero, Ovid, and his genius awakened. Virgil especially influenced him deeply. He could not read of the sorrows of Dido without shedding tears. If, to avoid arousing this sensibility, they forbade him to read the book, he wept; if, yielding to his entreaties, they permitted him to again peruse it, he wept still more. His soul, possessed of exquisite tenderness and deep sensibility, found here its greatest delight.

He appears to have been less attracted by Homer. "This gentle deceiver," he says, "was bitter to my childhood." This was not because Augustine did not comprehend the difference between Virgil and Homer, that the latter is greater, naturally more sublime, and exhibits in the succession of pictures which make up his work, a deeper and wider grasp; but, as he himself says, the difficulty which he experienced in learning the Greek tongue, made the sweet fables bitter, and prevented him from enjoying fully all that is charming and ingenious in the beautiful fictions of the greatest of poets. Perhaps, too, the exquisite sensibility of Virgil, no deeper than that of the Greek poets, but more modern in its expression, appealed more strongly to his soul. However this may be, it is certain that during this period of his life, and indeed always, his predilections

were for Virgil. He read, also, with diverse sentiments, Terence, Plautus, and Ovid; he breathed all their fragrance, drank in all their poetry, and opened his soul to all their beauteous images, and, at the same time, to all their dangers, for, alas! poison may be drunk from cups of gold.

To develop the talent of the pupils, they were frequently directed to turn into prose the ardent expressions of Juno, or the passionate complaints of Dido. The prize was to him who expressed most forcibly the anger, the complaints, or the passions of these imaginary personages, made them appear most natural, and clothed their great thoughts in the most beautiful language. Here Augustine triumphed signally, as he learned from the applause of his masters and fellow-pupils.

If, in our day, after the calming influences of three hundred years of Christianity, such precautions are necessary to save the youthful heart from being inflamed, what were the dangers in that time when editions were not expurgated, and professors were not Christian, and the theatres undertook to supply vivid renderings of all that the masters themselves could not give perfect expression to?

The Church had just emerged from the Catacombs; it had not as yet purified either books or schools, so that the young continued to be brought up as the pagans had been. Many mourned over it, but custom, queen of the world, prevailed over the uneasiness of fathers, and the tears of mothers. "O, hellish torrent of custom," says St. Augustine, "shalt thou never be stemmed? Whither dost thou draw the children of Eve on this vast and perilous sea, which they who are marked with the sign of the cross, traverse with great

difficulty? Have I not read of a Jupiter at once thundering and adulterous? Not surely that the divine power could ever be united to such a corruption of morals, but they have armed with false thunders a wicked, corrupt man so as to induce us to imitate his crimes. Have I not heard a Terence, introducing on the stage a young debauchee exciting himself to impure actions by the example of the master of the gods, saying to himself: 'A god, and what a god! has given himself up to this pleasure, and I, a poor mortal, should I be ashamed to imitate him? certainly not!'

"And men reward and applaud such lessons. The Forum is open to their teachers! They are openly given in the face of law. Salaries are ordered for the reward of the actors. And who does not see what an incentive such vile, lascivious expressions are to lead youth to the practice of vice? It is not," continues St. Augustine, "with that good sense and moderation which are a necessary part of genius that I condemn the sayings of the poets and the orators. Their words are like rich and precious vases. But I condemn the impurity of the wine they poured into those golden vessels for us to drink. The masters themselves were already intoxicated, and yet they struck us if we failed to drink, and we were not even allowed to appeal to a sober judge. And nevertheless, O my God, I who in divine presence examine and reflect upon the enormities of my past life, I willingly learned all they taught me, wretch that I was!"

It is not difficult to imagine what a deep impression the reading of such books, and the witnessing of such lascivious spectacles made on the mind of a young man so susceptible and tender-hearted, unbaptized and re-

moved from a mother's care, having no protector against the terrible dangers into which his masters or teachers plunged him, as they themselves were more inebriated with the wine of voluptuousness and impurity than himself.

"What wonder, then," he cries out, "that I should have lost myself in the midst of vanities; and that far from Thee, O my God, I should waste myself on creatures, when they gave me for my guides men who would have blushed as deeply in recounting a good action as for having uttered a solecism; and who, displaying in the recital of their debaucheries the richness of a profound art and a brilliant eloquence, gloried in and rejoiced at the vain applause of a licentious multitude.

