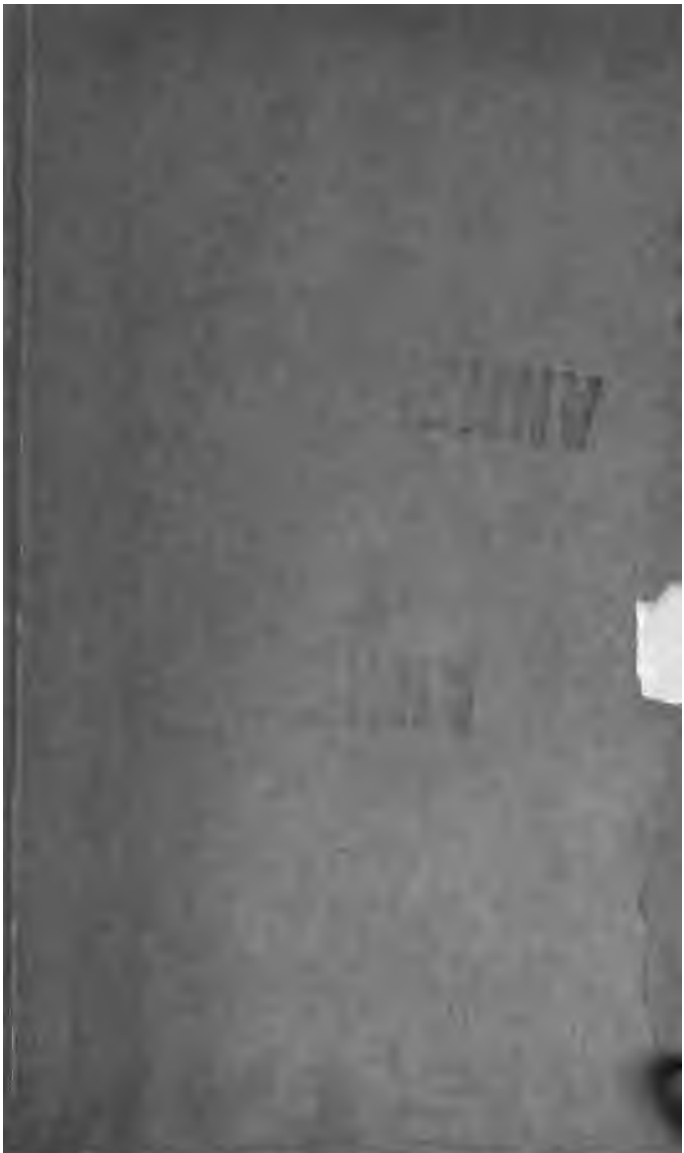

THE FRAUDS OF Romish MONKS AND PRIESTS,

SHEWING

The abominable Deceptions and Practices

OF THE

CHURCH OF ROME,

BY A FRENCHMAN,

Who was formerly a Monk, but afterwards became

A CONVERT

TO THE PROTESTANT RELIGION.

IN EIGHT LETTERS.

Second Edition.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Book, which I presume is quite out of print, was given me abroad; and as the matter it contains, though very curious, is, I have every reason to believe, absolutely fact, which I know by an experience of twenty-eight years. I thought it a pity it should be lost to posterity; I have therefore got it re-printed, and hope it will amuse, instruct, and inform many of its readers.

seeing that without it I was like one, who being fallen into a deep water, and finding no bottom to foot upon, is drowned and lost. You replied, that if I inclined to follow reason, you would soon furnish me with guides able to satisfy an honest mind; and that I needed only to cast my eye on so many learned men, both Monks and Priests, who are the light of the world, the main props and pillars of the Church, who by the integrity of their lives, and the purity of their doctrine, uphold the temple of God here upon earth; that it was morally impossible, that so many learned men should all of them be involved in error; and the agreeing consent of so many excellent spirits appeared to you a sufficiently firm foundation to establish and fix a reasonable mind. You proceeded to speak to me with earnestness, of the modesty that becomes those who have only a mean capacity; which, you know, I was so far from being offended at, that on the contrary, as being better than any one else acquainted with my own mediocrity, I thanked you for your advice; adding, that how useful otherwise it might be, yet ought it not to stop me in my search after truth. And forasmuch as some time after, partly out of devotion, and partly out of curiosity, I happened to undertake a voyage into *Italy*, and upon that occasion calling to mind how in my scruples about religion you referred me to your Priests and Monks, I made it my business, more than otherwise I would have done, to examine their life and conduct, to try whether I could find them a sufficient and rational foundation, as you pretend, to assure and confirm a person, who already begun to doubt of the truth of your principles. And it seems, indeed, that God took a particular care, to dispose all things towards my full, and satisfactory information herein, during the whole course of my travels.

At my setting forth from Paris, I associated myself with a *Benedictine Monk* of a reformed congre-

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gation, a man of sufficient learning, and whose wit and other good qualities, had so far recommended him to the religious of his Order, as to send him a second time in quality of their Procurator, and Solicitor-General to the Court of *Rome*. His person and port were very advantageous and he had a subtle wit, very proper to humour the Cardinals, and to insinuate himself with the Pope; and on this journey, we took our way through the country of *Brie*, and so through *Burgundy*; and upon the road we called at several Monastries of his Order, where we were received and treated very civilly; and where I had an opportunity of making some observations, which I thought not unworthy of your knowledge; and therefore have made them the subject of this LETTER; after which I intend with the first occasion, in case I find, Sir, that these prove welcome to you, to impart some other matters I have observed since my entering into *Italy*.

We arrived the thirteenth of *July*, at a little town on the confines of the country of *Auxerre*, called *Flavigny*. It is a place of little consideration at present, though very famous by reason of a pilgrimage which has been continued there a long time since, in honour of a certain Saintess called *Reine*, and very infamous for the contests and impostures which were in their vigour when we passed that way. The history, in short, is this: an holy woman, named *Reine*, suffered martyrdom about *Alise*, a little village a league distant from *Flavigny*; and the ground of that country generally abounding with mineral waters, some considerable time after the Monks of *Flavigny* made a search for the body of this Saint, and informed the people, that when she was beheaded, at the very place where her head lighted on the ground, a spring (known by experience to be much conducing to the healing of the sick) bubbled up at that very instant, for a perpetual miracle, in witness of God

approbation of the confession of faith made by hi handmaid. This error being afterwards carried o for many ages in the minds of the people, and be come the more incurable for its long standing, i happened some years since, that the fathers, *Cor deliers*, who are religious of the Order of S. *Francis* a sort of people subtle and very crafty, obtaine leave of the Bishop of the place, to build a littl Chapel about the said spring, whereof they tool possession to the great regret of the Monks of th Order of S. *Bennet*, who had been all along the an cient and peaceable possessors of all the relics o S. *Reine*; who soon found how dangerous it was to have such sly fellows for their neighbours; and the false step they had made, in neglecting to make themselves masters of a spring of water, so fruitful in blessing, and which was not above a league distant from their Monastery. Indeed, the *Cordeliers* knew much better how to improve this advantage, than the *Benedictines* had done; insomuch that the devotion very sensibly increased, in a short time, to the considerable profit of these good fellows, who not contenting themselves with being the masters of the miraculous spring, but resolving to draw to themselves the intire devotion of that pilgrimage, they pretended to have a considerable part of the body of that Saint; and accordingly they exposed to public view, as they pretended a whole arm of her; by which means, within less than a league's space, the monstrous sight was to be seen of a Saint with three arms, to the great astonishment and scandal of the people thereabout and of an infinite number of travellers and pilgrim who resort thither from all parts. Would to Go that this imposture, as well as many others, eve whit as strange, had the power to open the eyes *those poor* people, to discover once for all, h *these wretched* Monks do abuse them; how ea *hen would they* perceive, that not only the

they adore are very uncertain, as resting only on the faith of persons who indeed have none at all; but besides that, that spring never was miraculous, but only an excellent mineral water, as may be gathered from the nature of the soil, and by the consent of many famous Naturalists and Physicians, who have learnedly treated on this subject. I could, Sir, have heartily wished you present when the Father (Guardian of that Convent) who took the pains himself to shew us the fair buildings and gardens, which were the product of the monies brought in by that devotion, entered upon the discourse of his pretended Relic, which he had the impudence to shew us; for I assure myself, you would have soon recovered of the too favourable opinion you have conceived for this kind of men. He protested, not without an horrid blasphemy, that for his part, he did not more firmly believe the mystery of the Holy Trinity, than he was convinced of the truth of this Relic; notwithstanding that the Bishop of the place had absolutely forbid them to expose it any more to public view. It would be too ridiculous to give you a relation of the way and manner by which he assured us this arm had been found by them so far as to mingle with it the revelations of his brethren the *Cordeliers*, and the ministry of Angels, which is the ordinary way made use of by the Church of *Rome*, for introducing and authorizing their superstitious worship. The only reflection I desire you to make on this occasion, is, that certainly it is a pitiful and lamentable thing, to see that the *Roman Catholics*, who do not want men of wit and parts amongst them, are yet so obstinate, that they will not be disabused, notwithstanding they see every day many things sufficient to withdraw them from their error: so that we have reason to believe, that by a just Judgment of God, because they render to Saints and Saintesses a worship that is only due to God, they are suffered to give the same to those things

which they are well assured, do not deserve it. The most part of their divines maintain, that when a devotion is once set on foot, notwithstanding that the subject in which it terminates should be afterwards found to be false and superstitious and so unworthy of such worship; yet that in conscience the course of it ought not to be stopt: because (say they) the scandal which by this means must needs be occasioned, would be a much greater evil, than that which we design to take away; and because the simplicity of a deluded people, whose intention is always right and pure, is much more pleasing to God, than a too great cautiousness and fear of being deceived which might in the end engage them to call in question all manner of Relics and Miracles, which they look upon as a very great evil. But the naked truth is, this would give a great stroke towards the diminishing of their temporal profits, there being never a pilgrimage which does not afford them very considerable ones by the infinite number of prayers and masses, which are there procured, and all rated at a very high price.

I can give you on this subject a result of a conference at which I was present myself, some time ago, at *Blois* in *France* upon occasion of several Relics kept in the parish of S. *Victor*, two leagues distant from that city. These Relics were much out of order, in old wooden cases, all worm-eaten and rotten with age, which hindered them from being carried in procession, and exposed to public view. The concern therefore was to have them more modishly accommodated. To this end the Bishop of *Chartres* was petitioned to perform the translation, who presently sent his order to the Archdeacon of *Blois* for that purpose; who assembled several of the Clergy, to consult with the Curate and Priests of S. *Victor*, about the precautions to be observed in that translation. The resolution was, that to avoid the scandal that might happen, if nothing should chance to be found in the old cases, and

and to prevent the declining of the good opinion and devotion of the people, in case only some few bones should be found in them, the transportation of them into the new ones should not be done in public, but as private as possibly might be in the presence only of some prudent persons, who might be ready to remedy all sorts of accidents upon occasion: I was desired by some friends of the Archdeacon, to be present with them; and I can assure you Sir, that the resolution was taken, if it should chance that nothing were found in the case, to maintain peremptorily, *that the bodies of the Saints were there whole and entire.* And to allay somewhat the scruples that might start by occasion of this proceeding, a Canon of S. *Saviour's* Church of *Blois*, a man resolute and of a small conscience, maintained in the face of the assembly, that no difficulty ought to be made of asserting such a thing, though altogether false; that in a case where the interest of the Church was concerned, all manner of respects and sentiments whatsoever, were to be sacrificed and given up; that the mysteries of the catholics were not to be exposed to the raillery of the heretics (so they call the *Protestants*) who would not fail to mock at them as soon as they should understand, that nothing had been found in the cases of S. *Victor*, which for so long a time had been the object of the people's adoration; besides, that the devotion of Laicks, in assisting the Clergy, was so far cooled, that scarce any thing now was to be got from them, but by some pious fraud, or holy artifice. The Archdeacon heard all his discourse without contradicting him in the least; and the Curate of the parish, as being the person most concerned in the case, very officiously returned him his most hearty thanks. This done, they proceeded to the opening of the cases; and the truth is, bones either of Saints, or no Saints, were found in them. In the mean time, a Monk of the Abbo

of S. *Lomer* in *Blois* who was present, cried out at the very instant, that he smelt a very sweet odour which proceeded from them, wherewith he was so strongly seized that it was like to overcome him. A young religious (his companion) seconded him immediately, and some country people of the parish protested the very same thing. The Archdeacon, and the rest of the company freely declared, that they smelt nothing: yet forasmuch as it might be, that those persons having some more particular merit before God, he might think them worthy of receiving the like favours; it was ordered, that their attestation should be received, and set in the margin of the verbal process, which was then making of that translation, the original whereof was to be shut up with the Relics in the new cases. I had the curiosity some weeks after, in the time of vintage, to examine some of these persons about the odour they pretended to have smelt, of what kind it was; whereupon some of them said it was the scent of a rose, others of jessamine, and others of a violet: but finding that they faultered in their expressions, and smiled withal, I took occasion to press them more seriously, so that at the upshot they confessed, that the good opinion they had of the two Monks, which first started the matter, had drawn them in, and in a manner forced their imagination to make them believe that they smelt that, which they never had smelt indeed. This ingenious confession of theirs, made me to seek an opportunity to discourse these two *Monks:* I went to see the youngest of them, and after I had given him two or three visits of civility, to increase familiarity, I obtained leave of his Superior for him, to accompany me to a country-house, where after friendly entertainment given him, I put him upon the matter of the Relics of S. *Victor*. The young Monk overcome by my kindness, assured me he would open his heart to me as to his own brother; th

the truth was, he had not smelt any such miraculous odour, which he then attested; but that partly, that he might not contradict his companion, and partly by a sudden shame that surprized him, lest he should not seem to be as much graced with heavenly favours as his brother, had made him to depose against his conscience, for which afterwards he was somewhat troubled. But farther (said I) how can you be at peace, without unsaying again what you so openly averred and deposed, and this in honour to truth? *the Devil is the father of lies*, and you cannot pretend to the quality of a child of God without destroying the *work of the Devil*, whereof yourself have been the instrument: he answered, that he had consulted with his Superiors about the matter, and that the general rule they had given him, to pass over scruples of that nature was, to consider whether the thing undertaken or exerted into act, were opposite to the glory of God, or the good and advantage of his Order: that it was not against the glory of God, to advance the honour of one of his Saints; especially when some circumstances, that were both glorious and profitable to that Order, engaged in the doing of it; and that all the evil that could be supposed in the case came but to this, to say, that God had done what he might have done, and which he hath done on many other occasions, which at the highest could be no more than a small venial sin; as (they say) all lies are, that do not infringe justice; that is to say, that do nobody any harm. Having thus got this truth out of him; I had no more to do now, but to convince the old Monk, which it was not possible for me to do, for he continually persisted in asserting the truth of what he had deposed, aye and much more; for he added, that the odour had followed him every where, as long as the least dust of those sacred Relics was left upon his cloaths. In the *mean time this* did not hinder me from considering

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that all the credibility of this miracle was now reduced to the conscience of one single person; upon whom the affirmations of all the deponents rested, and that whenever these cases should chance again to be opened, in which the verbal process was shut up (as superstition is used to get strength by length of time) this miracle would come to be delivered with as much assurance, as a great many other most false and ridiculous ones are in the Church of *Rome*. I was the more willing, Sir, to represent this to your consideration, as being a thing which happened in your neighbourhood, and whereof you may fully inform yourself, whensoever you please; that so finding the faithfulness of my relation in this particular, you may be the more disposed to give credit to what I shall write to you concerning foreign countries. I return now to my voyage. From *Flavigny* we went to *Dijon* the metropolis of the dutchy of *Burgundy*, where I was eye-witness of a horrid cheat, practised by the men of the Church: I do not relate that passage to you so much for its own sake, but to the end you may make the reflection upon it, of great importance to our present subject. We took a walk to the Chapel, where he shewed us many Relics, that were indeed very ridiculous; and among the rest, that which they call the holy host of wafer, from whence they tell us, blood issued in great abundance, after that a Protestant had in several places stabbed it with a knife; that upon his so doing the wafer was changed into an infant, and from an infant to a wafer again, as it was before. Whereupon entering into discourse, we at last were insensibly led to this question, *how it came to pass, that at present there were not so many miracles to be seen, as in former times?* In answer to which, the Canon who shewed us the Relics, told us, that in the abbey of S. *Benignus*, in the same city there were *almost every day* miracles wrought at an altar of the

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blessed virgin, where still-born children were restored to life for some moments, till they could be made partakers of the sacrament of baptism; which was looked upon as a very great happiness for them, forasmuch as according to the opinion of the church of *Rome*, infants dying in that manner, cannot be saved by the faith of their parents, but go down to a dark place they call *Limbus*, which is made express for them, and where they are to continue for ever, without suffering the punishment of sense, because they have never sinned by the inducement of the senses; but where notwithstanding they must undergo *Pœnam Damni*, or the punishment of loss, which consists in the privation of the beatific vision, that being a punishment due to original sin. We cannot imagine, that any fathers or mothers should be so pitiless and unnatural, as rather to desire to spare their money, then to rescue their children from so deplorable a condition, by having prayers and masses said for them at the said altar: so that this was the trade driven by the religious of that abbey. We went therefore about 10 o'clock in the morning to that Church, where we saw the miraculous image of the virgin, commonly called the *Little*, our lady of S. *Benignus*, and two still-born children who had already lain two days being black and livid, and very noisome. The parents who were of the best families of *Dijon* had (during these two days) procured above 200 masses to be said in that Church, at a crown a-piece, in order to obtain from God, by intercession of the said image, and by the prayers of the religious of that abbey, so much life for these poor infants as might be sufficient for them only to receive the sacrament of baptism. The Monks would very gladly have deferred their resurrection for a day longer; but the bodies were already so far corrupted, that it was almost impossible to abide in the Church, by reason of the grievveness of the stench that came from them:

that as it happened we came in the very nick time, to see the performance of it. Towards noo which was the time of the last mass, a young Fri who served at the altar, going to carry the ma book to that side where the gospel is read, hit with his arm, either wittingly or by chance, tl table of the altar, upon which the still-born infan were laid, which made them move. The Priest wl was saying mass, and who probably was acquainte with the hour and moment of this interlude, imm diately breaking off his sacred mystery (as the p pists please to express it) pronounced with a lou voice the sacramental words over the infant *Baptizo, &c.* casting in the mean time on their b dies the water, wherewith he had washed his hand At the same a great noise was raised in the Churc the people crying out, *a miracle, a miracle!* M eyes could not deceive in a case I had so plainl discerned, and I could with all my heart have ur dertaken to undeceive the people: but that I kne how dangerous it is, to oppose the blind rabbl kept and entertained in error by Priests and Monk who knowing no other God, but their own interes would soon have stirred them, under the pretenc of *heresy* or *incredulity*, to have torn me to piece However, I could not refrain from hinting a wor of it in particular to some persons, who were pre sent at that action, and who owned they had ob served the same thing. *Burgundy* was always country fruitful in superstition, and we may see th signs of it every where; and consequently als there be very few countries where the Priests an Monks thrive better, or more abound in riches.

beg of you now, Sir, only to make this observatior *that the fathers of the abbey, are the reforme religious of the Order of S.* Bennet, *and conse almost* [illegible] *the greatest veneration* for, as *well upon* [illegible] *ment of their learning, as duty*; both which,

you have told me, *render them equally recommendable. If then*, say I, *these men, who are so holy and so virtuous in your opinion, are so able and cunning to deceive, and such profligate lovers of outward gain; what may we not expect from so many non-reformed religious, who live so licentiously and loosly to the very eye, as to make open profession of trepanning laymen by a thousand kind of artifices, to have wherewith to maintain their flagitious and scandalous debaucheries?*

We staid some days at *Dijon;* where I was eye-witness to an abundance of ridiculous devotions, that are in vogue there, and which would be too tedious to relate to you; as that of our Lady of *l'Estan*, that of S. *Bernard*, and of the image of the virgin kept at *Talent*, and pretended to have been painted by S. *Luke*, and to be very miraculous. But forasmuch as the devotion paid to these sorts of images, is used to increase or decrease, according as the Priests or Monks do more or less dexterously manage them; this last mentioned has suffered very much, being well nigh fallen into contempt, insomuch as the Curate of that parish, despairs almost of ever bringing it into request again. To bring this about, he told us, he knew but one way, which was to publish a miracle which lately happened about that image, which was a more remarkable one than all the cures it daily performed. The case is this, said he, having perceived about ten years ago, that the devotion to the image daily decreased; I began to enquire into the cause of it, and finding the picture to be in a very rueful condition, by reason of the moistness of the place, which had well nigh rotted the cloth, and the rats also having made bold with some part of it, and extremely disfigured the face especially; I conceived that this might be the reason of the abatement of the people's devotion. Wherefore to remedy this, I made the old cloth to be pasted upon a new one, and sent for one of the be

best painters of *Dijon* to draw over the defective places of it, which was accordingly done with a great deal of care and exactness; and on a first Sunday of the month, the image thus drawn over and embellished, was set up in its former place with a great deal of solemnity, and a great concourse of people. Since which time, proceeded he, I have been continually troubled with the gout; and moreover, the blessed virgin, to shew herself displeased, that any painter should be so bold as to put his hand to a piece of work which her servant S. *Luke* had left to posterity, in order to the restoring of it to its first lustre; she has some days since made the colours that had been superadded to it, to scale away and fall down, and thereby reduced the image to the pitiful estate it was in before; which however she is much more pleased with, than to see her portraiture profaned with strange colours. He added, that he had already caused the relation of the miracle to be printed, and that he did intend to send copies of it to all neighbouring, yea, even into foreign countries; and that he looked upon this as a probable way, to recall the devotion of people to his Church. I had occasion, Sir, to remind myself of this passage, during my *Italian* voyage; for being at *Bononia*, they shewed me an excellent piece of caratche in *Fresce*, upon the walls of the cloister of the abbey of S. *Michael* in *Bosco*; which being extremely injured by all-devouring time, had moved the compassion of *Guido Rhin*, another famous *Italian* painter, who so dexterously mended the defects thereof, as in a manner to restore it to its former beauty; but yet we find that the new paint, laid upon the first colours, falls down in scales, and that without a miracle too; there being nothing more natural and obvious, than *that new colours*, cannot so well incorporate with *old paint*, as fresh colours do with one another. *But notwithstanding* the obviousness hereof, when

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superstition has once gained the ascendant of a man's spirit, she doth so strangely prepossess the same, that there is nothing so common and ordinary, but appears to them miraculous. I have seen several other images of the blessed virgin in *Italy*, which they say, were all painted by the same St. *Luke*, and are consequently reputed miraculous, particularly that of St. *Mary* the greater in *Rome;* but in truth, they are so very different from one another, that it is impossible they should have been painted by the same hand, or that all of them should be the pictures of the blessed virgin, the lineaments, figure and proportions of the face and body, vastly varying from one another. I shall give you a more particular account of them, in my observations of *Italy*. For the present, because we have not yet quitted *Dijon*, I will only relate to you what I was eye-witness of myself, in the same abbey of St. *Benignus*, belonging to the reformed *Benedictine* Monks, where is kept the miraculous image of the blessed virgin, that brings still-born children to life again, as we have already mentioned. I went to visit one of my brothers, who is a religious of that abbey; and as I was walking with him in the garden after dinner, another religious came running towards us in great haste, and told my brother in his ear, that he should immediately repair to the church, to see something worth his curiosity: and forasmuch as I was then in my brother's company, and well enough known to the fathers, I followed them to the church. The business was this, the Prior, accompanied with seven or eight of his Monks, was about to uncover an old crucifix, which was kept in a very fair Chapel, which thence was called *the Chapel of the miraculous crucifix*, and had for forty years been covered with a veil of black velvet. The story tells us, that a religious of that abbey, saying his *prayer* one evening before that crucifix, *the image of Jesus* Christ, which was fastened to

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spake to him, and said, *my dear brother, cover me, that I may no more see the iniquities of my people, and let no man from henceforward be so bold to uncover me, to behold my face.* This Monk presently performed the charge laid upon him, by advising his Abbot and brethren thereof, who were not wanting immediately to carry the news throughout the whole city, which occasioned that great devotion which continues still to this day. There is a vast concourse of people to this crucifix, especially on *Fridays*, but more particularly on *Good Friday*, when the whole city goes in procession to the image to worship it, and pay to it the same honour as they would do to Jesus Christ himself. Now the Prior of this monastery, who was an old stander, and well versed in monastic intrigues, was resolved, cost what it would, to satisfy his curiosity about it; as he also did; and in this resolution he was fain to put his hand to the work himself, some of his monks having absolutely refused to do it, expressing themselves extremely affrighted at his undertaking, saying, that should they offer to touch it, they could expect no less than to be consumed with fire from heaven. But the Prior, not concerned at their apprehensions, with a wonderful courage uncovers the mysterious and dreadful machine. I could not but laugh to myself, to see the posture of the Monks that were present: some of them betook themselves to their heels, declaring they would not by their presence make themselves partakers of so horrid an attempt and sacrilege; others shut their eyes, that they might not be dazzled and struck blind with the majesty of the crucifix, *ne opprimerentur à gloria, Scrutatores Majestatis;* and others prostrated themselves with their faces on the ground, that they might be seen by their divine master, as they said themselves, in that most profound act of adoration and self-abasement. There were scarce any that kept standing, besides my brother and I: we were

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very near to the Prior of the monastery, who was very busy with uncovering the crucifix, and who beginning himself to be frighted, or at least pretending to be so, began to repeat the 51*st Psalm*, *Miserere me, Deus.* But, as it happened, neither the one nor the other had any cause to fear: for when the velvet covering was taken off, they found nothing but a linen bag, with some bits of rotten wood in it, which were the remains of that dreaded and adored crucifix. Among these mouldered fragments, we had much ado to distinguish the head, where was the miraculous mouth that had spoke to the Monk. In a word, it was in a pitiful state, being all rotten and worm-eaten, without either form or figure, full of dead flies and spiders: insomuch that the good Monks that were present, being somewhat recovered from their fright, and perceiving no such glory as they had prefigured to themselves, begun to discourse among themselves, how to reconcile their story with the present discovery; that is, the condition wherein they found the crucifix, with their tradition concerning the revelation and discourse of the crucifix, with the religious: for if it were true, that it had never been uncovered, since the time of its speaking, when it was fixed to the cross, how could it be, that at present they found it in a thousand pieces, and in a bag? The Superior concluded very wisely, that it was probable, that this crucifix had of old been had in great veneration, and thereby been of great advantage to the monastery; and that this Monk, by inadvertancy or otherwise, had let it fall, and broke it to pieces; and fearing to be severely punished by his Abbot, therefore had gathered up the pieces into a bag, and having fastened them again to the cross, and covered them with that piece of black velvet, had afterwards forged and published *that his* pretended revelation. However, *forasmuch as he* knew nothing of certainty

concerning the matter, he chose rather to suspend his judgment, than to pass a rash one concerning it: and besides that, according to their general principles, the devotion being already fixed, he would by no means be a hindrance to so many good works as were performed on that occasion; nor put a stop to the course of so many masses and prayers as were daily procured to be said in the Chapel of the miraculous crucifix. So he packed up all again, and put in the same order as he found it; which may still be seen, in case they will permit the viewing of it, in the said Chapel, where the devotion continues as great as ever. If the Roman Catholic Bishops where a little better stocked, with true zeal for the glory of God, or at least for the honour of their own party, they would without doubt most seriously apply themselves to the examining of the different devotions that are in vogue in their diocese. I am well assured, they would find a great deal of downright impiety, covered under the mask of devotion. But so far are they from this, that they are the first to authorize and encourage them, by the indulgences they give from time to time, to the Churches and Chapels where these devotions are entertained: and accordingly we find, that great abundance of them have been granted by the Bishops of *Langres*, to those who shall shall say five *Pater Nosters*, and as many *Ave Maries*, in this Chapel of the miraculous crucifix in the abbey of S. *Benignus* of *Dijon*. Before I have done with this city, Sir, I must not forget to entertain you a while with a famous nest of Monks four leagues distant from it; I mean, the great and famous abbey of *Citeaux;* the Abbot of which, as you know, is the chief and general of the whole Order, which is without doubt, one of *the vastest* bodies of religious, the Church of *Rome can boast of: France, Italy*, Spain, Poland -- *Portugal*, being thronged with the monasteries

that Order; who all of them own this abbey, the *Citeaux*, for their mother. I had very particular acquaintance with the Prior of the monastery, who was a young man of the city of *Orleans*, who invited me to come and see him, The Abbot sent two of his coaches with six horses, to fetch some of his relations, whom he invited to dine with him, and with whom I had the honour to join myself. All the discourse we had on the way from *Dijon* thither, was about the tragical end of Monsieur *Bourre*, a gentleman born of one of the most noble families of *Dijon*, and a religious of that order, who a little before had been publicly executed at *Dijon*, for poisoning his Abbot, because he went about to make an enquiry into his crimes; the fact being evident, that he had debauched some of the Nuns of a Monastry, whither the Abbot had sent him, in quality of their Director, or Confessor. As soon as we were come near to the *Citeaux*, I could not but admire the stately avenues of that magnificient Abbey. This place, which formerly was nothing but a horrid wilderness, when S. *Robert*, the first Abbot of that Order did institute it; is now, at present, by the voluptuousness and luxury of the Monks, become an earthly paradise, abounding with all manner of delights. The history tells us, that, that Abbot being a lover of silence and solitude, retired himself, with some of his disciples into these parts; which at that time was nothing else, and lying out of the way of almost all human converse. Here it was they began to build themselves cells, with the branches of trees, and some among them digged themselves caves under-ground, without either art or form, like to the dens of ravenous beasts. The herbs and roots that grew in the wood served them indifferently, without distinguishing the good from the bad, for nourishment; And all the precaution they used was this; that after they had boiled them, they first gave some to a dog,

other domestic animal; which, if it did not immediately die, or appeared distempered, they took it for granted, that there were no poisonous herbs in there cookery, whose dangerous effects they had reason to apprehend. But how prodigious a change appeared in that place not long after! the people round about, being informed of the astonished severities, and strange way of living of these *Anchorites*, came flocking from all parts to admire them; and returning to their homes, published every where, that in the wood *de Citeaux*, they had in their days seen somewhat more and greater than either *Elias*, or S. *John the Baptist*.

And as in the age of the world people were much more compassionate and tender than they are at present towards persons who for the love of God, as they express it, had left all, they made it their business from all parts, to carry them not only food, but other conveniences of life. These good Hermits contented themselves for some time, to accept of some of the coursest and meanest of their supplies; and afterwards, by little and little, the most exquisite and delicate, receiving them as by an express order from God, by attributing to themselves the promise of Jesus Christ made to his Apostles, that having forsaken all for his sake, they should receive in this world an hundred fold, and in the world to come eternal life. Thus within a short time from a life of extraordinary rigour and abstinence, and most signal and remarkable piety, they chopt about, to a life as scandalous and dissolute; and whereof S. *Bernard* in his time began already highly to complain, but at present is advanced to a far more transcendent degree of excess. Instead of a desert and solitude, as it was before in the highest degree, they have now made it a kind of a city; which within its compass entertains all manner of handicrafts-men, who live there with their wives and all their families: instead of that mean and spare diet, to which they were

were obliged by a solemn vow, made at the foot of their altars, and in particular of abstaining from flesh all the days of their life, they have at present, directly contrary to their vows, introduced the use of it to the highest degree of delicacy, as being always accompanied with the agreeable variety of *herbs* and *fish*. And, for my part, I can truly aver, that for the two days that I staid there, their table (besides their common viands) were covered with several dishes of venison, followed by a service of fish, the sides of the dishes being garnished with the tongues and roes of *carps*, and the tails of *crabs*. Yea, the Abbot had sent to *Diep*, which is above a hundred and twenty leagues distant, at an excessive charge, and by a post sent express, who ran day and night for *soles*, which were fresh enough, and so costly a rarity, that the intendants and presidents of the parliament of *Dijon*, durst not venture upon them in their most sumptuous entertainments. The monks of this abbey, in the mean time glorying in this excess, which ought rather to have confounded them, vaunted with an unparalleled impudence, that in all that province there was not a man besides the Abbot of *Citeaux*, who could bear such an expence, and continue it every day. After dinner, the Abbot (followed by many of his officers, and a great number of Lacqueys in livery) went himself to shew us the new building he was then making in his abbey, and which consisted in four great piles of building, of a magnificient structure, all of hewn stone of a diamond cut, designed for the seperate lodging of the four principal Abbots of the Order, with all their train, at the time of their general chapters. A fifth building, which he intended for his own person, was a lofty palace, lifting up its proud head above the other four buildings, as it were to overlook and command them, to represent the authority he had over the other Abbots, in quality of their general. After we had take

a view of these magnificent structures, we were led into the old buildings. Here it was that a fair opportunity was given me, to take notice of the subtilty and artifices of the Monks, still to continue Laieks, if possible, in the high esteem of their monastery and persons. In order whereunto they shew to those who visit them, a great quantity of Relicks and places of Devotion, as they call them; upon their entering into which, they used frequent bowings of their bodies, and kneelings, repeating some prayers, besides some gests and cutting of faces, wherein they oblige the company to imitate them. This done, they fill your ears with the recital of old stories and miracles of the days of Yore, wrought in favour of their Order. Amongst which, they never forgot to inculcate the tragedy of some usurper of the revenues of their monastery, or of some other that spoke ill of the same, who at the upshot of the story doth never fail of being struck from God with sudden death by a thunderbolt, or of having his neck broke by some Devil or other. I have since observed the same inveighing tricks in almost all the monasteries and convents of *Italy*, and in all other places frequented upon the score of devotion. They shewed us a large refectory of the first religious of their Order, which is a vaulted room, and very long, more resembling a hideous cave, than a place to eat in. And yet, (said one of the religious) this is that holy *grotto* where our ancient fathers, the blessed founders of our Order, met together every day after sun-set, wearied with their handy-labour, after having sung the praises of God, to partake together of a piece of black course bread, with some boiled pulse or roots, without either salt or butter, or any other sauce or dressings, and in so small a quantity, as designing rather to keep themselves from starving, than to *make them strong* and lively; and continually *practising* those severe mortifications, which we

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can sooner admire than imitate. These great and heroic saints are now in heaven, and have changed their astonishing severities with the eternal delight of the wedding-supper of the Lamb; and it is from that high station, they with a favourable eye, look down upon those who live, or have lived for some time in this monastery, as likewise upon those who are or have been benefactors to it; and we are assured by Revelation, that none of them, nay though they may have lived a most abominable life, shall ever die in mortal sin. A councellor of *Dijon*, who was there present with us, said smiling, "that he wanted but very little of being persuaded to leave all he had to the monastery," and gently pushing my arm, asked me, whether I was not well pleased to hear a fat and burly Monk, after having so well dined, discoursing of the abstinence and penance of those ancient fathers, and of the blessings God hath in store for his Abbey too upon their account, with so much energy? But after all, the plain truth is, that it is nothing but an artifice they make use of, to strike the spirits of men with some kind of veneration for their orders and persons. From this place they led us to another, which they call the *Old Chapter House*, which is a building they be- *Gothic* way, with many rows of pillars like they church, yet stately enough. The stones of the pavement are cut into letters, which make up all the *Psalms* of *David;* and near the midst of this place they shewed us a large stone, on which of old they were used to lay the religious of the monastery some hours before their departure, where they were exposed all naked upon ashes and an hair-cloth, until they breathed their last. But this custom (said the father) has since been abolished, because it was found by experience, that some of those who were so exposed, having more strength left than *was imagined*, continued sometimes in that condi- *tion, exposed* to the violence of cold for twen-

four hours, or more, before they died; so as those who thus exposed them, questioned whether in so doing they had not been their murderers. At the present (said he smiling) the case is altered, and we die softly on the feathers, after having essayed whatsoever the art medicine can afford for our recovery, and which is every whit as meritorious to us, as that pitiless rigour our predecessors were obliged to, forasmuch as herein we submit our wills to those who command us, and whom we are obliged to obey; obedience even in pleasing and agreeable things, being more acceptable to God than all sacrifices. Thus gallantly the father excused the decay of their observance, endeavouring to make that seem a virtue, which indeed is nothing else but an effect of their softness and effeminacy. Or rather, we may say, that by a just judgment of God, these kind of men having rashly vowed, what was not in their power to perform, are fallen by so much lower, by how much they aspired to fly higher. It is upon this account that we see so many reformations of these religious orders, and soon after other reformations of them again, who in a short time will stand in need still of another first reformation. But that which is the strangest of all is, that they fall into prodigious corruptions, and into those habits of sinning, which strike the most worldly men that are, with horror, as may be seen from the hint I give of Monsieur *Bourre*, Monk of that Order, and many other examples, that fill the world with their report.