"Behold how I, unhappy youth, was exposed on the threshold of life, and under what sad apprenticeship I fought the combats through which I had to pass." Very soon, indeed, the poison began to circulate in the veins of Augustine. Just in the flower of youth, hardly entered on his fifteenth year, that charming and perilous age when the heart expands, but droops also like a flower, he felt himself troubled by vague desires. "I cherished only one dream,—to love and be loved." But he adds, humbly, "I did not merely desire this within the limits of a chaste and luminous friendship, in which soul loves soul. The gross vapors which arose from the lower regions of my being so obscured my heart that I could no longer distinguish between the sentiments of a legitimate affection and the shameful images of a culpable love. And so a devouring fire raged within me, and my youth, carried by the strength of passions amid rocks and precipices, plunged into the abyss of shameful sins."

Little by little impure thoughts invaded his mind; and as there was no one to pluck them up by the root, they grew rapidly. "Still a youth," he says, "I commenced to long ardently for criminal pleasures, and had no shame in wasting my life in criminal joys. The beauty of my soul vanished, and I was only a wound in Thy eyes; but this did not hinder me from pleasing myself, and seeking to please in the eyes of men." Only, timid and naturally reserved, he veiled the most profound disorders of his soul; and none, not even his fellow-pupils and friends, dreamed of the storms which desolated his heart.

Meantime his success was increasing. His soul, already touched but not yet consumed by evil, appeared more beautiful each day. His eloquence commenced to make itself felt; and everybody predicted that, when his powers should be completely developed, he would eclipse the most illustrious rhetoricians.

Patricius was overjoyed on hearing this news, and even, as he had already removed his son from Thagaste to send him to the more learned schools of Madaura, now resolved to make an effort to send him, not to Rome, for that was beyond his means, but to Carthage, where he would enjoy the advantages of fine schools, learned masters, great libraries, and a numerous concourse of chosen and polished young men, all of which were necessary for the development of his mind. Unhappily, to accomplish such a design, it did not suffice to have a heart as generous,—and, let us add, a pride as great,—as that of Patricius. He was not rich, and it required economy, privations, and consequently time to accomplish his project, so that at the end of the year 369, when the schools closed, Pratricius recalled his son from

Madaura, and kept him home for a year. During this time a sum of money, sufficient to defray the expenses of so long a journey, was to be gathered together. Augustine, therefore, returned to Thagaste, and we can imagine with what joy he was received by his mother. As yet she knew nothing; and beholding once more her darling boy, crowned with literary laurels and sparkling with genius, she felt the pride which every mother, even the humblest, experiences under such circumstances. Believing him innocent, she could confidently kiss his smooth open brow, over which fifteen years had now passed.

If Augustine had been still innocent and pure, or if he had had the courage to avow to his mother the first dawning of his passions at the time when his studies were suspended, it would have been well for him. His mother would have regained her influence, and prepared him to confront the dangerous society of Carthage. But there was nothing more deplorable than the sad state his soul was in,—the wicked resolutions he had taken to conceal from his mother the passions that silently nestled in his heart. Now at his paternal home, in the sluggish and inactive life he led, without study, his heart became a void, his mind devoted to revery. This helped to arouse the dormant passions lurking in his young heart.

“In the sixteenth year of my age,” he says, “the necessity of some domestic affairs constrained me to interrupt my studies, and return to the house of my father and mother. The briars of impure desire, which hitherto only had stung and pricked my soul, now suddenly grew up and elevated themselves into rank weeds above my head.” And as there is nothing that enfeebles

more in the soul the thought, and especially the love of God, than the growth of the passions, he heard the voice of conscience less. "As a punishment for my infidelity," says he, "the noise of the chains of my captivity rendered me almost deaf to Thy voice, O my God; and deprived of the great resources and the great strength that flow from Thee, I felt myself more and more devoured by the wicked fire of concupiscence. My heart was all on fire," he continues, with a brilliancy of style absolutely untranslatable; "it was boiling and seething with iniquity.

"It overflowed with the mad surgings of impurity; it became confirmed in evil. Oh! Thou, my joy, too late; I did not hearken to Thy sweet, penetrating voice, and further and further I drifted from Thee." Joyfully can it be said, and it must redound to the honor of St. Monica, who formed and educated his heart, that Augustine, amid all his carnal joys, was never happy. His first transgressions were accompanied by a glorious and happy sadness. He suffered cruelly. He sought peace and happiness; he found not even pleasure.

After the mad delirium of sensual joy, he awoke as from a bad dream, horrified at himself.