There is but one only religious order in the church of *Rome*, that can boast of its antiquity, and of having never been reformed, which is that of the *Chartreux*. Having stayed two days at *Citeaux*, we took our way through *Lionnois*, and *Dauphiné*, and finding ourselves not far from the monastery called the *Great Chartreux*, our curiosity invited us to take a view of it. This monastery is the chief head

of all those of the Order of *Chartreux*, and in r general chapters are held. *S. Bruno*, who ie founder of this Order, retired hither with npanions in the year of our Lord, 1080. What monly related as the reason of his retirement, er a fable than a history; which notwithstand- maintained by a great deal of heat, as a great by the fathers of this Order, who have caus- story to be painted at large, and hung up in cloisters; but on the other hand it is denied doctors of the famous university of *Prais*. able tells us, that *Bruno* who had a long time nted that university, being present at the in- nt of a doctor, who had been a member of me, a person of an irreproachable life, to out- view, and who died with the odour of sanc- when the office of the dead was reciting in urch for him, and that they were come to those of the lessons, *Responde mihi, quantas ha- iquitates, answer me how many sins I have;* ead body raised himself on the bier, and sit- pright, with a terrible voice pronounced these , *accusatus sum;* I *am accused:* at which as- ing accident, when all that were present were nely amazed, it was thought fit to put off the nies till the next day; at which time they be- gain the office for the dead, and when they come to the same words, *responde mihi, &c.* ead answered with a tone much more terrible t first, these two words more, *judicatus sum: judged;* which increasing the horror and ment of all those that were present, made resolve to delay the burial one day longer; at time a vast croud of people being assembled fice was begun again, and at the same words, g himself the third and last time, said with a and mournful accent, *condemnatus sum;* e was *condemned* to hell without recovery. o *strange* and terrible a spectacle saith the fabl

fable) had that effect on the spirit of *Bruno*, that from that instant he resolved to quit the world, and to retire into some solitary place for to live there wholly to God, solitary and separate from the view of the world; and by his persuasion engaged seven students of the university of *Paris*, his companions, with him in the same resolution, who being all of one mind, went and cast themselves at the feet of the Bishop of *Grenoble*, to beg of him the desert called *Chartreuse;* which belonged to him; and having obtained their request, they retired there, and built themselves cells. The truth of the matter is, that this saint did indeed retire with his companions into this place; but all the story of the doctor is evidently false, as has been incontestably proved by the doctors of the university of *Paris;* there being none of the contemporary writers, or any that were two hundred years after, that make the least mention of it: and is indeed nothing else but an invention of the papists, very fit to be joined with the rest of their stories, concerning the apparitions of souls in purgatory. Probably, Sir, your curiosity will incline you to desire I should give you a description of this place, and its situation, which without doubt is the most desert place nature could form; and yet notwithstanding is at this day become a very pleasant seat, by means of the immense expences which these fathers, who are extremely rich, have been at, to make it more pleasing to sense. Wherefore, Sir, I shall endeavour, in order to your satisfaction, to set down what comes to my mind concerning it. This desert, called *Chartreuse*, which has given the name to the order that is thence denominated, is a place situate in the bosom of an exceeding high mountain, the top of which parts itself into four others, leaving in the midst of them a place of a mile in length, and above a quarter of a mile in breadth, in which space the cells of these father

are built. The waters gushing forth from these mountains, made a most impetuous torrent, which bears the name of *S. Laurence*. This was a place altogether unfrequented, and almost inaccessible, when *S. Bruno* first retired thither, though at present, by a vast profusion of money, the religious of the place have made the access to it not only easy, but pleasant, having cut out large steps in the rock, and by that means made, (as it were) many stairs to get up to it. However, such is the situation of the place, that neither coaches nor carts, no, nor horses neither, can come up to it; but they make use of mules, accustomed from their youth to go up and down those steps, to convey their provisions to them. We got up to the place by means of the same conveniences, and found the snow in several places lying still on the eminences of the rocks, notwithstanding that it was in the midst of *August*; and that at the foot of the mountain, the heat was almost insupportable. The building of the monastery was not yet quite finished when we arrived there, having been reduced to ashes some short time before. There was a suspicion, that the religious themselves had been the incendiaries, because their cells displeased them, as being too mean and old-fashioned; and besides, too much pinched of room, so that they could not enjoy themselves in them with that ease and convenience they desired. It happened at a time when the wind extremely favoured their design, and the fire began in a quarter where so much combustible matter was lodged, and so far from the places where any fires were made, that it was easy to judge, that it was not a thing happened by accident, but contrived on purpose. Besides, the delays and indifferency shewed in quenching of it, gave a sufficient testimony, that the friers desired nothing more than to see it (with all expedition) burnt down to the ground. Yea, *some have averred it for* a certain truth, that the

news of it was known many days before in foreign countries, which was related to us by one of the fathers of that society for a miracle; saying, that without doubt the tutelary angel of the place, foreseeing what was to happen to it, had communicated the knowledge of it to so far distant countries. But not to insist on this any longer, certain it is, that the whole building was reduced to ashes, and in less than six months, in a manner quite rebuilt again; a good part of the materials having been prepared beforehand, and as it were by a divine Providence, as the said father exprest himself, in places adjacent to the mountain. It is to be noted, that their general chapter having some veneration for those ancient buildings of the first fathers, and to prevent lay-men from taxing them with niceness and luxury, had refused them their permission to build. But what is capable to restrain the longing of Monks, when as by direct or indirect means, by hook or by crook, they are in a condition to effectuate it? In a word, these new buildings were brought to perfection with a magnificence very unbeseeming the modesty of hermits, and more becoming the palace of a king, than the cells of such who pretend to have forsaken the world. There remained only one building at the foot of the mountain yet unfinished, being designed for the officers of the *Chartreuse*, and which was already far advanced. As for their manner of living, I must acknowledge they still retain something of their first institution, as in particular their abstinence from flesh; but the diversity and abundance of *fish*, *herbs*, *eggs*, and other such like things wherewith they are served, is far more pleasing and agreeable to sense, than any sort of flesh-meat, and much more costly. The father-purveyor of the house assured us, that the expence of every religious amounted at least to five hundred crowns a year. They have a way of extracting the substance, and as it were the

the quintessence, from several great fishes, whereof they make jelly-broths, that are extremely nourishing. Their bread is of an extraordinary whiteness, and the best wine that can be got for love or money, is afforded them without measure. Besides this, every religious has in his own apartment a reservatory, stored with fruit and other necessaries, so that they may eat and drink whenever they please, and entertain their friends that come to visit them, to charm the irksomeness of their solitude. Some amongst them, who are of a melancholy temperament, are so immersed in their solitude, that they abhor all manner of conversation, and will not so much as speak to their superiors: this is no virtue, but rather a savage-humour, that has got the ascendant over them, and makes them almost insupportable to themselves, and like *Timon* the *Athenian*, they conceive an hatred against all mankind. The greatest part of these, in process of time, become distracted, losing the use of their understanding and reason; and accordingly they have built for these a very fair apartment. Every *Chartreux* has his separate apartment, which consists of five or six fair rooms, very neatly furnished and adorned, with a neat garden, which separates one apartment from another; all which gardens have a door that opens into the cloister, which is of a prodigious length, and of a most sumptuous and magnificent structure, insomuch as it doth not seem so much contrived for the convenience of the several cells, as for the embellishment and ornament of the place. The great company of strangers, who come thither from all parts, either out of curiosity or devotion, some about business, others to visit some of their friends or kindred, has changed this solitude into a place of great concourse, and consequently made it appear less hideous to nature; and *particularly in* summer-time many persons of

quality retire thither, there to enjoy the deliciousness of the place, and the cool air of the mountain. These fathers, to engage the frequent visits of others, and to draw thither their kindred and friends, have established hospitality in this their monastery, and entertain every one that comes, according to his quality, both person and attendants, without costing them a farthing; and a man may stay there many days, according as they find his company either pleasing or profitable. At the first they had also some respect for the poor; but at present, if those who come there be not men of fashion, and in good order, they are neglected and contemned. That part where they entertain strangers, is a most stately and sumptuous building, containing apartments for persons of quality of all ranks and degrees. The chief officer of the kitchen knows what kind of entertainment is suitable to each chamber, which is very exactly observed. By this we may guess at the immense riches of these Fathers. You would be astonished, Sir, to see these *Anchorets*, whose first instituter, S. *Bruno*, shewed himself to be so great a lover of *poverty*, *retirement*, and *silence*, are now by succession of times, mounted to so high a degree of riches and grandeur, and so ardently desirous to change their desert, of itself so solitary and inaccessible, into a well-inhabited country, and more frequented, than the great roads that lead to great and capital cities. They boast, that they have never been reformed since their first institution; but in good earnest, Sir, think you not after all this, that they stand in need of a sound reformation? We may conclude from hence, that all those great efforts which are made to surmount nature, which cannot subsist without a *most* particular grace and assistance from God, *which he vouchsafes* to whom it pleaseth him, *when we will* unadvisedly appropriate the same,

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and rashly make profession of them, and tye ourselves up to them by vows, do commonly end in shameful weaknesses; which discovers, that they were rather artifices of the devil, to lift up the heart of man, in order to his greater fall, than the motions of grace, which are wont to humble and abase the soul, in order to give the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. After this, as it were to cast dust in our eyes, and to divert us from making any reflection upon such extravagant disorders, they led us to the chapel of S. *Bruno*, which is not above a quarter of a mile distant from the monastery, upon the top of a rock, surrounded with many fir-trees. They told us, that this formerly had been his cell, and that a spring of most clear water we saw there, had been miraculously obtained by his prayers, which restored many sick persons to their health, and though drank to excess, was never known to hurt any. The *Benedictine* frier, who was my companion in the voyage, drank a great quantity of it by way of devotion, but was much incommoded thereby in coming down from the mountain; which that he might derogate nothing from the miracle, he attributed to the cold and pent-in air of the rocks. This Father assured me, often whilst we were there, that he felt his soul pierced with an extraordinary devotion, and a great sense of the presence of God; and demanded of me, whether I was not sensible of the same thing? I answered, that I was; but withal, that in all this I did not believe any thing to be more than what was very common; it being very natural for *grottos*, dark places, close and shady forests, vast caverns, and the sources of fountains and rivers, to produce the same effect in us; and not only so, but that we often experience, when we are alone by night in great buildings, chapels or churches, that our souls are moved with a kind of horror, which cal

God to our remembrance, as I have often found by experience in my travels. And some few days after, as I passed the *Alps*, which are very high mountains, in company of this *Benedictine*, when we were come to a place which was very solitary, I obliged him to take notice, whether it were not indeed so as I had said? whereupon he ingenuously acknowledged, that he found himself no less moved, than he had been at the great *Chartreuse*. Nevertheless, these Fathers make all strangers, that frequent this place to take notice of it as a special blessing of God, vouchsafed to this place by the intercession and merits of S. *Bruno*. It is an astonishing thing to see, that those effects which God, as the author of nature, works in us, are for the most part by those of the communion of *Rome* ascribed to God, as the author of grace and worker of miracles in their behalf. So true it is, that it is a very pleasing thing, and extremely flattering the pride of man, to believe, that God thinks us worthy to be exempted from the common-way, that he may favour us in a more peculiar manner, not sticking every moment (for our sakes) to countermand the natural course of things here below, by prodigious and miraculous operations. We came down from this monastery, by a very narrow-way between rocks, for the space of near two leagues, having on our left hand the torrent of S. *Laurence*, which precipitates itself with a horrid noise from the top of the mountain to the bottom of it, where is situate the town of S. *Laurence*, from whence it borrows its name. All the neighbouring country many leagues about, belongs to the religious of this monastery, and every where are seen stately piles of building, and houses of pleasure, which they have caused to be built, with pools and ponds full of all sorts of rare fish, to please their palates. We afterwards continued our way towards Savoy, and passed the

Alps.

Alps by the way of *Montsenis;* whence we came down into *Piedmont*, to a little town called *Susa*. Here, Sir, I intend to stop, and shall conclude this letter with this last reflection, which I would desire you to make; which is, that the church of *Rome* is so far from having any cause, to pride herself in her religious orders, and of which she boasts so much, as far excelling the *Protestant Church*, which has wholly excluded them, ought rather upon that account to be humbled; yea, to blush for shame; seeing it is evident, that this sort of men, under the specious pretexts of devotion, silence, and retirement, endeavour nothing else, but to acquire themselves a great esteem in the minds of people, that by this means, they may turn them which way they please; and experience makes it appear, that all this is done for their temporal advantage. They begin with the spirit in appearance, but always palpably end in the flesh. I have made some other more curious discoveries during my voyage in *Italy*, which I shall be very willing to communicate to you, in case I find you are not offended with this my first LETTER; but that you have received it with the same spirit of charity and zeal, which I shall always preserve for the spiritual good of so dear a person; as being, Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTE

LETTER II.

OF THE SPIRIT OF REVENGE IN THE ROMISH CLERGY, &c.

SIR,

FORASMUCH as there is nothing, the Church of *Rome* more strictly forbids her children, next to the reading of the Scriptures, than the perusing of those writings, which discover the lives and doctrine of her pastors, whom it is her will they should follow blind-fold, without examining either what they say or do; I had some fear for my first Letter, lest it might have given offence, because it made some discoveries to you of their conduct. But seeing the kind welcome you afforded it, I hope that the reflection you have made upon it, and the good inclination you express, in declaring your willingness to be further informed by me on this subject, may at length conduce to the opening of your eyes, to see the dangerous condition you are in. And seeing I desire nothing more, than to serve as an instrument to produce so good an effect: I shall gladly continue, Sir, to communicate the observations I have made, during my travels, about matters of religion.

Being arrived at *Susa*, a small town of *Piedmont* in *Italy*, and subject to the Duke of *Savoy*, we were told that the body of S. *Maurus*, abbot and first disciple of S. *Bennet*, reposed in one of the churches of this place. And forasmuch as the Father that was my companion in my travels, was a reformed benedictine, of the congregation of S. *Maurus in France;* I asked him whether he *would not go to* pay his duty to that relic of his *blessed founder?* but he very freely told me, that he

he would take heed of doing so; adding, that the *Italians* were great cheats, who pretended to have all the saints of Paradise in their country, whereas indeed there is nothing more false; for as much as the body of S. *Maurus* was preserved whole and entire, in one of their abbies in *France*. And moreover assured me, that the bodies of S. *Bennet*, and S. *Scholastica* were there likewise, the one in the small town of S. *Bennet*, on the river *Loire*, near *Orleans*, and the other at *Mans*; notwithstanding the *Italians* contested with them about all these relics, and a vast number of others, of most authentic authority; and that upon no other ground, but that of the Pope's bulls, which they have procured, said he, by some artifice or other, for this purpose, and which declare them to be true and lawful possessors of these relics, though clear contrary to all evidence drawn from history and tradition. But Father, said I, do you remember the discourse you held two days ago, as we passed the *Alps*, to prove the Pope's infallibility, which you extended with so much heat and earnestness, not only to matters of rights, but also to matters of fact? The question then put was this, how the popes could grant such thundering bulls, fraught with excommunications and anathemas against those who do not believe, that the house of *Loretto*, was transported from the Holy Land by angels, to that part of *Italy*, where it is supposed to stand at present; as likewise against those who should deny, that a great mountain near to the city of *Cajeta*, in the kingdom *Naples*, which is open at the top, and as it were, split in two, was one of those rocks, that were rent at the passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ? You then affirmed, that the Pope on all such occasions, was assisted with an infallible direction from the Holy Ghost: and *consequently*, that it was impossible for him to be *deceived himself*, or to deceive others, any way

than in matters of faith itself: and more especially, yet, in a case of giving religious worship to some object of devotion, as that is, which is given to the house of *Loretto* and to the Holy Mountain; and how then can you now say, Father, with respect to your S. *Maurus* and S. *Bennet*, or any other whatever, that those popes who declared against you in favour of the *Italians*, have been mistaken? Is not this a case of worship, as well as that of *Loretto*? The party was but visible, and the good Father must needs have entangled himself in a most troublesome contradiction: wherefore to avoid the shame and confusion that thence would have followed, he chose rather to turn his answer into a piece of raillery, saying, he confessed that he was indeed a very bad politician, because when he was on the *Alps*, he spake like an *Italian*, but that at present he spoke as a *Frenchman*. Because it is true, that the people of *Italy*, especially those of the Pope's territories, do own the Pope's infallibility in matters of fact, which the greatest part of the Roman Catholics of *France* do deny.

This distinction of speaking as an *Italian*, or as a *Frenchman*, was indeed very frivolous; and in truth, if it were permitted to utter one's opinion, sometimes according to the humour of one country, and sometimes of another, if our *Benedictine* had spoken like a *German* or an *Hungarian*, he would have reduced the papal authority to a very low ebb: for I have observed in my travels, that these people, though for the most part they profess the *Romish Religion*, yet have this advantage, that they believe little of it. Without doubt, Sir, it would much better have become him, to have spoken as a Christian ought to do, *viz.* like a good and honest man, with a sincere and unbiassed spirit, strengthened by grace, supported by reason, and grounded upon the holy

Scripture

Scripture: for then would he never have attributed the title of infallible to a mortal man upon earth, which belongs to God alone. I was ready to give him my thoughts to this purpose; but I called to mind, that I was got into *Italy*, where one only word might drag me before the cruel and merciless tribunal of the *Inquisition*, and therefore thought it more wisdom to hold my peace. However, I could not but make this reflection on these proceedings of the religious, that in cases wherein the Priests or Monks find their advantage, or in things altogether indifferent to them, they are not wanting with open mouths to publish the Pope's infallibility: but when his infallibility seems in the least to clash with their interests, he is no more than an ignorant and mistaken man, who may be bubbled as well as any other.

From *Susa* we came to *Turin*, which is a very fine city, situate upon the banks of the River *Po*, and the court of the Duke of *Savoy*. Here it was that a dawning of the beauty of the churches of *Italy*, presented itself to our eyes: the greatest part of the parish-churches, monasteries, and convents, are very sumptuously built, and most richly adorned within. Nothing is seen in them, but marble, porphyry, jasper stones, and most exquisite gilding and painting. The crosses, the candlesticks, lamps, statues and cases of the relics, are all of gold and silver, and almost infinite in number and value. Some good *French* priests, who had joined themselves with us, to take a view of the churches, where in a strange rapture at so dazzling a sight; and being inwardly moved to see so many temples of the Lord, so gloriously adorned, wept for joy: for as in their journey from *France*, they had taken their way through *Geneva*, and the *Swiss Cantons*, where they had seen the Protestant Churches *devoid* almost of all material embellishments, they from thence concluded, (how truly

leave you to judge) that there was no other true religion, besides that of the Church of *Rome*, whose zeal for the House of God, was an evident witness of the truth of her faith. I told them that this their conclusion seemed to me to be built upon very weak principles, and that where we had a mind to prove the truth of any religion, the grandeur and riches of the world were too weak premises to support a conclusion; and that for my part, if I were to form a presumptive argument in favour of any religion, I should sooner take it from the good life and manner of those that profess it, than from the sumptuous ornaments of their churches. They shewed us the church-treasury, where is preserved the holy shroud or sheet, and soon after the canons and priests entered the choir, to sing their vespers and complins, which are the evening prayers of the Church of *Rome*. They entered without any order, and very indecently, talking and laughing together, and pushing one anothers elbows. The first come, without waiting till the rest were seated in their places, began to sing the office; and that which might well have lasted an hour and half, in case it had been said with the required pauses devoutly and modestly, as it is practised in the Common Prayer of the Church of *England*, was dispatched in less than a quarter of an hour, with a strange kind of precipitation, so that it was scarcely possible to distinguish between one word and another, or between the end and the beginning of the verses. In truth, Sir, were it lawful to judge of the consciences of men, from any thing that is outward, I might have had good reason to infer from their behaviour, that their hearts were much stranged from the words of their lips, and their lips and their hearts yet further from God. They did not much weary our patience with hearing them; and the service thus roundly dispatched, they rather fled, than

than went out of church, every one his own way. The Father that was with me, perceiving that I was scandalized at it, told me, as having had some former experience of *Italy*, by a journey he had before made through it; that it was not yet time for me to be offended, and that the nearer I should appear to *Rome*, the more cause I should find for it. I had been told indeed, that the further I went, the more stately churches I should find, and the more richly adorned: so that joining these two together, I concluded, that all this outward bravery and ornament, did not proceed from the piety or zeal of the clergy of *Italy* for the House of God; because they neglected the chief glory and embellishment of it, *viz.* the inward, and that something else must be the motive to it, as I discovered afterwards, and of which I shall give you a more particular account upon another occasion. After we had visited the churches, towards evening, we went to view the great *piazza* of *Turin*, facing the palace of his Royal Highness. Here we saw many theatres or stages of rope dancers and mountebanks, wherewith the market places of the cities in *Italy*, are always well provided, for the satisfaction of the public. But that which surprized me most was, that the greatest part of those that assisted as auditors and spectators, about those theatres, were either priests or monks, who clapped their hands in applause of the most ridiculous and scandalous stuff they produced, and laughed with all their might. We saw there all sorts of orders, some father-jesuits, that seemed the most concerned for these fopperies, who saluted the Father *Benedictine* that was with us; and having understood that he was procurator general of the order, they offered him an eminent place, near unto themselves, which he accepted of. For my part, I was unwilling to engage myself in the concern, and retired with the two French priest

to our inn. We had opportunity the same evening of discoursing with Count *Zamberti*, an officer of his Royal Highness, whom formerly I had seen in *France*, and we could not keep ourselves from acquainting him, how strangely we had been surprized, to see so many religious at the public shews, and so attentive to the lewd fooleries of buffoons; because we looked upon it as very unworthy and scandalous, and that no such thing was to be seen in *France*. He told us, that this was not that which ought most to surprize us, for that in *Italy*, those of the clergy who did commonly frequent the *Piazza* in the evening, were the most esteemed of, as being ordinarily the best amongst them; because the rest at the same time were, for the most part, either in whore-houses, or at taverns, in company of their wenches. Here I turned myself to our *French* priests, and said, Well, gentlemen, what say you now? Do you think you concluded well from the magnificence of the churches of this country, that their religion and piety must needs be the best, because their churches were the most stately and sumptuous? whereas you see that these who ought in a more especial manner, to be the living temples of the Holy Ghost, abandon themselves to such execrable profaneness and debauchery? As to that which we alleged, that no such lewd deportments were to be found amongst our ecclesiastics in *France*, the Count very wisely replied, *That for that we might thank the Protestants; for that it was only their presence that maintained the learning, modesty, and reserved carriage of the clergy of the* Gallican *Church, and if they once should be forced to quit the country, we should soon see all sciences and virtues exiled with them.* This, Sir, agrees *incomparably* well with what some persons of quality of *the Roman* communion have of late freely

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owned to me, that they begin already in *France* to perceive, that since the Protestants have been banished thence, and that they believed them far enough from them; the burning zeal of the ecclesiastics, is turned to lukewarmness, their devotion grown cold, and their application to their studies become very flat and languishing. So that at present they are seldom found at their books, but for the most part ranging from one house to another, upon pretence of encouraging and confirming their new converts, and boasting themselves for great doctors, with what they have learned, at a time when they were forced upon by the learned writings, and close arguings of the Protestant ministers. I return now to my voyage: but before I leave *Turin*, because I have already made mention of the church, wherein is kept the holy shroud or linen sheet, wherein they pretend our *Saviour's* dead body was wrapped; I suppose you will not take it amiss, if I tell you in short what I think of it. Those of your religion suppose it to be the same shroud or linen sheet, in which *Joseph* of *Arimathea* wrapped up, and buried the precious body of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, after it was taken down from the cross, and that the figure of that adoreable body remains imprinted upon it, for the comfort of believers.

I intend not to enter the lists about the truth of that history, which I never searched into; but I shall only tell you, Sir, that there is another of them to be seen in the cathedral of *Besansom* in *Burgundy*, which they maintain to be the same in which *Joseph* wrapt the body of our Saviour: several popes, according to their distinct fancies and humours have granted several bulls and indulgencies, some to that of *Turin*, others that of *Besansom*, until that these contestations raise such extreme feuds between the archbishops of these two cities, that at last they fell to libelling one

another; whereupon to stifle the flame from spreading further, a way was found out at *Rome* to reconcile them, by determining (contrary to the express words of the vulgar translation, *Matt.* 27. *Et involvit illud Sindone munda. And wrapt it in a clean linen cloth;* where the word *Sindone* is in the singular number) that there were two, and consequently that both the one and the other of them were true. It cannot indeed be denied, but that there was such a shroud or linen-cloth, and it is possible that with great care it might have been preserved till now: but to see the Church of *Rome*, for the reconciling of two bishops, with so much easiness, boldly to determine that there were two, when the scripture seems but to speak of one; this is that which will not go down with men of understanding: and moreover, to ordain, that the same worship and adoration be given to them both on *Easter-Day*, which is given to the cross on *Good-Friday*, which does not differ at all from what is given to Jesus Christ himself: this is no less than downright impiety and idolatry.

After some days stay at *Turin*, finding myself within two days journey of *Genoua*, the curiosity of seeing that lofty city, made me resolve to go thither. However, I found some strife in myself about it, because of the satisfaction I had enjoyed in the company of my *Benedictine*, whose conversation was indeed very pleasant and agreeable; as finding, that if I continued my resolution, it would be necessary for us to part; for the letter of obedience, which he had shewed me of his general, expressed, that he was without stop or stay to go directly to *Rome*. I communicated to him my resolution of going to *Genoua*, whereupon he immediately told me, that he was resolved to go along with me, and that he would order the matter so, as his superiors should know nothing of it, and accordingly in the letter he wrote to them from Turin

Turin, acquainting them, that being not yet wholly recovered from some fits of an ague he had, he should be obliged to remain there still for some days, which was just the very time he took to go this journey with me. I found by this that the most reformed monks make no great scruple of violating the obedience they have vowed to observe and to transgress the rules they profess, upon the least occasion that presents itself to them, of any particular satisfaction. The use of meat was also forbid him by his rule, and yet he no sooner found himself at a distance from the monasteries of his Order, but he made bold with it; and as soon as he met with another, he took up his observance again as before, desiring me not to divulge that ever he had transgressed it. And in the mean time I can say with truth, that I never saw a more rigorous censor of another man's actions than he was, when he was in the company of monks, who were not reformed, or who took more liberty than those of their congregation; he would undertake them in a high manner, yea, with insolence itself: he said, *He could not look upon them any better than damned souls, and worse than devils.* Neither had he any more charitable opinion for the people, whom the monks, by way of distinction, term the people of the world and worldlings, with which words they denote all laymen in general. It seemed to him impossible for a man that lived at large in the world, to be saved, except he took up and confined himself to a convent; yea, and it must be in a convent of his Order too. If by chance he saw in the streets a woman well dressed, without examining whether her condition, or some other reason might oblige her to it, he immediately pronounced a sentence of eternal condemnation against her; saying, *That she was a victim destined to the flames of hell;* and if he heard speak of any persons newly married, or that had obtain

ed some good fortune, *alas*, said he, *these persons make their paradise of this world, but they shall burn for ever in the other for it.* And thus without excepting any whatever, and putting a wrong construction upon the most innocent actions, he judged with an inveteracy of heart what belongs alone to God to judge of. What I now say, is not only to be understood of this religious alone, but generally almost of all sorts of reformed religious, as those who profess a more strict life than others; and of secular priests also, who by their little superstitious ways, pretend to be quite distinguished from the common sort of people: I have observed, that they judge men without mercy. Some have owned to me, that from their youth up, they have been accustomed to these ideas, the world having been always represented to them as a tempestuous and raging sea, whence it is very rare for any one to escape, without being shipwrecked, and that their monasteries are the very ports of salvation, and the havens of grace, where it is impossible to perish. Whereas, it were much better, to educate them in a spirit of humility, and to inspire in them charitable thoughts towards their neighbour, whether they be joined with them in the same profession of life, or engaged in another way, to which we ought, Christian like, to believe that God had called them. This indeed we must own, that it seems to be the unhappy lot of all persons whatsoever that engage themselves in a party, not to have any consideration, but for those of their own company, despising and condemning all the rest. It was this consideration, without doubt, that made our fathers, the first reformers of religion, to disapprove, and afterwards to reject all these kind of inequalities, which by dividing men into several different states, do ordinarily divide their hearts also, and [illegible] means separate them from the charitably in the [illegible] superiors sh[illegible]rist. But to return to our Benedictin

nedictine, who as he was extremely rigorous to others, so he was indulgent to himself. He was naturally very comical, and inclined to raillery, and did not effect that monkish gravity, but upon certain occasions.

We arrived at *Genoua* the 1st of *September*. Being informed that there was a very fair abbey of his order in the city, called S. *Catherine* of *Genoua*, he would needs go and lodge there, in hopes of being as well entertained, as he had been hitherto in the several monasteries he had called at. He went and presented his letter of obedience to the abbot, who having read it, took a view of him from top to toe: he asked him, of what Order he was? he answered, that his letter shewed that, and that he was a reformed *Benedictine*; the other replied, that he believed nothing of what he said, because he was not in the habit of S. *Bennet*, which was the chief mark which distinguished their order. Now it is to be noted, that these monks in France wear gowns of our course cloth, with [illegible] cut very strait; whereas the *Italians* ha[illegible] asten[illegible]ely amplified theirs, and wear stuffs very [illegible]ne, three [illegible]strous; they are very neatly shod, [illegible] mon-fear [illegible]ockings, fine grey hats, and are not [illegible]e ham-durst [illegible]or to the bravery of laymen. Moreo[illegible]sants, shut [illegible] difference in the habits of *Italy*, make[illegible] they to [illegible] difference of Order. There are about ten s[illegible]ies, of the religious of the Order of S. *Frances*, whic[illegible]y are only distinguished from one another, because some of them have their sleeves, or their cowls, two or three finger's breadth larger than the others. And yet this makes so great a division between them, that they cannot endure the sight of one another, and hate one another mortally. The monk of whom I am speaking, was not sprucely enough accommodated, according to their mode, to please this *nice and curious* abbot; and the conclusion was, *that he very basely* denied him entrance into

his monastery. The poor *Benedictine* was put into such a rage by the affront put upon him, that he could not forbear downright railing at the abbot in his own monastery; telling him, *that he was an abbot accursed of God: that damnation would be his portion, and that all those who lived under his conduct, might make state to go to hell with him; that it was they that had changed the venerable habit of the Order, and altered it to that degree, that it seemed at present rather contrived to please and entice young ladies, than to distinguish them from the people of the world; and that they would see one day, but alas, too late! what a reception their glorious patriarch would afford in Heaven, to that poor habit which he had upon his body, and which they vilified so much here on earth.* The abbot found himself so extremely nettled at this invective, that he threatened our reformed monk, that in case he did not that very evening depart the city, he would take care to stop his pipes for him. The poor monk frighted, and trembling at his threat, returns to the inn where I was, and gave me an account of his disin r. This was the reason, that I staid only bour, ays at *Genoua*, because my companion, for same f being sacrificed to the *Italic* revenge, to wh not stir abroad, but was fain to keep himself Go up in a chamber, all the while I stayed there th take a view of the city.

Revenge is an abominable vice, and which at present is not without great reason particularly appropriated to the *Italians;* but certainly amongst them all, there are none who exercise and act it with greater rage and fury than the clergy, who, as they have no families to care for, their attention is less divided, and consequently more united and concentred, to resent injuries done unto them, and *have also more* leisure time to descant upon them; *and besides all* this, in case of any accident, they

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have none but their own persons to save, neither do they fear so much as others the confiscation of their goods, as being assured, that whatsoever country their lot may cast them upon; so it be the *Romish* communion, they cannot miss of getting a livelihood by their masses, and of being furnished with a full supply of their necessities. This is a patrimony that follows them wheresoever they go, and cannot be taken away from them, but with their life. One thing extremely facilitates the taking of revenge in *Italy*, *viz.* the great number of petty principalities, into which it is divided; and whereof the princes are all of them independent one of another, and extremely jealous of preserving their rights, especially of *protection* and *refuge*, to those who having done some ill turn, retire themselves to their territories. The ambassadors of the king of *France* would sooner, and with more ease obtain a fugitive person from the Emperor, than from the Duke of *Mirandula*, whose territories do not extend themselves to three *Italian* miles; because, always the more inconsiderable any power is, the more it strives to appear great. The commonwealth of S. *Marin*, is but an inconsiderable hamlet of about some fifty houses of poor peasants, who are governed by themselves: and though they be shut in on every side by the *Pope's* territories, which they call the *Domaine* of S. *Peter*, yet they do give such a resolute protection to priests guilty of murder or manslaughter, that it is not possible for the Pope to persuade them, to deliver up any one of them; neither are the sovereign princes of *Italy*, only thus jealous of their franchises of their estates, but also all persons of quality in general, who will not permit a malefactor to be seized in their houses. I shall here tell you by the bye, Sir, that it is this pretended liberty which was the *rise of the franchise* or liberty of the ambassadors *of crowned heads* at *Rome*, and which caused th

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great dispute between Pope *Innocent* XI. and the *French* King; for seeing the ambassadors, to distinguish themselves, were willing to have some privilege above the ordinary nobility, they did not only pretend to have an immunity for their palaces, but over and above, an entire franchise throughout all the quarters, where their abode was. Now Pope *Innocent* XI. conceived it an enterprize becoming his glory and courage, efficaciously to endeavour the final destruction of these retreats for robbers and murderers in *Rome*, obliging the ambassadors for ever to renounce the franchises of the quarters, and to content themselves, for the respect borne to their masters, with the immunity of their houses. But, to speak truth, to what purpose was it for the Pope to be so zealously bent to abolish these places of refuge? Did not he know, that all the churches, monasteries, convents, and colleges of *Rome*, are so many open places, which one meet with at every turn, where injustice, incest, robbery and murder are protected and secured? I confess, it seems not unreasonable, that the churches of God should be esteemed so holy and sacred, as to make it a kind of profanation to enter them armed, in order to seize a criminal; but what reason is there to allow the same privilege to all cloisters and houses of those wretched monks, that are the very worst of criminals? and the compass of whose walls take up so much ground, that if they were all joined together, they would, without doubt, make more than a third part of *Rome:* and what is the sacredness and holiness of these profane persons, for which they are to enjoy this exemption? For my part, I cannot imagine any other reason for it, but that the Pope, with the rest of the ecclesiastical princes of that communion, endeavouring no less to establish their temporal power, than their usurped tyranny over the souls of men, will be very backward

of diminishing the privileges belonging to the monasteries that are amongst them; lest foreign princes following their example, should undertake the same in their countries; and seeing, that the monks always side with the Pope, the taking of this course would be a manifest weakening of their own party. Moreover these monks are of such mean and interested spirits, that if the Pope or a Cardinal send to them, to deliver up any that have taken refuge with them, they immediately comply with the demand, as being well pleased to have this occasion, to procure their favour at so cheap a rate: but if any other secular lord comes to request any such thing of them, then they stand stiffly in defence of their privileges, and without a good piece of money in hand, will never grant their request. Especially if the criminal be a monk, or a clergyman; and indeed (as was mentioned before) that which makes them so bold in revenging themselves, is the assurance they have of being always seconded and assisted by some of their brotherhood; for upon any such occasions, they are very ready to take one another's part; so that it is impossible to offend any one of them, without engaging with a whole party. For either they are monks or friars, and so are fellow members with all those of the same order, convent, or monastery; or they are secular priests, and so make up one body with all the other priests of their diocese, cathedral, or parish, there being never a church so inconsiderable, that has not at least fifteen or twenty priests belonging to it: so that when any one member of the same body is offended, all the rest are affected by sympathy, and endeavour to revenge it, as done to themselves. It is evident, that a spirit of charity does not engage them to these courses; for charity avengeth not itself: but it is a kind of natural pleasure they take to make others feel the effects of their rage

and fury, that have either offended them, or those they have any relation to; and which makes them say with one of their poets,

Dolcissimo, mortaii, e la vendetta:
Revenge is the sweetest thing in the world.

Myself, when I was at *Bononia*, counted no less than seventeen in one week, that had been sacrificed to this infernal fury, and who (for the most part of them) had been murdered by either monks or priests. The great provost, who there is called the *Bargello*, having by order of the cardinal-archbishop, made search for a monk, who very scandalously kept a public stew, was one of the number of these unhappy victims, being miserably massacred on *Easter-day*, as he was coming out of a church. One of the most dreadful means the clergy have to glut their *vengeance*, is the *Inquisition*, which they have introduced under the pretext of religion; though, indeed it be the most diabolical invention that was ever forged in hell, and which they as dexterously manage for the serving of their particular self-ends. They have made it an inquisition matter for any to strike, affront, or vilify any person belonging to the clergy, whether secular or regular. I will give you an instance how they proceeded at *Bononia*, against an honest man of my acquaintance, who in heat of his passion had called a Dominican Friar, *old fool of a monk:* the friar immediately went and made his complaint to the inquisitor, who forthwith caused the young man to be seized and cast into the inquisition prison, where he continued ten months before ever any inquiry was made about the cause of his commitment. At last he was brought before the sacred tribunal; and forasmuch as he could not deny, but that he called the friar, *old fool of a monk*, his indictment was drawn up to this purpose:—he who doth not respec

spect churchmen, doth not believe the ecclesiastic estate worthy of honour, and consequently is an heretic: now it is apparent, that you have had no respect for brother Nicholas, *who was an ecclesiastic; and consequently, neither do you think the ecclesiastic state worthy of honour, and therefore are an heretic.* The defendant pleaded for himself, that it was true he called the plaintiff *old fool*, but only with respect to his person, without intending the least reflection upon his profession. But the plaintiff insisted, that he called him *fool*, with respect to his profession, by joining the word *monk* with that reproachful word, and without adding these words, *saving your character.* For true it is, that if in *Italy* a man chance to affront a priest or a monk, by calling them *knaves, rascals*, or the like, so he do but remember immediately to subjoin *saving your character*, or *saving your habit*, they cannot make an inquisition matter of it; but if by mischance this be forgot, he is undone. Thus this poor gentleman was found guilty. As for striking any one of the clergy, in what manner soever it be, whether sorely or slightly, it is always a matter the Inquisition takes cognizance of. And this is that which makes the men of the church so peremptory and insolent throughout all *Italy.*

I happened at *Rome* to see a priest, who fell out with an officer in the *Piazza Navona;* the officer very dexterously and freely stained the priest with his tongue, never forgetting at the end of each injury, to compliment him with a *saving character;* which so confounded the poor priest, that quite foaming with rage, he began to say to the people that stood about, *Gentlemen, I must put this man into the inquisition, for if I be not mistaken, he struck me: did not you see him* to give a slight *stroke? Indeed he* could have had wished he had *with all his heart,* that so he might have had a

opportunity to have prosecuted his revenge; but none of those that were present having seen any such thing, they could not witness against him. The *Italians* have a proverb, *That he who would live peaceably at* Rome, *must take heed of offending any female or priest; because the women procure their lovers to work their revenge, and the clergy make use of the inquisition to avenge themselves.* It is true, indeed, that persons of rank amongst them, as abbots, bishops, and cardinals, do not ordinarily make use of this means, it appearing to them a little too troublesome. They have servants and dependants, who for money, or to obtain some favour, do voluntarily offer themselves to be the executioners of their revenge; and if at any time they chance to be seized in the act, they are but very little concerned at it, fully relying upon their master's power and authority, who are never wanting, by all manner of means, to procure their discharge and liberty. As for the Popes, they are no more exempt from this weakness than other men; neither do they forget, upon occasion, to make use of the power they have in their hands; but like other monarchs, whenever they are offended, shew themselves to have long hands. There is no speaking to these holy fathers, of humility, or patience in suffering injuries, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose person they will needs represent upon earth. They have in a manner rejected all his virtues, and their study at present is, to represent here below, his heavenly glory, *viz.* his power and judicature. The title of *Holiness*, which is given them, is only a swelling term they make use of to express their pride. We have a signal example of revenge in the life of Pope *Sextus* the Fifth. He was of a very mean extraction, his father being a poor vine-dresser, and his mother a serving maid, and he himself in his youth, was reduced to be a hog-herd; and yet by the

the subtilty of his spirit, in conjunction with an extraordinary fortune, he stepped over all these difficulties, and mounted the pontifical throne. But so far was this meanness of his birth from inspiring him with an answerable degree of humility, in the midst of that greatness to which he was raised, that he could not endure to hear the least hint of it; but by a revengeful inclination, which was natural to him, he let loose his cruel and unrelenting nature against all those, who either imprudently, or of set-purpose let drop the least word of contempt reflecting that way; of which the following story may be a pregnant instance: the statue of *Pasquin* in *Rome*, appeared one morning with a very nasty shirt pulled over it; and *Morforius* demanding the reason, *Why for shame he did not shift himself, and put on a clean one? Because* (answered *Pasquen*) *my washer-woman is become a princess.* This answer stung the Pope's sister, *Camilla*, who of a poor washer-woman, which she was before, was, by her brother raised to a principality. The Pope being enraged at this cutting satire, made use of all the ways imaginable to find out the author; but missing the desired success in this his research, he betook himself to craft and circumvention, but that too one so base and unworthy, that the whole recital of it is sufficient to strike a man with horror. He caused it to be published every where, *That he was so extremely pleased with the delicate poignancy of this piece of wit, that if the author of it would come and discover himself to him, he would be so far from punishing him with death, that he would bestow upon him two thousand crowns for a reward.* The poor unhappy wretch, trepanned by this advantageous promise, makes himself known. The Pope, upon owning himself to be the author of it, caused two thousand crowns to be counted out to him, *assuring him withal*, that he would be as good as h