"Thou, O Lord, didst pour gall of sorrow and bitterness on all my guilty pleasures, so that by this means Thou mightest gain me over to seek after and taste those joys, those pleasures which are delightful, heavenly, and without remorse."

True happiness is not to be found in the forgetfulness of God. Whilst Augustine forsook his God he lost his liberty and became a slave to his unbridled passions. That brilliant vision of pleasure presented

to his disordered imagination plunged him into mists of doubt and dissipation; it led him into the mire of sensuality. He says, "I thought myself a freeman, unhappy wretch that I was, whilst I was forging my chains. By the use of my pretended liberty, I placed a weight of iron on my head that I could no longer shake off, and I was bound by the thick cords of my obdurate will."

"Behold," says Bossuet, "what a degrading servitude the great Augustine was subjected to whilst he enjoyed in the world the liberty of rebels."

In that deplorable state he often had recourse to prayer. He lifted up his heart, broken by dissipation, to heaven; his shackles were moved by the sorrow of his heart. He implores strength from on high to deliver him from the abject slavery to which his unruly passions have reduced him.

But he trembled for fear that he would be heard too soon. He cried out aloud to God, "O God, I beseech that Thou wilt grant me the grace of chastity and continence," but with the same breath he adds, in a low, smothered tone, "Not now; not yet awhile." Guilty and miserable, yet shrinking from being healed, the corruption under which he groaned became more and more unendurable.

Such was the sad state of Augustine at the age of sixteen. Three or four years of enervating vice had almost destroyed the work and moral influence of St. Monica, in the heart of the young Augustine. We are not astonished at it, when we consider that the causes were always at hand which led to the ravages of the soul. The religious indifference of a father who up to this time cared little about the innocence or morals of

his son, provided he excelled in his studies and became an eloquent and brilliant orator, Augustine's teachers caring only to cultivate the natural man, to fire his imagination with vain and heathenish conceptions; the reading of dangerous, immoral books, and the frequentation of still more dangerous plays, the culpable friendships of which he now began to feel the influence—along with the fact, mentioned not in blame, but in pity, of his mother being married to an infidel, and, therefore, subject to a tyrannical will which prevented her from conducting her son's education; and the absence of all religious succors at a time when most needed; for he had neither baptism, nor confirmation, nor confession, nor Holy Eucharist at this terrible period in which passion awakening in the soul of the young man, affords him the occasion of so grand a triumph, so perfect a victory, if he is able to conquer, but which drags him into such deep degradation if he yields to it. When we consider these causes, the futility of St. Monica's efforts is easily explained, although her labor had been so great. Her work, however, was not lost; let us be certain of it, for what God and a Christian mother together implant in a child does not so easily perish. Even if the wind of passion be powerful enough to dim for an instant the sacred flame of conscience, we may feel a moral certainty that it will not be able to extinguish it altogether.

During all this while, God watched over and guarded with heavenly protection both the mother and son; He consoled her broken heart for the affliction it suffered when she became cognizant of her son's moral condition. This consolation came to her in witnessing the first step of Patricius toward religion and the Church.

During the seventeen years that St. Monica had lived in the matrimonial state with her pagan husband she had suffered much and obtained much merit. During all this space of time she had never ceased for a moment to labor with infinite discretion for his conversion. It was by her admirable tact, Christian patience, and deep devotion that she gained him over to God. She said little; never argued nor preached to him, but prayed much; hence she conquered his violent, rebellious will.

She began to see some glimpses of hope that her pagan husband's heart and soul were touched by God's grace. Time, which is always on the side of those who know how to wait patiently, had come to her aid.

As he advanced in life, and as the furious passions grew more subject to reason, Patricius saw the madness and wickedness of venerating and adoring dumb idols, which were the works of the devil. His heart began to feel the sweet odor of Jesus Christ that issued from the heart of his holy spouse.

For a long while he resisted the calls and the whisperings of divine grace; and vowed within his heart that he would never yield to the influence of the Christian religion. He remained for a long while in a state of hesitancy; sometimes his conscience upbraided him for not acting according to its dictates. He would say, "Not yet awhile; time enough." These thoughts tormented his heart, struggling between virtue and vice. He was particularly anxious to conceal from his wife his doubts, his hesitancy, and almost despair. St. Monica divined the sad condition of his conscience, but said little and prayed much. At length, conquered by the truth, he declared to St. Monica that he had resolved to abjure paganism.