his word, and that he should not be hanged. At which words, the wretch overjoyed, poured forth his most humble acknowledgments to his holiness, for so unparalled a piece of grace. *Ay, ay,* (answered the Pope) *I will be as good as my word in all this; but take notice, sirrah, that I never promised you not to cause your hands to be cut off and your tongue to be plucked out of your head.* And immediately commanded the cruel sentence to be executed in his presence, as a pleasing sacrifice to his implacable revenge. I have sometimes set myself to enquire, what might be the cause of this spirit of *vengeance*, which now-a-days is become so natural to the *Italians*, whether it proceed from the climate, or nature of the country, or from some other necessary and inevitable cause. But having called to my remembrance the generosity, courage, and greatness of soul, that shone forth so illustriously in the lives of the ancient *Romans*, who inhabited the same country, and who rendered themselves every where as amiable by their clemency, as formidable for their valour, I soon found that I was rather to seek for a moral cause of it, than a natural; and as far as I can reach, it is this, that the greatest part of *Italy*, in process of time, being fallen under the domination of the Bishops of *Rome*, they sent priests to be their lieutenants in the several provinces of their dominions; a sort of people equally ignorant in matters of commerce and war, which are the two sinews of state, and without which the government is like a body afflicted with the palsy, without either action or motion. This idleness, joined to the great heat of the country, and to the corrupt examples of the said governors, as being men that only minded their pleasures, at last introduced an entire dissolution and effeminacy. In *Rome* of old, the *sword* sometime gave way to the robe, and arms to letters. *Cedant arma togæ.* But at present, all veils to the

love

love of women. This love being excessive and unbounded, is the inseparable companion of jealousy; and the fruit of jealousy, inexorable revenge; which are the two great vices which do stain the reputation of the *Italians*. From this great easiness of revenging themselves, when affronted in their amours, they are now arrived to that point, as not to suffer the least word, or the least injury to fall to the ground, without taking (so it be in their power) a most pityless revenge. This vice, which had its birth in the Pope's dominions, has insensibly dispersed itself into those of the neighbouring princes, and at present miserably infected all *Italy*. It has been observed, that *Bononia* and *Ferrara*, who were the last that have submitted their necks to the *Roman* yoke, have since that time doubled their revengeful spirit. But that which is most of all to be condemned in their way of revenge is, that they do commonly execute it in the basest and most cowardly manner imaginable; that is, either by poison, or treacherously stabbing their enemy in the back. They deride our duels, and say, it is the greatest folly in the world, to put the sword in our enemies hand, and by this means state him in as fair a condition of being revenged of us, as we ourselves are of being avenged of him. When we have an enemy (say they) we are not such fools to cry to him at a distance, *stand upon your guard;* but endeavour to kill him with the first occasion, without putting ourselves to the hazard of being killed by him. However, Sir, though the *Italians* have their faults, yet on the other hand I must own, that they also have their good qualities; they are very prudent in conduct of their affairs, very discreet in their discourse, civil and handsome in their carriage amongst themselves, or towards strangers; they are good counsellors, and very ready to render service; constant in their friendship, and of

very obliging humour, provided it cost them nothing: they are very witty, and I daré say, that if their priests and monks had not corrupted them in their morals, and had not so strangely spoiled and changed their religious worship, (as well as the best country in *Europe*) they would be some of the best men in the world. Indeed, *popery* is grown to that prodigious excess of idolatry, superstition, and folly, that I am astonished they are so backward in casting off that yoke. I know there are a great many amongst them, that begin to open their eyes, and see thier errors; but they dare not declare their minds to any one whatsoever, for fear of falling victims te the barbarous and inexorable cruelty of the *Inquisition*. That tribunal was set up more particularly for a curb to the *Italians*, amongst whom many began to waver, than to debate the doctrine of *Rome*. And in order to make it the more fierce and terrible, the Popes thought they could not trust it in better hands than those of the *Dominicians*, a cruel and pitiless sort of fellows, and more than any other Order, engaged to maintain the Pope's interest. And to encourage them to a rigorous discharge of that barbarous and butcherly function, they have found it convenient from time to time, to confer episcopal dignity upon the most zealous inquisitors, and even to raise many of them to the eminence of cardinals.

Throughout all the dominions of the great Duke of *Florence*, this employ has always been attributed to the *Franciscans*, many of whom likewise have been elevated to *bishoprics* and *cardinals caps*. The end in dividing the Inquisition thus between two different Orders, was only in order to the more vigorous maintaining of the same by emulation of both the pretenders. The main design at *first* intended for the erecting of the *Inquisition*, *was by* ways of blood and violence, to put a stop *to the progress* of *heresy*, or to speak in their own terms.

terms, *Contra hæreticam pravitatem, Against heretical pravity.* But the clergy having since considered the great advantage the *Inquisition* gave them above the laity, have learnt so dexterously to serve themselves by it, that at present there is scarce any thing which they have not brought within the verge of that court, in order to bring about their private self-ends. If you fail of paying your tithes; without troubling them to examine, whether you be able or not, they argue, *That the reason why you do not pay them, is because you do not believe they ought to be paid, and consequently, that you are an heretic.* If the least word chance to drop from you, reflecting upon the licentious lives of the bishops and clergy, whether regular or secular, they accuse you as one whose design is to vilify the episcopal dignity, and consequently the church itself, in the eyes of the people; that in so doing, you have done the heretic's work for them, and serve their interest, and therefore must be looked upon as being one yourself. If a man be known to have an estate, and in the mean time shews himself cold and indifferent in contributing to the collections that are made for the saying of masses and other prayers, for the repose of the souls of the dead; though it be well known, that there is never a priest or monk that will so much as say one without money, he is presently accused, as one who doth not believe *purgatory*, and consequently a downright heretic. Nay, moreover, if any one be consequently observed to refuse putting something into those boxes, that continually run up and down the streets to help to celebrate the festivals of such an he or she saint, towards such a procession in such a church, towards the chapel of the *rosary*, towards the scapulary of the *Blessed Virgin*, or for the cord of *S. Francis*; these fellows have the impudence to tell you, *That they see well enough*, you have

no devotion for holy things, and consequently believe little of them; which is a kind of advertisement, *That in case you should be guilty again of the same neglect, occasion would be taken to recommend you to* Inquisition, *there to learn better manners.* It is not lawful for any to excuse, or to intercede (either in person, or by one's friends) directly or indirectly, for those who have had the mishap to fall into the prisons of the *Inquisition*, except you have a mind to involve yourselves in the guilt of the same crimes, whereof they are attained. One cannot so much as come to speak with them without an express permission given in writing by the Inquisitor himself, which he never grants, but with a deal of difficulty, and very seldom. An abbot of *Calabria*, one of my acquaintance, was put into the Inquisition at *Venice*, for smiling at the story a certain monk told, about the apparition of a soul in purgatory. After he had been a whole year in prison, I understood that sentence of death was not yet pronounced against him, though he had been several times put upon the rack: and having occasion to go to the Inquisitor, to obtain his licence for printing a book; I took this opportunity to beg leave of him, that I might go and see this poor prisoner; who having heard the request I made him, looked sternly upon me, and demanded what business I had to concern myself with him? I told him, *That nothing made me to desire this favour, save only a motive of charity, to bestow some words of comfort upon him.* But the monk answered me in a most rude and disobliging way, or rather like himself, that the prisoner was in very good hands, and did not at all stand in need of any of my comfort; so that it was not possible for me to get to speak with him. However, I had the satisfaction of seeing him set at liberty about six months after, through the charitable care, and powerfu

powerful intercession of *Cornelia Episcopia*, a noble *Venetian* young lady of extraordinary learning and merit, to whom my friend dedicated his learned poems, which he had composed during the time of his confinement. I have before mentioned that it was not lawful to intercede for any that are committed by the *Inquisition;* but that you must know, Sir, that the *Inquisition* is much more favourable in *Venice*, than it is in other parts of *Italy*.

That wise senate abhorring the inhumanity of those monks that manage it, have erected a particular chamber, where some *Venetian* nobles preside, and take cognizance of all matters that are brought before the *Inquisition*, insomuch that the *Dominicans* are not altogether the masters of it. This friend of mine having had the good fortune to escape so great a danger, was so sensibly touched with the cruelties they had made him suffer during his imprisonment, that he readily concluded from thence, that the Church of *Rome* being possessed with such a spirit of cruelty and barbarity, as is never to ba paralleled even amongst the worst of heathens, could never be the true spouse of Jesus Christ. She might indeed be allowed the prudence of serpents, for her own preservation, provided it were always in conjunction with the mild nature of the dove, that so she might not render herself unworthy of, and unlike to him, who wills us to learn of him *to be meek and lowly of heart*. My friend confessed to me, that indeed, before he was cast into prison, he had some doubts about *purgatory* and *transubstantiation;* but that since that they had gone about to make them believed perforce, he believed nothing at all of them, and that he was resolved to retire into *Switzerland* or *Geneva;* there to enjoy that *liberty of conscience*, which would not be allowed *him in his own country*. He told me, that never *a night past over his* head, in which he was no

disquiet

disquieted in his sleep, with the frightful *ideas* and representations of the torments he had in their dungeons, where they had racked all his members out of joint, one after another, bruised all his fingers, and applied plates of red-hot irons to the soles of his feet. And after all this, to make him the more sensible of his pains, they in this condition shut him up again for some days in his dungeon, allowing him nothing but a poor morsel of brown bread, and a small measure of water, and then again put him into the hands of the executioners of the *Inquisition*, to go through a new course of torments. They tied him by one arm, and by means of a pully, hoisted him up into the air, and there left him hanging for several hours, which time being over, they let him down again, rather dead than alive; and to bring him to himself again, they most cruelly and inhumanly scourged him with a kind of whip made of slender iron chains full of points, as sharp as needles, and this till he was all of a gore blood. And all this (O strange and unparalleled barbarity!) to discover the secrets of a poor conscience, and to search the bottom of a heart, which God has reserved to himself as his own divine prerogative. The Father Inquisitor, who was all the while present to encourage the executioners, and to observe whether they were not wanting in their duty, sometimes would draw near to the penitent, and with a severe tone demand of him, whether he did not believe *purgatory* yet, wishing him to think seriously of it, for all that he suffered there, was but a slight a draught of the torments of that place, and that it was much more terrible to *fall into the hands of the living God.* This poor gentleman answered nothing to all this, save only by sighs and tears. But he confessed to me, that since he had made a very serious reflection upon this matter, and that he was come to this result, that

it was utterly inconsistent with the infinite goodness of God, to treat those souls whom he had destined to his heavenly glory, and the enjoyment of himself for ever, to such extremities of pains and torments: that all the works of God being perfect, *he shewed mercy to whom he shewed mercy*, that is to say, perfect and complete mercy, and that it was infinitely more glorious for him, wholly to pardon both guilt and punishment, than to reserve himself a miserable vengeance from the fire and flames of their feigned *purgatory*, and that for this very reason he did not believe any thing of it all. The common punishment inflicted at *Venice* on those who are convicted of heresy, is either to strangle them in prison, or to tie a great stone to their necks, and so cast them into the sea. And herein also the Inquisition of *Venice* is much more favourable than it is in other parts of *Italy*, where they either burn them alive with a slow fire, or else cut off their members one by one, which are cast into the fire before their eyes, after having first of all plucked out their tongues, and made them suffer unexpressible torments. Can you ever believe in good earnest, Sir, that this is the spirit of the gospel? is this the way our saviour made use of to convert sinners? did he ever threaten the disobedient or unbelievers with prisons, racks, and tortures? has he ever left us so much as one example or command to authorize this Sacred Inquisition method? I trow no, and consequently this cannot be the spirit of Christianity. Thus these very means the Popes take to maintain their tyranny over the consciences of men, might serve (and without doubt will so in time) for just motives to pull it down, if the people would once open their eyes, and vigorously oppose themselves to the effect, of a most unjust and inhuman violence. *It is virtue* alone that stands in need of *no support, but sin* and iniquity are always in

the search of props and contrivances; and what they cannot carry by the strength of the lion, they endeavour to bring about by the foxes craft. Thus what the Popes and their adherents cannot obtain by the Inquisition, they strive to compass by artifice and lies. One of the chief fetches they have to keep the people in their obedience, is to secure them in the chains of profound ignorance; first of the truths of the Holy Scriptures, as a book very dangerous and pernicious to their souls. Their next care is to prevent any books of controversy, written by Protestants, from coming into their hands. It is an *inquisitional* matter to have or read any of them, or to be privy to any others having of them. Moreover, they take special care to charge the preachers in their sermons, that in speaking of the Protestants, who being very well grounded in their principles, must consequently be looked upon, as the most formidable enemies of the Church of *Rome* has, they be sure to represent them to their auditors, as men that have absolutely renounced the faith of Jesus Christ, and who do no more believe in him, than heathens and infidels. Wherefore also, they indifferently call them heretics and infidels; or to make use of the *Italian* word, *questinon Christiani.* So that indeed all the common people, yea, and the greatest part of those that are learned too, are of the opinion *That Protestants do not at all believe in Jesus Christ, no more than Turks do.* A canon once demanded of me in *Rome*, by way of curiosity, *What the infidels did in* France, *and why they were suffered there?* I desired him to tell me what he meant by that word, which I did not understand; and finding that he spoke of Protestants, I told him that they were no infidels, but believed in Jesus Christ as well as the *Roman Catholics*, only that they rejected *transubstantiation*, the mass, purgatory, *&c.* and in particular the power and infallibilit

infallibility of the Pope. And having heard me discourse at this rate a good while; *In truth, Sir,* (said he) *if the case be as you say, I perceive that those people are not such great devils as they are represented to us here. I have often heard it declared from the pulpit, that they are as unbelieving as the Jews themselves; and you are the very first I ever heard say, That the Protestants believed in Jesus Christ.* But, Sir, said I, it is impossible, but that you who have studied divinity, must needs have heard the opinions of *Luther, Calvin,* and *Zuinglius,* in the Treatise of the Sacraments in general, and in particular of those of the *eucharist penance,* the *sacrifice of the mass, &c.* I know (said he) that those ringleaders of heresy, pretended not to destroy, but to reform the church; and as to some points, they have very strong arguments which even to this day we are hard put to, to answer. But nevertheless, God, who hath particular care of his church, that he might make known to believers, that these then were in a bad way, has so ordered it, that their whole party came to nothing. For as one error draws on another, they have still rolled from one *precipice* to another, till at last they are fallen into the abyss of infidelity. They at first separated themselves from the Church of *Rome,* upon the pretence of reforming it; but some time after their followers reduced all to the *particular spirit,* which is to believe what they please, and that provided only they do worship one God, whosoever he be, and lead a morally good life, that this is enough for them to be saved. I perceived by this discourse, Sir, that this canon had been ill-informed (as indeed most part of the *Italians* are) of the present state of Protestants and of their doctrine, and that at *Rome* all manner of slights and tricks *are made use of* against those who refuse to bow *their knees to Baal.* To tell a lie with them is vir

virtue, as long as it is but employed, as they think, for a good end. I remember that a jesuit, who was lately come from *England*, boldly preached in the church of *Lateran*, that all religion there was reduced to the particular spirit. And having made an ample description of the meetings of the *Anabaptists* and *Quakers*, under the name of the Church of *England*, when he came to speak of their sighing and groaning, and their women preaching, he made all his auditory break forth into a loud laughter; and by this means, without doubt, though with a great deal of injustice, he made many there present conceive very contemptuously of that august and venerable body of Protestants, the *Church of England* so zealous for the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ his only son; so exact and decent in the worship and obedience she renders to his divine majesty, and so reasonable in her orders and ceremonies. As long as those vigilant pastors, the bishops of the Church of *England*, and the learned ministers that are under them, keep their watchful eyes fixed on the flocks committed to their charge, there is no cause to fear, that ever the *Romish* wolf will be in a condition to snatch so much as any single one of them out of their hands; nor will any of her emissaries, as subtile thieves as they be, ever be able by night to steal into the *sheepfold* to devour or massacre them, as they have already so often endeavoured to do. I have since made this observation on this sermon of the jesuit, which I heard from the beginning to the end, and I could wish all Protestants might seriously take it to heart, *viz.* that to pull down the Church of *Rome*, the great secret is not absolutely to reject, as some do, all that she practiseth; but that the best way to compass her downfall is, to retain all that is good in her, only rejecting the evil. If we absolutely reject all fasts, because they of the Church of Rome observe

observe some of them, as they desire nothing more than to blacken the Protestants, representing them actions in the worst light they can, and always concealing the good that is amongst them, they presently cry with open throat, that the Protestants are a sort of people that love nothing but their bellies, abhorring and abominating whatever serves to mortify the flesh. If we reject episcopacy, they hate (cry they) all manner of subjection, and love nothing but independency: if we refuse the use of *Common Prayer*, we are not joined in the *band of charity*, neither is their any union amongst us: if we not from time to time consult the ministers in cases of conscience, we reduce all to the private spirit. In a word, if we celebrate marriages and funerals, without any prayers or ceremonies, they say that Protestants go together like beasts, and are buried like dogs. At this rate, did this calumniating jesuit, with a renowned malice, from the beginning of his sermon to the end, endeavour to make them odious and execrable. Neither was it a hard matter for him to obtain his end, in a country where they are so little known, and where they are never mentioned but under the notion of *devils*, *heretics*, *new Christians*, and *Infidels*. But the case would be much altered, if retaining what is good and lawful, or only indifferent amongst them as far as may be, the Protestants would singly apply themselves to oppose those points of doctrine or practice amongst them, which first occasioned the Reformation; for so they would not be able to condemn them in any thing, but by producing the points of doctrine and practice in controversy, with the oppositions made against them; which is a thing they are very loath to do, for fear of discovering their own nakedness. An evident proof of *what I here alledged*, is the great care they *take to hinder any books* of controversy from com-

ing into *Italy*, not so much as those which have been penned by the most famous men of their own party. I was extremely put to it, when I was at *Rome*, to meet the works of Monsieur *Arnaud*, which he had dedicated to the Pope, and which I do not believe were ever yet translated into *Italian;* their design herein being to prevent by all means imaginable, the true state of the question from being known; for their objections are so weak, and the answers they make to those of the Protestants, so pitiful, that any unprejudiced mind may easily from their own books perceive on what side the truth lies. If ever there was an author that strained his wits to calumniate and blacken the Protestants, it was, without doubt, Father *Maimburg* the Jesuit, in his books of *Luthranism* and *Calvinism*. When I was at *Venice*, I undertook the translation of all his works, and had already translated several of his volumes, when I took in hand those of *Lutheranism* and *Calvinism*, but I was not a little surprized, when the inquisitor of *Venice* would not give me leave to continue the traduction; and sometime after I received an order from the Pope, forbidding me to print those two books, with another of the same authors, treating about the growth of power of the bishops of *Rome*. The single title of *bishop*, which was given him in his last Treatise, instead of the magnificent titles of *Pope* and *Sovereign Priest*, together with some curious enquiries concerning the rise and progress of that prodigious grandeur to which the bishops of *Rome* are mounted at present, were a powerful motive to the *Pope* to condemn it; but I could not penetrate what reason he had to pronounce the same sentence against the other two, except it were, as I hinted before, *to prevent* the occasion of renewing in the minds *of the Italians*, the state of the question between *the Catholics* and the *Protestants*. For notwithstanding

standing both these books be fraught with scoffs, injurious reproaches, and calumnies, coined on purpose to render a party contemptible, whom they had resolved by all manner of means to run down in the conceit of the people; yet for all this, *Innocent* the XIth, did not believe that this beating them down would prove of as great advantage to the Church of *Rome*, as the publication of some points of doctrine that are there necessarily inserted, might prove dangerous and mischievous to it. You can no way imagine, Sir, the extreme precautions the Popes make use to prevent any Protestant book from being brought into *Italy*. As there is no other way to enter that country by land, without passing the *Alps*, they keep men express at all the passages thereof, to examine the travellers that come that way, and search them whether they have any forbidden books about them; amongst which number are accounted all those that treat of controversies. In a journey I made from *Venice* to *Lyon*, I took my way, in my return to *Italy*, through the land of *Valois*; at the entry of this country, which is a kind of a straight or narrow passage of a mountain, there is a famous abbey of the canons regular of S. *Austin*, called S. *Maurice*. The River *Rhosne*, which is extremely impetuous and violent in this place, and which a little lower, disembogues itself into the Lake of *Genoua*, leaves only a very narrow way, by which one must necessarily pass to enter *Italy*.

The abbot of S. *Maurice*, had built a gate at this pass; and forasmuch as he is the master of it, the Popes who know it to be one of the keys of the *Alps*, which opens a way to *Italy*, have charged him to have a careful eye upon all passengers coming that way, that they do not bring with them any forbidden books; because *Geneva*, which they stand in great fear of, is no further from it tha

the length of its lake. The promise the Pope had made to the abbot, of making him a bishop, in case he were found faithful in the discharge of his commission, had made him very exact when I past by that way. He caused all passengers to be stopped without exception; those that were on foot were searched at the gate by the guards, and those on horseback that had any appearance, were conducted into the abbey, where the abbot entertained them very civilly, and made them eat with him, while they were searching their portmanteaus. The abbot, with whom I discoursed after dinner for a good while, told me, that the Pope allowed him money towards the entertainment of passengers, because without that the whole revenue of his abbey would not have been sufficient for it: and that he had sent him most pressing letters, to recommend to him an extraordinary care of that post, whence he easily conceived, how much they apprehended the books of Protestants at *Rome*.—And being himself well acquainted with the temper of *Italy*, he told me, that if the *Italians*, and more particularly the Pope's subjects, might but have the least communication with *Geneva*, it might be greatly feared, they would utterly cast off their obedience to the Pope. Indeed there are none that have more reason to know the weakness of that God on earth, of the sacred college of cardinals, and of other ecclesiastics, than they who are the eye-witnesses of it; neither are there any more concerned than they, to cast off a a yoke, which upon other accounts is so insupportable to them. One can scarcely call to mind the flourishing condition of those fair provinces, that constitute the patrimony of S. *Peter*, without shedding of tears, to see them miserably *groaning* and languishing at present, under the *oppressive* domineering priests, wholly waste and *desolate*, and deprived of their former beauty and ornament.

ornament. These famous and ancient cities of *Ravenna*, *Benevento*, *Spoleto*, *Perusa*, *Orvietta*, and so many more, which heretofore were the glory of *Italy*, are hardly any thing else at present, but heaps of rubbish, occasioned by the insatiable avarice and rapaciousness of Popes. True it is, that naturally this country is the most pleasant and fruitful territory in the world; but withal there is none more bare of money. The immense impositions the Pope lays on it, have exhausted a great part of it; and the legates he sends there every three years, strive by all manner of extortions, during their triennial governments, to squeeze out the rest, and then return to *Rome* loaden with the spoils of that miserable people; where they are no sooner arrived, but they consume it with as much prodigality, as they had hooked it in by avarice and extortion.

I will not here entertain you with the grandeur and luxury of the *Roman* court; I may have an occasion to give you some account of that more at large hereafter. I shall only desire you to tell me, whether indeed you do not believe, that the *Italians* have great reason to endeavour to deliver themselves from so oppressive an usurpation and tyranny, by withdrawing at the same time their consciences from so intolerable a slavery, and their estates from the hands of such merciless extortioners. For my part, Sir, I cannot question, but if the learned writings of the Protestants of the Church of *England*, could one day make their way into this country, and that they would only so far honour them, as to give them the reading; I say, I doubt not but that popery, whose foundations they so evidently overturn, would find itself at an end. Or rather let us say, that it shall be thus, when it shall please our great God the *Father of Lights*, to enlighten their minds towards an acknowledgement of their blindness, and

warn their hearts by his holy grace, to embrace the truth; that then, I say, we shall see all *Italy* turned Protestants against their own errors, and composing one sheepfold with those, who so many years ago, couragiously protested against them, under the one and only shepherd of our souls, the *Lord Jesus Christ*. I shall not trouble you, Sir, with the relation of other particulars and curiosities, I observed at *Genoua*; forasmuch as my design is not, as I have hinted to you before, to give you an entire relation of my travels, but only to single out those matters that more particularly have some reference to religion. This is that I intend to do from time to time, in these my LETTERS, if I find you continuing to give them the same reception wherewith you have favoured my first. It being my great wish to evince you with what zeal I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

LETTER III.

OF THE HOSPITALS AND PILGRIMS OF ITALY, &c.

To continue the account I have undertaken to give you, of the observations I made in my voyage of *Italy*, relating to matters of religion, I shall tell you, Sir, that from *Genoua* we took our way along the sea-coast, and in three days arrived at *Savone*, an episcopal see, situate on the sea of *Liguria*. The bishop of the place received us with a great deal of civility. We had waved

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going by sea to *Leghorne*, because the Father, my companion, could not bear that kind of passage, and was besides very fearful of falling into the hands of pirates. None can be imagined more stoical in their discourses of *Death*, than the monks are, neither are any more cowardly and frightful than they, when they are in any likelihood of facing it. This made us resolve to pass the *Apennine* to *Luca*, and from thence continue our journey through *Tuscany*. The bishop advised us to take guides along with us in passing the mountain, forasmuch as otherwise he assured us, we should run a great hazard of being robbed; that we had a three day's journey to pass through very desert and solitary ways, where we should meet with neither houses nor villages, except only two or three sorry inns at twelve leagues distance from each other. There are always plenty of these guides at *Sestre*, in a readiness to accompany travellers, being provided with carbines, blunderbusses, pistols, and bayonets. The custom is to take two or three of them, or as many as one pleased, to pass the mountain, paying him two crowns a piece. Two *Genova* merchants intending the same way, joined company with us, at the charge of four crowns. Our *Benedictine*, whom one would have thought a former journey he had made to *Italy*, should have made more circumspect, had a mind to make use of its wits, and to spare the crown he was to pay for his share to the guides we had taken; saying, that he would spare that money, to make much of himself at the next inn he should come at; that there was no danger at all in passing the mountain, and that all those guides were a company of knaves, who made it their business to frighten passengers, to get a piece of money out of them; but that he, for his part, was resolved they should have none of his. Thus having taken directions of the way in writ-

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ing, he went his way two hours before us. For my part, I remembered the counsel the bishop had given us; who was a venerable old man; and considered, that if it were only for the respect that is due to old age, we ought never (where it may be done) reject the advice of such persons. For this reason, I joined myself with the *Genovese* merchants, resolving to go with them, attended by our guides. The *Benedictine* parted from us at six o'clock, though with an intent not to make so much haste, but that we might overtake him, so that he might have an opportunity of falling again (as it were by chance) into our company, without being obliged to pay any thing towards the guides we had taken on our own accounts. But it so happened, that very unluckily for him, we stayed three hours longer than was intended; for we did not leave the city till eleven of the clock. We were extremely surprized, when at the end of seven leagues, upon the mountain, we found this poor monk sitting on a stone, in his boots, lamenting, and all in tears, for the mishap that had befallen him. He had been set upon, in the same place by five robbers, who having dismounted him, had taken away all his money, and all they found in his portmanteau, except his *Breviary*, which they had restored to him; which seemed to vex him more than all the rest: *For*, (said he) *had they but taken this with the rest, I should at least have been excused from saying my breviary till I came to* Rome. We made a shift to get him on horseback again, persuading one of the guides to lend him his; in consideration of which, the monk promised to give him his boots, and we defrayed his charges between us till we came to *Luca*. He assured us, *That the men that had robbed him, were armed and cloathed in the same manner as the guides*: and that if *he were not extremely* mistaken, he had seen the very

very same persons in the market place of Sestre. We were told since, *That these robbers are the very guides themselves, who accompanying travellers out of town, do afterwards by a shorter way get before them, placing themselves in ambush near the road by which they are sure they must pass and never fail of robbing those who have refused to make use of them, or any of their companions.* By ill-luck for our Father *Benedictine*, he had but lately received a bill of exchange at *Turin*, and was not to receive another till he came to *Rome*. This forced us to part company, because I was not in a condition to bear his expence and my own too. He resolved therefore to take his journey the best way he could to *Rome*, through the monasteries of all sorts of Orders and hospitals also, necessity forcing him thereto. I saw him afterwards at *Rome*, where I found him not wholly recovered yet from the miseries he had suffered since our parting. He gave me a particular and full account of the hospitals at which he called in his journey, what they were, and the entertainment he had met with in them. I have heard often *Roman Catholics* reproachfully object to *Protestants, That they have no hospitals amongst them to entertain strangers;* and confounding this kind of hospitality with charity, boldly conclude, *That they are not charitable, and consequently no true children of the church.* It is a mark of a weak cause, to lay hold of every thing it meets with to support itself, which, notwithstanding, commonly contributes most to its overthrow. To defeat this pretended charity of Catholics, it will be sufficient to relate to you, what this Father told me, and what I have learnt of some other travellers, which I intend in part, to make the subject of this my third LETTER.

I *shall tell you* first of all in general, Sir, that *all the ancient* hospitals of *Italy* owe their foun-

dation to the holy places of *Rome* and *Loretto*. The pilgrimages to these, some ages ago, by reason of more universal deluge of *superstition*, were much more in vogue than they are at present; though it were to be wished they were much less than they are. A man was scarcely reputed a good Christian except he had been at *Rome*. And the Popes perceiving how much this vast concourse did augment their revenues, and rendered their capital city rich and wealthy, found a way to oblige confessors to enjoin their penitents for the expiation of the greatest sin, such as *rape*, *incest*, and *murder*, a journey thither; so that there was no remission for these kind of sins without going to *Rome*. They afterwards made reserved cases of most of these kind of sins, whereof we find still at this day a great number in the bull, entituled, *In Cœna Domini*, reserving to themselves alone the power of absolving them, so that in these cases, the parties concerned must either go to *Rome*, or else resolve never to enter into Paradise. It is true, that at present they have bethought themselves of a way to spare men this trouble, which is, of sending thither a good sum of money. With this they content themselves now; for I am sure, it is not the person they desire, but his purse, which at any time will abundantly supply his absence. And forasmuch as amongst the great number of pilgrims that flocked thither out of devotion, or of necessity, for the expiation of their sins, there were many poor people that had not wherewith to defray their charges in public inns; many rich persons, moved with compassion towards these poor wretches, founded hospitals for their entertainment, where they received both lodging and diet; or whatsoever hour of the day they called there, had an alms given them, which they call La Passade; according as the foundation was more or less endow-

dowed, such was the alms, in some places more, in others less. We met with many hospitals in *Italy*, that were founded towards the end of the 10th, or the beginning of the 11th century; the cause of which was a false opinion that was uppermost then, *viz.*: that the day of judgment was near, grounded upon a forged tradition, which is preserved still to this day in the Church of *Rome*; *That Christ being asked by his apostles, how long this outward world should last? he answered them, A thousand years and upward.* So that the most part of Christian Princes, and great lords, about this time took a journey to *Rome*, founded hospitals for the poor pilgrims, and several abbeys, into which many of them retired themselves, in expectation of the dreadful day of judgment. As for the hospitals they founded, the care and administration of them was committed to priests, as being the men who think themselves concerned in all pious legacies, who very readily take upon them the care of those places, where they find a plentiful current of devotion-money. It was too much their interest, not to encourage so favourable beginnings, and therefore were not wanting any more than at this day, constantly to frequent the houses of widows and rich persons, to induce them by their last wills, to enlarge the revenues of their hospitals, of which they were constituted the stewards and overseers; insomuch, that in a little time these hospitals became prodigiously rich. It remains now only, that we take a view of the use which is made of them at present, that thence we may judge, whether from them a good argument can be drawn in favour of those of the Roman Communion; to prove, that their charity so far exceeds that of the *Protestants*, as they would fain make *people* believe; or, whether indeed *we have not* much more reason to infer the *contrary? Our Benedictine*, by sad experience

was in a condition of giving me some information concerning this matter: he told me, that after he had parted with me at *Luca*, which is a small republic, he took his journey on foot by *Alto Passo*, which is a very ancient and famous hospital, founded by a queen of *France*, eight miles distant from *Luca*. He could not exactly tell me what were the revenues of that hospital; but that this was the law of it, *That all strangers, of what rank or quality soever, rich or poor, were to be received and entertained there three days together, according to their quality.* But that at present it admits of none besides the priests and monks that pass by that way, and to other travellers they give a loaf of half a pound weight, and a pint of wine at the gate; and before they can be admitted to this favour, they must produce several passports and letters, to prove themselves pilgrims, for want of which our Father was in a great danger of being shut out and rejected; but instead thereof, he boldly produced his Letters of Obedience. The good priest who examined them, seeing that the letter was written in Latin, in which probably he was not over skilful, according to the custom of the priests of *Italy*, let it pass, saying that he perceived it was a travelling letter of the *Apostolical Nuncio*, at *Turin;* so that by this shift he was at last admitted. He told me, that his entertainment there was very tolerable, and that upon his enquiry into the manner of the government of that hospital, he found there were 25 that were intendants over it, some of them with the titles of *Guardians*, *Administrators* and *Receivers*, and others with the names of the First, Second and Third Officers of the Pantry and Butlery, which were all rich-clergymen, who divided amongst themselves almost all the revenues of that hospital, there being but a very inconsiderable part of it reserved for those few charitable deeds that

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exercised there. From thence he came to *Pesche*, which is a very fine city, a small days journey from thence, where there is a vast number of convents and monasteries. He went and presented himself for a lodging; but every where they shut the door upon him; for the *Italian* monks are very pitiless and never give any alms to strangers. They have an artifice amongst them they make use of to refuse poor passengers, which is this: all the monks and brothers have orders to tell them, that their abbot guardian, or prior, is not in the monastery; and if you happen by chance to meet with the men themselves, they tell you, that the steward, butler, or some other officer that has the purse, is gone abroad. By this means they make the poor travellers lose all patience, forcing them to depart without the least relief. Our monk being thus refused admittance every where, was fain to seek out an hospital, which he found very different from that of *Alto Passo*, for the bad entertainment he there met with, though it was with much more difficalty that he was admitted, because his letter mentioned, that he was sent to *Rome* about business, and not upon the account of devotion. For though, for the most part, they understand but little Latin, yet they are so wise as to put travellers upon shewing them these two words in their letters, *Ex Devotione*. Two hermits of those *Italian* vagabonds, who spent their life in running from one hospital to another, having perceived that our monk had been somewhat rudely used by reason of his letter, came to him after supper, offering to remedy the matter, and to supply the defect of his letter, so that he should never run the hazard of exposing himself to the like affront for the time to come. The way was this: they promised to draw up for him a *letter of pilgrimage*, and to affix to it the seal of *he Archbishop of Lions*, which they had counter

feited. So that the question now only was about a piece of money they demanded of our *Benedictine*, for this seasonable service; who having none to give, offered them his *Breviary*. The one of them absolutely refused it, saying, that that was a bad implement to carry with one to hospitals; that it was long since they had been happily robbed of theirs, and by this means were excused from a tedious repeating of them, according to the decree of the sacred congregation at *Rome* to that purpose; *Amisso vel ablato Breviaro, non tenetur Presbyter Officio: A priest is not bound to the duty of saying his Breviary, in case he hath lost, or is robbed of it.* They added, that not long since they had seen a priest expelled an hospital, because having a *Breviary* about him, he had forgot or neglected to say the office before supper. But his companion accepted of the bargain, saying, *He would make it his business to rid himself of it, the first booksellers shop he came at.* Thus the *Benedictine* at the same time procured two advantages, the one of being rid of the trouble of saying his prayers; the other, of having got a sure key to give him entrance into all hospitals, and this by means of a counterfeit letter of *pilgrimages*, which these two hermits were ready, for their money, to give to any that did desire it. The Father being thus provided, boldly prosecuted his journey through all the cities of *Italy*, till he came to *Rome*, having been every where received into the hospitals without any difficulty. But he protested to me, that if it were in his power to inflict a severe punishment upon all the *guardians* and *administrators* of them, he thought that in so doing, he should render a most acceptable service to God, as well as to all poor pilgrims; because, said he, it is a most lamentable thing to see how they treat them; what they give them to eat, does not amount to two-pence ch[illegible]

for each person; and this too in such a nasty and slovenly manner, that it turns one's stomach; whilst in the mean time, those wretched priests engross and sweep all the money into their own coffers, to maintain their coach and horses, with the magnificent titles they take to themselves of *high almoners*, *grand administrators*, and *grand priors of the hospital*. It is an infamous thing to see how they lodge poor strangers; there are about twenty or thirty beds in a great room, where they lye two and two, or three and three in a bed, according as they are stocked with company. Before they are suffered to enter into this room, they are stripped stark naked in another, without suffering them so much as to keep on their shirts: this done, they are all of them shut up together till next morning. The beds are all rotten and spoiled, and crawling with vermin, and most of them without any sheets. The hospitals, indeed, are well endowed: but it is the malicious contrivance of those who have the care and administration of them, to give their visitants the worst entertainment they can devise, to turn their stomachs from ever coming there again; and indeed a man must be reduced to extreme necessity before he can resolve on a second visit.

The *Benedictine* gave me a more particular account of an hospital, which is in the hands of the Dominicans of *Viterbo:* these Fathers employed their utmost endeavours with the magistrates of the city, to procure the direction of it, promising, that they would make it their business to take a particular care of *Pilgrims*, by faithfully employing the revenues thereof for their use and relief; whereupon at last, their request was granted them. But since this, forasmuch as they never had the least thought of performing their promise; but to make use of it for their own advantage, they have taken up all the best part of the building fo themselv

themselves, and lodge the Pilgrims that visit them them in one of the cellars that belong to the house. Our *Benedictine* arriving here, met with a company of seven or eight Pilgrims besides himself, who were all together locked up in that cellar, without giving them either meat or drink, or beds to lie upon; and left them thus shut up till ten of the clock the next morning, at which time the door was opened for them. The Fathers Dominicans seeing them in great confusion coming forth from their miserable lodging, scoffed at them, asking them whether they had lined their insides well, and been lodged at their ease? desiring them at their return from *Rome*, to call that way, for that all things should be in a readiness to give them a very good entertainment. All the world knows, that there is nothing of more dangerous consequence in *Italy*, than to offend a Dominician; because, having the *Inquisition* in their hands, they commonly make excellent use of it, to avenge the least affront that is offered to them: wherefore these poor wretches were fain to slink away in silence, without as much as daring to reply one word to this their villainous scoffing at them, after having treated them so outrageously. The famous and rich hospital *Loretto*, to which vast and immense donations have been given in favour of Pilgrims, is for all that, but little better served than what we just now mentioned.

To this purpose I shall relate to you a passage, whereof myself was witness, when I was at *Loretto*. I was walking in the great place which is between the church and that hospital, with two *French* priests, who had lodged there the night before. The guardians, it seems, are obliged to ring a bell, to gather pilgrims together before *supper*, that none of them may be absent; but *these wretches*, that have no more religion in *them than dogs*, and whose only desire is to de-

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fraud and pinch the poor Pilgrims, had on purpose omitted ringing of the bell, as they often do. The *French* priests about six of the clock retired to the hospital, where they demanded of them, why they did not come sooner, and that supper time was past? They excused themselves by alledging, that they had not rung the bell for them: but they falsely and impudently maintained, that the bell had been rung; so that it was not possible for them to obtain so much as a piece of bread for themselves that night. The next morning, the poor priests were so fearful of being served the same trick, (for in that hospital they are obliged to give their visitants supper and lodging for three nights together) that they continued from three of the clock in the afternoon, until evening, under the belfry. The guardians seeing, that it was impossible to put them by their suppers, called them softly (about six of the clock) to come into the hall to supper; which they very honestly refused to do till they had rung the bell, to give warning to the rest of the Pilgrims: the guardians, though enraged at this, yet durst not but do it; but avenged themselves another way, by giving them very bad wine. In other parts of *Italy*, they make use of other devices in their hospitals, to affright pilgrims from coming at them. At *Parma* and *Turin*, they oblige them (all wearied as they are) to go into procession throughout the whole city, in the sight of all men, and to sing long litanies; which makes persons that have the least spark of generosity, or those who are naturally more shamefaced than others, rather expose themselves to lie in the streets, yea, or perish for hunger, than to visit such kind of hospitals, where they must subject themselves to such odious laws. Others make it their business to spoil and deface all the *passports of strangers*, with great ugly black *marks they make* upon them, as a sign they hav be

been entertained in such and such hospitals. Now persons that are any thing careful of preserving their honour in their own country, and to keep their passports neat and clean, will take care how they present themselves to such places as those, whose charity is so infamously and ignominiously administered. In the mean time, by these scandalous fetches, they make shift to reduce their guests to a very small number; for the fewer visitants they have in a year, the greater is their dividend at the year's end. Others have the impudence to make them gain that by their own labour, which was destined for them out of charity: and indeed generally every where, if they be not there precisely at the set time, which ordinarily is an hour before night, they are irrecoverably shut out of the hospital; and it is impossible, either by prayers or tears, to procure any entrance. Others again treat their guests very rudely in their discourse, and with the greatest disdain and contempt imaginable. In a word, charity is every where administered in so uncharitable and misbecoming a manner, that if the benefactors of those hospitals could once return to life, and have the possession of their goods they formerly bequeathed to these places, I do persuade myself, that seeing the horrid abuses that are there practised, they would take heed of undertaking the like foundations for time to come.

The Father told me, that he had been in no place better treated than a new hospital that was a building at *Montefiascone*, three day's journey from *Rome*. It was about five or six years ago, that the priests of that place had been persuading the nobility and citizens of that small city, to contribute to this foundation. They had already procured a considerable revenue, by the pious legacies of some ladies of quality, and some annual rents the city had granted towards it. The Benedictine seeing the good entertainment they had given

given him, said smilingly to the priests, who had the direction of the house, that he was very well satisfied with the good entertainment he had received, that he prayed God to preserve in them this spirit of charity for the poor; and that he heartily wished for the good of their souls, that they might not one day become like others, by sharing the revenues of the hospital amongst themselves, and neglecting and abusing the members of Jesus Christ, as they do. Many Pilgrims have assured me, that it is the greatest misery in the world, to take up one's lodging in any one of the old hospitals, notwithstanding that they are the most richly endowed; and that in the new hospital, they were well enough entertained because the priests had not yet divided the revenue amongst themselves. They do like the gardeners, who suffer the fruit to hang upon the tree, till it become to its full growth and maturity, and then gather it, and make their profit of it; or like merchants that traffic in company, who do not divide the purse till it be full. All these external practices and shews of piety and devotion, visibly terminating in self-interest, make it evident beyond dispute, that they proceeded from no other principles than avarice and hypocrisy. You may probably object to me here, Sir, that the *Italians*, whom I have elsewhere represented to you as men of wit and understanding, must needs be very simple in suffering themselves to be persuaded, to bestow their goods upon such foundations as these, considering the great abuse of them. To this, Sir, I shall answer, that the priests in all countries, have a very powerful ascendant over the spirits of the people, and that this, joined with the doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, which is, that the prayers of Pilgrims are of a particular *efficacy with* God to deliver souls out of purgatory, *and with the* practice observed in the hospit-

hospitals, of obliging the Pilgrims at night to make long prayers for the souls of their deceased benefactors, and causing mass to be said for them in the chapels belonging to the said hospital, is a powerful motive, considering the false belief wherein they are engaged, to persuade them to it. Moreover, these priests are very dextrous in divulging every where, that they are very faithful in the administration of their alms, that they are very careful in giving good entertainment to their Pilgrims, even so far as to contribute with their own money, to defray the charges they are at for provisions. But it is evident enough, that by a mental restriction, they must understand this of provisions for themselves, though before God they cannot by this means excuse themselves from lying. There was formerly many more hospitals in *Italy* than there be at present; every monastery had its hospital. S. *Odon*, abbot of *Clugny*, seeing that these hospitals were all in vogue, and that it was a kind of devotion that made a great noise in the world, would not in this point come behind any seculars. He divided the vast revenues of his abbey into three parts: the first was for the abbot, and entertainment of strangers of note, that came to the monastery: the second, for that maintenance of the monks, which was called the Conventual Portion; and the third part, for the relief of the poor, and the entertainment of Pilgrims, whose feet the abbot himself, as an effect of his humility, was pleased to wash. Almost all the abbots of *France*, *Germany* and *Italy*, followed this example; and in like manner made a tripartition of the revenues of their abbeys. But this their abundant charity, was not of any long continuance; for soon after, that which had been *given* with one hand, was taken away with the *other*. The share of the poor was lost, or rather *confounded*, with those of the abbot and the monk

nonks. At present there are no more of these hospitals to be found in *Italy*, excepting one at *Mont-Cassin*, and another at the Great *Camaldule*, where they entertain Pilgrims. The *Chartreux* monks have also another in the dutchy of *Milan*, at the monastery of *Pavia*. But it is not to their charity strangers are beholden for this convenience, but to that of *Galeacius*, Viscount, Duke of *Milan*, their founder, who would have this monastery, which he had endowed with a vast revenue, to be a place of public reception and entertainment for all, whether rich or poor. The Fathers of this foundation have since done their utmost endeavour, to rid themselves of this hospitality, under the specious pretext, that it was a great disturbance of their solitude. But the lords and great men of that Dutchy, who by the charter of that foundation, are to be splendidly entertained there with all their train and equipage, as often as they pass that way, found themselves too much interested in this their petition, and therefore have always opposed it with all the vigor imaginable; so that they are still forced to continue the same, though sore against their wills. It is a thing but too well known in *Italy*, and avowed by all, that their clergy are extremely wanting in this great duty and distinguishing Christian badge of charity. It is an observation I made myself, that the poor, who are over and above persuaded of this truth by their own experience, do seldom or never beg any alms of them. As for the regular clergy, the *Benedictine* told me, that from the time of our parting, he had presented himself to all the monasteries of his Order he met with, to obtain a lodging with them, but that scarce ever had they been willing to receive them: the common answer he had from them was, That there was an hospital in *the city*, to which he had best address *himself for entertainment*; and that when he

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came thither, they absolutely refused him entrance, telling him *There was a monastery of his Order in that city, and that it was more proper for him to seek a lodging there.* Thus this poor monk, seeing himself sometimes rejected on all sides lamented his sad condition, occasioned by the scandalous uncharitableness of the clergy, and his own brethren of the same Order. He added, That if it were in his power, he would abolish all these hospitals, as well as all pilgrimaging. For, said he, as these hospitals are most scandalously administered, so neither can any thing be imagined more abominable, than the persons that take up their lodging in them; amongst a score of them, it is hard to find one, that is come from his own country with a design to visit the holy places, being for the most part of them a company of vagabonds, who make it their business every year to go the round of *Italy.* They commonly pass the summer in the *Alps,* and then begin their journey in autumn, spend their winter at *Rome, Naples,* or in *Calabria;* and in the spring begin their round anew, in order to return to their summer quarters in the mountains. The way they take to live is this: they beg in the day-time, go from one farm to another, leap hedges, rob orchards, and steal fowl they meet with on the highway, or in the back courts of country houses, or whatever else they meet with. After this good day's work, they retire towards the evening to some neighbouring village, where they know there is an hospital. Many of them travel up and down thus with their whole families, trailing their wives and children along with them. These generally profess themselves to be new converts; that formerly they were either Jews or Protestants; but having abjured their errors, they have thereby reduced themselves into so miserable a condition for the love of Jesus Christ. To this purpose they shew you

very

very fair and plausible letters of credence, with fair great seals annexed to them.

I have sometimes diverted myself with questioning this kind of people, about the principles of Judaism, or the Faith of Protestants; but they were never able to answer any thing to the purpose. Perceiving this, I came nearer to them, and demanded of them, how they came by these fair commendatory letters; whereupon some of them freely owned to me, that they had bought them for their money of an abbot living at *Turin*, who made a trade and livelihood of it. That to this purpose he was furnished with all manner of seals, and could counterfeit all writing-hands. And as for themselves, they ingenuously confessed they had never been either Jews or Protestants, but that they made use of this artifice to induce people to a greater degree of charity towards them: besides these, we find many other sorts of hospital-haunters, that are never a jot better than those I have now mentioned; some of these drag great chains after them, and iron manacles, declaring to have been slaves in *Turkey*, from whence they were miraculously delivered by some vows they made to *Rome*, or to our Lady of *Loretto:* but if any one take them to task about these remote countries, they can answer nothing that is pertinent; and besides, it is notorious, that they buy their chains of the blacksmiths, which many *Italians* have assured me to have been eye-witnesses of. Moreover they are, a sort of people so dissolute in their manners, and so debauched, that were it true indeed, that the Blessed Virgin had wrought a miracle, to deliver them from their bondage, she ought by another to return them thither again. Another sort of Pilgrims well known in these hospitals, are a kind of hermits of the nature of those two I mentioned before, who spend their time in strouling from one place

devotion to another, from *Rome* to *Loretto*, and from *Loretto* to *Rome*, leading a most scandalous life. These are the men, who, without any permission obtained from their bishops to lead an hermetic life, have taken up the habit of themselves. I remember that at *Lions*, the vicar-general caused one of these hermits to be seized, who in prison confessed, that he himself had given the habit to seventeen vagabond rogues like himself for three crowns a piece in consideration of which he had also furnished them with the cloth cut out, and sewed their gowns and cowls himself, and given them counterfeit letters to wander throughout *Germany* and *Italy*. Now it is observable, that the guardians of hospitals do commonly give a better reception to those sort of cattle, than to passengers and Pilgrims, because they know their company is very apt to turn other people's stomachs from coming at them. These are the several sorts and divisions of hospital-mongers, which houses being beside ordered after the manner I have informed you; judge, I pray you, Sir, whether the Church of *Rome* has reason to be so huffy and proud of her Pilgrims and hospitals, or to reproach the Protestants for wanting such goodly ornaments, and testimonies of their charity? For my part, I am firm in the opinion, that the Protestant's method in this point, is by far the better: they have very wisely retrenched these sort of pilgrimages, being convinced that it is much better for a man to shut himself up in his closet, there to pray in secret to his Heavenly Father, than to run up and down to pray to God and the saints in public places, as the *Romanists* do. They know that God has not tied up holiness, neither to time or *place;* and that it is a great piece of folly to *found places* of entertainment for vagabonds, *which* are for the most part either lazy drones

or wicked villains, which ought rather to be shut up in houses of correction, and made to work for their living, than to leave them at their liberty, which they make such ill use of. As for what concerns strangers and travellers, if they happen to fall into some necessity, they are not wanting in Protestant countries, charitably to assist them in their needs, especially if they are known to be honest people. And as for the poor and necessitous that dwell in cities, the parishes to which they belong take notice of what their wants are, and take care to supply them. This, Sir, as far as I can judge, is a far better regulated charity and consequently also more pleasing to God, and such as was practised in the primitive times of the church. It may be, you will tell me, Sir, that the Pilgrims of the Church of *Rome*, are not all of them such pitiful wretches as I have now described, but that there are a vast number of persons of quality, of different ranks and conditions, who travel to *Rome* and *Loretto*, upon the account of devotion, in imitation of S. *Paul*, S. *Pelagia* and *Eustochium*, noble ladies, who undertook a *Jerusalem* voyage, to visit the holy places there, according to the testimony of S. *Jerome*; and that such as these are the persons whose zeal your church extremely boasts itself of. I will not deny, Sir, but that indeed I have seen many persons of quality going into pilgrimage to *Rome*, and other places of devotion that are most in vogue in *Italy*, neither would I altogether disapprove of their design, could I find that the objects to which they pay their devotions, were in any degree worthy of them, and that they did it in a decent and edifying manner. But sincerely, to tell you my opinion, I could never see any thing in all *Italy*, that deserved a man's putting himself to so great charges, *except only* to see its fair cities, and the *masterpieces of* art and nature it contains: but in

this case it is curiosity, and not devotion, that puts men upon undertaking that journey. Besides, Sir, the manner of your rich people going a pilgrimage is so extravagant, and so fraught with staring libertinism and licentiousness, that in truth they had much better keep at home, and honour God in their families, than to quit them as they do, to satisfy their lusts under a cloak of devotion, to the great scandal of all good and sober people. I question not but you will be of my mind, as soon as you shall have read the account I intend to give you in my next *Letter*, wherein I shall treat of my journey to *Loretto*. For the present, because I have not quitted *Luca*, where I parted with my *Benedictine*, who has given me an occasion to write what I have done of *hospitals;* I shall only tell you, before I part with this city, without giving you the description of it, that being no part of my design, that as I was one day coming forth from my inn, I was extremely surprized to hear the people in the street swearing and blaspheming the holy name of Jesus Christ. There was a great throng of people gathered together, who looked upon those that did so, without witnessing the least horror, for hearing such execrable blasphemies. I demanded of them, with some indignation, why they suffered them to talk at such a rate? They mildly answered me, that I was mistaken, and that they did neither swear nor blaspheme, but that it was only a particular quarrel about a piece of money of the value of a shilling, or thereabouts, which at *Luca* they call a *Jesus Christ*. The magistrates of this city caused this money to be coined in honour of a miraculous crucifix, which is kept in their cathedral, which (they say) did either weep, or speak, or bleed, these being the ordinary miracles of these crucifixes. The figure of *Jesus Christ* hanging on the cross, is stamped upon

on this coin, which therefore they call a *Christ*. By which means, when they are at play, or upon quarrels arising about payments, the adorable name of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is not only very frequently taken in vain, but also outraged and blasphemed, as those wretches, whom I have just now mentioned, did for one of these pieces, which the one of them restored to the other with these horrid words, *Take there your R.... of a Christ.*

I have seen another sort of money at *Bononia*, called a *Madonnin*, that is to say, an *Our Lady*, or a *Virgin Mary*, which is of the value of sixpence at *Bononia*, upon occasion of which the same inconveniences do proportionably happen in the like disputes. Thus we see, that an imprudent devotion, ordinarily terminates in a great impiety. The Queen of *Sweden* having seen one of these pieces of money, said smilingly to the cardinal of *Luca*, *That the* Italians *would have done much better to have stamped a coin, and bestowed the name of God upon it;* intimating, that *gold* and *silver* were the God of *Italy*, there being no people in the world that worship it with more idolatry, and yet that are more lazy and careless in the gaining of it. From *Luca* I came to *Pisa*, an ancient city of *Tuscany*, situate upon the River *Arno*. Amongst other remarkable things, here is to be seen a fair church yard, called in *Italian*, *Campo Santo;* it is exceeding large, and of a square figure. The walls and tombs of it are all of marble, jasper, and porphyry, very artificially wrought. They of *Pisa*, had filled this place with the earth, which in a great number of vessels they brought from *Jerusalem*, and in which the dead bodies are consumed in twenty-four hours. In a word, they tell us, that this *Holy Earth* is nothing but a continual *miracle: but* for my part, I find no more *miracle in the case*, than there is in the church

yard of S. *Innocent's* at *Paris*, where the bodies are consumed within the same compass of time, without any miracle at all. In all their churches they shew us a prodigious number of relics of saints and saintesses, as in all the rest of *Italy*, the most of which are extremely ridiculous. I will not stop at present to give you a catalogue of them, but will pass on to *Florence*, where I shall have occasion to entertain you with the *great devotion*, that is so much in vogue and credit at a church called the *Anonciade*, or *Annunciation*. The original of the *devotion* take as follows: a painter having been employed to make a picture of the Blessed Virgin, in the posture wherein the Romish tradition tells us she was, when the angel *Gabriel* was sent to her, to acquaint her with the incarnation of the *word*; that is, in her chamber on her knees, reading the prophecy of *Isaiah*: the painter had finished all other parts of the picture, except one, to wit, the Virgin's face, which he had reserved for his last task; but being at a loss what idea to follow, in representing to the life so excellent a creature, and despairing ever to find any thing in his art of sufficient perfection to reach this height, he in this trouble and discomposure of thoughts, fell asleep in the church, where he was at work, and awaking three or four hours after, (O strange prodigy, and well deserving the wonder of all men!) he found the thing that had so much perplexed him, happily finished, and much better than ever he could hope to have done it himself; whereupon he began to cry out amain, *a miracle, a miracle!* highly averring, that an angel sent from heaven had done the work whilst he was asleep. The friars of the convent where he wrought, finding their interest in the thing, ranged themselves of his side, so that in a moment the devotion took fire, and the concourse of people to their church

was

was so great, and has ever since continued with such extraordinary success, as hath made it at this day, one of the richest of all *Italy;* and the convent of friars, one of the best endowed. The reflections I have made on this picture, is, that on many accounts all this might be no more than a mere cheat or mistake. For first of all, some unknown person, or rather friar of skill in that art, entering by chance into the chapel where the painter was at work, and finding him asleep, might make use of that opportunity, and having finished the work, retire himself before the painter awoke. Secondly, we may suppose that the painter, to make himself talked of, and to gain himself the credit and reputation of a good man, might have invented this lye himself. Or lastly, we may conceive that the friars of the convent, upon consideration of a good piece of money, might have induced him to have published this lye, to make their advantage of it. What I alledge here, that might have been, is not done with this intent, as if I had a mind by all manner of ways to disgrace and discredit this pretended miracle, by supposing it a piece of forgery. I know it is the character of a disingenuous and malicious spirit, to put a bad construction upon a matter that admits a favourable one; and verily, I would not, for all the world, expose myself to that reproach. But the reason of what I have said concerning this matter is, that I am otherwise satisfied on good grounds, that the point in question is a manifest and palpable falsehood. For first of all, if it were an angel, as it is pretended, that had painted this face of the *Virgin*, as the work of an angel is far more perfect than that of a man, it will follow, that this picture, at least as to the mixture and laying on of the colours, must have far excelled all the pieces of *Caratche, Guido, Rhin*, or any other of the most famous painters of *Italy* : and in the

mean time we see the contrary, and that it doth not at all exceed the rest of the pictures, finished by the painter himself, which made a traveller, who eyed it very well say, *That the angel-limner must have been but a blockhead and bungler at his art, to draw such rude and incurious strokes.* But besides this, we have another argument to convince the *Romanists*, that this is a false supposition; which is, that this portraiture of the *Blessed Virgin*, bears no resemblance at all with those other pictures of the Virgin, which they pretend to have been drawn by the hand of S. *Luke* himself. The face here is round, fair and ruddy, with lively and brisk eyes, and a low and smooth forehead; whereas, that painted by S. *Luke*, is long and swarthy, *Egyptian*-like, with an humble and modest look, and an high and prominent forehead, and which has nothing of that so charming a beauty of the *Blessed Virgin*, they so highly magnify when they speak of her, being more proper to excite sensual lust, than any sentiment of devotion. Wherefore we must conclude, that either this angel was mistaken, or that S. *Luke* was a great *ignoramus* in the art of *painting:* which, notwithstanding, they tell us he was skillful in, to perfection; for, without doubt, the one or the other must have been foully mistaken. To attribute this mistake to the angel, would be to derogate extremely, and against all reason, from the transcendant excellence of those blessed spirits; and to accuse S. *Luke*, would destroy their own tradition; which they ought not so far to vilify and debase, as to make it give way to the particular testimony of a silly painter, who may be a liar as well as so many others; I speak of him who drew this picture of the *Annunciation*. *Lastly*, it might also as well be alledged, that the *devil*, for the encouragement and increase of *superstition*, might have had a finger in the intrigue,

as so peremptorily to assert, That it was an angel of light; though to speak the truth, this is not very rational neither, for the devil is too cunning to have done his work so much at random, and would without doubt rather have borrowed his idea from the picture of *Sancta Maria Magiore* at *Rome*. However the Popes have declared it to be a truth, they have approved the matter, and have issued their bulls for the authorizing of it, and thundered out their excommunications against those who would be so fool-hardy to doubt of it, being the same that other Popes have done in favour of the pictures of S. *Luke*. This *devotion* has procured vast treasures to the Fathers of this convent called *Serviti*. The great Duke of *Tuscany* repaired thither every evening to say his prayers, whilst I was at *Florence*, and it is the common rendezvous of strangers, that have a mind to see this court. He every day gave great alms to the poor at the door of the church, who all of them, as I was told, were persons very well to live, though (to induce people more to compassion) they keep themselves covered with nothing but rags. They have taken such firm possession of this post, that they will not suffer any strange beggar to mingle with them. By occasion of mentioning these beggars, and that you may somewhat the better apprehend the powerful virtue of the Holy Image, and the miracles the *Virgin* continually works in favour of those, who repair thither to pay her adorations, I will here relate to you a miracle which they cried along the streets of *Florence*, as a thing that had lately happened, which print my curiosity prompted me to buy: the story seemed to me very gallant, and though it be something long, yet I hope the recital will not seem tedious to you.

A gentleman of one of the best families of Florence, was fallen from a flourishing condition, by

mean

means of some cross blasts of fortune, to extreme poverty. That which greatly added to his affliction was, that he had two grown daughters that were not yet provided for; his only recourse to this miserable condition, was to the mother of God. And to enter himself the better into her favour, he made a vow to continue all his life long very devout to her miraculous image of the *Annunciade:* to this purpose he rose very early every morning, and went to say his prayers in the church-porch, before the doors were opened. After he had continued his devotion thus for a long time, the *Blessed Virgin* thought good at last to hear his prayers, and to send him some relief. Accordingly she inspired two blind men, of the number of those who always kept about the door of the church, to rise sooner than ordinary, to take their station in the church porch: being arrived there, one of them began to tell his companion, how much he was beholden to the miraculous Virgin, for that from extreme poverty, he had in a short time attained to competent riches, by the alms he had received there; and, that besides the money in silver he had left at his lodging, he had two hundred pistoles in gold quilled in the crown of his hat. His blind comrade having heard this his discourse, told him, *That for his part, he did not in the least envy his good luck, as being much more obliged to the miraculous image, and that he had quilted in his hat no less than five hundred pistoles in gold.* The gentleman, who was near to them at his prayers, without making the least noise, that might discover him to be there, having heard them discoursing at this rate, and seeing so fair an opportunity offered him of enriching himself, very softly drew near to the two blind men, and very dextrously took off both their hats at once, retiring some paces backwards. The blind men being extreme-

y surprized hereat, and each of them believing is companion had done the feat, demanded their ats of one another, and proceeded to such a age, that handling their crutches, they disharged several hearty strokes upon one another's heads; and without doubt, had killed one nother, if people had not come in to part them. Vhilst they were thus hotly engaged, the gentleman went off, and finding some scruple in himelf, for what he had done, he goes the same ay to the Cardinal-archbishop of *Florence*, to hom he told all that had past: the Archbishop aving heard the relation, did fully approve of hat he had done, and told him, that he was not t all obliged to make any restitution, forasmuch s it was apparent, that the *Virgin* had visibly ssisted him in the whole course of that affair, n consideration of the devotion he bore to her niraculous portraiture; and ordered, that for the omfort of the faithful, it should be printed and ublished throughout the city of *Florence*. This ame story has since been printed a-new, in a ook which is very current in *Italy*, and has for s title, *l'Utile col Dolci*, or *profit with pleasure*. ou see here, Sir, a very pleasant miracle, wherein the *Virgin*, to pleasure one of her servants, makes a robber of him, and who, as such, ought o be punished according to the laws. For by what means soever these poor blind men might have picked up this money, however, theirs it vas, and had been given them for alms. But if we suppose this to be a story invented at pleasure, I am astonished that a cardinal-archbishop should ever cause it to be printed; and that the *Inquisitor*, which in all other matters appears so exact and scrupulous, should licence the impression of it in the book before mentioned. People are so *cloyed with miracles* in *Italy*, that except they contain something romantic and fabulous, the

they are scarcely taken notice of. This is that which makes the *Italians*, who not without great reason, are accused of coining new ones every day, to have a great care to set them out with such rare and surprising, or such merry and pleasing circumstances, that it is very divertizing to read them, or hear them related. I may have an occasion to give you a more particular account hereof in one of my *LETTERS*, and therefore shall at present pass over in silence the many miracles of this famous church of the *Annunciade*, to give you an account of some places of devotion, which are not far distant from the city of *Florence*, and which I had the curiosity to go and visit.

It is amongst the high mountains of the *Apennine*, that we meet with three famous deserts, at a day's journey distance from each other, where as many heads of different orders had their beginning. The first of these is *Camadule*, the second *Valombrosa*, and the third *Mont Alverne*. Of these *Camaldule* has, by way of pre-eminence, been called the *Holy Desert*, and is certainly one of the most desert places nature can produce. S. *Romualdus* obtained this place of an Earl, called *Maldule*, from whence it took its name *Camaldule*, as being a kind of abbreviation of *Campmaldule*, or the field of *Maldule*. Hither it was then that he retired to lead a penitent life, and having by his example engaged some disciples to join with him, he built there a monastery upon a very high mountain, in an interval lying between two tops or prominences thereof; and afterwards being desirous of a greater solitude, he retired to one of those tops, which is a place almost inaccessible, where he instituted a kind of double Order, one of *Monks*, and the other of *Solitaries* or *Hermits*; but under the same habit and rule, excepting only some particular constitutions to the one, with re-

ferences

ference to the hermitic life; and to the others, for the monastic. The monks dwelt in the monastery he had built below, and the solitaries retired with him to the top, which at present is called the *Holy Desert*. I arrived at this monastery in the beginning of *October*. From *Florence* it is in a manner a continual up-hill thither, and from thence one may discover that great and lofty city, with the country all about it, which affords a most pleasing prospect. These fathers have always preserved hospitality amongst them, and to this day entertain all strangers that come thither, and treat them according to their quality for three days together. Forasmuch as their is neither inn, nor any houses near it, I went and presented myself to the abbey, where I was very civilly received. I found here three *Florentine* gentlemen, to whose company I joined myself, and at night we were served at table with eggs and fish, without any superfluity; but with a mediocrity well-becoming the religious state of these Fathers, with which I was much more edified than I had been at the *Citeaux* in *France*, where the abbot treated us with so much profusion and excess. We acquainted them we designed next day to go to the *Sacred Desert;* and accordingly they called us up at five the next morning, and made us sit down to eat at six. I was extremely surprized to see they had prepared dinner so early, when none of us had the least appetite to meat: but they told us, that we must force ourselves to eat as well as we could, because the air was so piercing and cold in climbing up to the top of the mountain, that we should never be able to bear it, if we attempted it with empty stomachs: moreover, that we were to prepare ourselves to clamber on foot for six miles together on the rocks, and *to march through* the snow, before we could *come to the top of the Holy Desert*, and that ther

they never gave any meat to any person, to avoid disturbing of their solitude; so that we should be forced to come down from thence by the same way to the monastery, there to take a second refreshment. We suffered ourselves therefore to be persuaded, and after we had eaten, we parted from the monastery about seven of the clock, and walked on towards the top, always compassing the mountain in a continued forest of tall *fir-trees*. All these rocks are full of little springs, from whence issueth a very clear water, whose rivulets disperse themselves all over the way by which we went; so that one cannot climb very high without marching in the water, which is very troublesome. These waters, meeting together from a considerable torrent which we passed and repassed upon great *fir-trees* laid over in the form of bridges. We arrived about noon at the top, after having marched two miles through the snow. This was in the month of *October;* but the top of the mountain is so cold, that when it rains below, it almost continually snows here on high. We found the snow very high there, and had been so for eight days; so that at a distance we could see nothing but the upper part of the church, and the tiles or covering of the cells; we counted about sixty of them, which are about twenty paces distant from one another, and taken all together, from a little town: every cell hath several rooms, and a garden. They shewed us that of S. *Romuald*, which one of the hermits dwelt in. We asked them why they bore no greater respect to the cell of their happy founder, but left it to one of their religious to live in? They told us, that this was the only way they had to preserve it against the moisture the place was obnoxious to; and that otherwise the wood would rot, and the cell be in danger of falling down. They shewed us the cell of a venerable hermit, who, they assured us had

not stirred thence for forty years together, who still lived there in perpetual silence, not nuch as speaking a word to any one. They in his meat to him through a little window, ch he took with great sobriety and modera-. These solitaries esteemed him a saint, for ; value silence above all other virtues: which e me occasion to demand of those who were ered to accompany us, what kind of thing great virtue of *Silence* was, and how they de-d it? They answered, that it was to be silent ı men, in order to speak to God. Where-n I replied, that it seemed to me to be better ned thus: *To be silent or to speak when one ht; and that I could not approve of the use ı had introduced amongst them of speaking to another by signs.* We ourselves indeed had newly experienced the inconveniences of it, ur first entrance into the *Holy Desert;* for ng found the court gate open, we went into ıts; but when we were entered, not knowing ch way to betake ourselves, we drew near to e of these solitaries, who were busy in remov-of the snow to make a passage: We desired n to be so kind as to tell us, to whom we ht address ourselves for to take a view of the e, but not so much as one of them opened their ıths to give us a word in answer. Some of n made signs to us with their hands and feet, others with their brooms and shovels. We be-ed at first, that they were fools, or that they a mind to drive us out again; but at last we rehended that they made signs to us to return he gate, and there speak with the porters, ı whom we happily met. I immediately told ıe porters, that it appeared to me very strange, God having given to men a tongue and a ıth, *wherewith to* express their thoughts, some *ons instead of* acknowledging this advantag *had given them* above brute beasts, by a go

and discreet use thereof, should undertake to make use of their hands and feet to express themselves, like those that are dumb-born, or that have their tongues cut out. That at the best this seemed to me very improper, and very far from appearing to be a virtue fit to make men good and holy. They answered me, *That these were mysteries hid and unknown to seculars, and only revealed by God to solitaries and perfect souls, who knew the excellence of it. The sins (proceeded he) of the men of the world, are gross sins, such as* covetousness, envy, luxury, blasphemy, &c. *but as for us, our greatest sins are, when sometimes by frailty we do break our observance of silence; to walk with too much haste and precipitation; to cast some curious, though innocent looks; to be slovenly in our habits; to have preferred sometimes vocal, to mental prayer; to have been too much pleased with the taste of heavenly comfort, or too heavy and cast down under sufferings.* I seemed to perceive in these answers, something of pride and haughtiness, and that smelt strong of a pharisaical *non sum sicut cæteri hominum, I am not like other men*, and which made me fear that *pride* (having been the sin of the angels in heaven) might, probably also, be the sin of these solitaries here on the top of the mountain. And indeed, so far were all these dazzling shews of piety from making me conceive any inclination for these material solitudes, which seemed so much to facilitate the practice thereof, that on the contrary, it made me conceive a greater love for an ordinary and humble life in the world, accompanied with all those pious practices which in such a life we have continual opportunities to exert. It appeared to me, that these solitaries placed the whole and main of *godliness* in some trifling observances, which yet are *powerful* enough to make them wander from the *paths* of that charity they ought to have in their

those who are engaged in the commerce of the world, as looking upon them no otherwise than as men that are in the highway to utter perdition, and for whom there is almost no hope of salvation. Surely, such thoughts as these cannot be said to comply with *charity;* for without doubt, some seculars living in the world, are as acceptable in the eyes of God, as these hermits on the mountains. The porters told us, *That three times a week they of the monastery below brought up viands, and other necessary provisions for the sustenance of those who lived in the sacred desart.* At last they conducted us to the church, which is very little and narrow, all lined and wainscotted with wood, against the moisture and great coldness of the place. They assured us, *That some certain winters, the cells, church and all, were wholly buried in the snow, and that they were fain to hollow themselves out passages below through the snow, making some holes to the top to let in the light, for to pass from one cell to another, which then appeared like so many great white vaults.* They told us, *that all the while they live under the snow, they are very little sensible of the cold; but to preserve themselves from the ill effects of the moisture, they keep good wood fires, that burn day and night, as having very near them vast forests of* pine, chesnut, *and* fir-trees, *which do furnish them with wood in great abundance.* After we had visited the church, we returned by the same way we came, and arrived to the abbey about five of the clock in the evening, where we were civilly entertained as before. It is only this monastery that is still maintained in good observance; all other monks of the same Order, who have any monasteries in *Italy,* lead a very scandalous life. We *parted thence the next* day, after that we had *returned our thanks to* these Fathers, and knowin

that the abbey of *Valombrosa*, which is chief of another order of monks, very famous in *Italy*, was not above a day's journey from thence, we all of us travelled thither. We went down hill for some miles, and afterward, coasted about the *Appennine* by a very pleasant way. We travelled a great way through woods of *olive-trees*, all loaded with *olives*, and ever and anon met with small hills full of *orange* and *citron-trees*, full hung with *citrons* and *oranges*. Some of them are so high, that a man on horseback may pass under them, without touching the branches. After they have been once planted, they grow, without standing in need of any art or husbandry. All these sides of the mountains are exceeding rich, as abounding with all sorts of *fruit-trees*, and at the bottom of every one of these trees, there is a stock of a vine that embraceth it, and enterlacing its branches with those of the trees, does at the season make a very pleasant mixture of its grapes with the fruit. After half a day's journey, we were obliged to mount the *Apennine*, for four miles together, through very stoney and rugged ways, until we came to *Valombrosa*, in Latin *Vallis Umbrosa*. This place is indeed a valley with respect to the tops of the mountains, that raise themselves a great height above it; but if we compare it with the level of the country that lies beneath, it is a very high mountain, and very cold; for there are no fruit trees to be seen here, except only some *chestnut-trees*, and a few *apple-trees*. The great forests of *pine* and *fir-trees* that encompass it, in former times, rendered the place very dark and shady, which was the occasion of giving it the name of *Valombrosa*. S. *John Gualbert* made choice of this place for his retirement. He naturally was a lover of these kind of places, and in all his travels whensoever he met with any dark wood or very solitary place, he cast in his mind

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some time or other to come and fix his abode there, and to be the founder of a monastery. I am frequently obliged in my *LETTERS*, in compliance with the exigency of my matter, to relate to you several vicious and wicked actions of the *Italian* priests and monks; a thing very contrary to my natural inclination, which prompts me to conceal the ill, and to publish only the good. Wherefore, a little to refresh my wearied pen, and to comply with the desire I have to honour the memory of great men, you will give me leave, Sir, I hope, to give myself the satisfaction of relating to you an action truly virtuous and memorable of S. *John Gualbert.* This young lord had a brother, whom he most tenderly loved, who being engaged in a duel, was unhappily killed by his rival. *Gualbert* supposed it would be an action worthy of his honour and great courage, to endeavour to avenge the death of his brother. To this purpose he engaged himself in pursuit of this homicide, who being fled, he went in quest of him throughout all the provinces of *Italy.* It happened at length that he met with him disarmed in a way where he could not escape him. The unhappy wretch seeing him come towards him with his drawn sword in his hand, cast himself prostrate on the ground, crying for mercy; but perceiving by his thundering voice, and his inflamed looks, that there was no quarter to be hoped for, laid his arms across his breast, in expectation of the mortal thrust. *Gualbert* seeing him in this posture, called to mind our Lord Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, who was so far from avenging himself, that he not only prayed for his persecutors, but died for them. This thought having quite spoiled his former design, he alights from his horse, and instead of running his enemy through, he freely forgave him, kissed him and embraced him, and tendered him ever after as his ow

own brother. If the *Italians* and other Papists, instead of amusing themselves about the superstitious worship of their saints, would once apply themselves to imitate these lovely examples of their virtues, they would, without doubt, render themselves more acceptable to God, neither would they be found so basely and abominably avenging themselves as they do. I return now to my solitude of *Valombrosa:* we arrived at this famous abbey, where are some of the most magnificent and sumptuous buildings that can be. One of the *Florentine* gentlemen that was with me had a brother there, who was the chief person there, next to the abbot, for whose sake we were civilly received. The monks here lead a very commodious and pleasant life; when they are weary of living in this desert, they make an enterchange with the monks of *Florence*, and thereby enjoy the pleasing variety of living one part of the year in the country, and the other in the city. They have cut down for a quarter of a league round their monastery, all the great *fir trees* that shadowed it, to give themselves more air, and to make the place more healthy. The next morning we were led to the hermitage of S. *John Gualbert* which is about half a league distance, from the point of a little rock which lifts up itself in the midst of a valley, being very craggy on every side. In getting up to it, we went round the rock, as by a winding stairs, for the space of one quarter of an hour, at the end of which, we found ourselves at the top of the rock, where the hermitage is; which consists of a very neat chapel, curiously gilt and painted all over, and a very handsome set of lodgings, well wainscotted and painted all within, with a garden of a moderate size, so that the whole is a mere jewel. There is no monument left here of the ancient cell of this saint, all the buildings being new and modern: there is always a father

father hermit that dwells here, with a converse rother to serve him. Whenever the hermit dies, he abbots of the congregation of *Valombrosa*, at heir general chapter, make choice of a monk of xemplary life, and a lover of solitude to reside here. The great abbey is to furnish him with all ecessaries of life: he has a very fine library full f choice books when he has a mind to study, and ndeed the hermit that was then in possession of he place, was a man of competent learning, and ppeared to me a very honest man. He made us very fine discourse about the *Contempt of the orld*, and the *advantages of retirement and solitude:* though indeed there was no great need of , for we were already, without all that, so charmd with the beauty of this hermitage, that in case here had been more of the same cut, nature, rather than grace, would easily have persuaded us o become hermits, in order to enjoy an easy and leasant life, without either care or trouble. The nonks of *Valombrosa* have extremely relaxed the trictness of their first institution. They are loathed in black, and profess the rule of S. *Benet*, though indeed they observe but little of it. The next day we set out very betime in the morning towards Mount *Alverne*. This is the place were the seraphic Father S *Francis*, founder of all the religious Orders that live under his rule, retired himself to spend his life in contemplation, and where, as they tell us, he received the impression of the sacred wound. This day's journey was exceeding troublesome to us: we went up rom *Valombrosa*, by the direction of a guide we ook along with us, to the very top of the *Appennine*, nd continued our way upon the same, till we came o the foot of *Alverne*. This mountain is discovered at a great distance, and some maintain it to e the highest of all the *Appennine*. It hath nothing that is pleasing or delightful about it, nei-

ther is any thing to be seen here besides bare rocks, without either trees or verdure. It is so high, that it seldom or never rains there, which was the reason we found no snow here. We got up to it with a great deal of trouble and difficulty, by a very narrow way between extreme high precipices, and we could not gain the top of it, till it was in a manner quite night. Here we found a large convent of religious, of the Order of S. *Francis*, called by the *Italians*, *Soccolanti*, because of the wooden socks they wear instead of shoes. The first thing we did was, to enquire where we might lodge for that night: the fathers told us, there was an inn close by for the entertainment of strangers. Formerly these religious exercised hospitality towards all sorts of persons, that out of devotion came to *Alverne*, as the Fathers of *Camaldule* do to this day, to those who come to visit the *Holy Desert*, whereof I have spoken before; but at present they are weary of this piece of service, and do employ the fund destinated to that purpose to their own advantage. By bad hap for us, there was no body in the inn, the innkeeper with all his family being gone to a wedding, a day's journey from the place; so that we were obliged to return to the convent, and entreat the Fathers to afford us some shelter amongst them for that night, since there was no other place for us to bestow ourselves. The Fathers seeing no remedy, granted our request, but with so much perverseness and ill-will, that we could not but wonder to see that persons, who for the most part live upon the alms that are abundantly contributed to them by seculars, should refuse to assist them upon occasion. They shewed us a chamber where we might lie, but as for affording us any thing to *eat, they* desired our excuse, telling us, that they *had none* for themselves; being thus resolved to *leave us* without either meat or fire, though that night

nights be exceeding cold there, upon the pretence of the trouble they had in getting their wood, as being obliged to fetch it from the foot of the mountain. We desired them at least to be so kind, to give us leave to enter their kitchen, for to warm ourselves a little at their common fire; but they being very loath that we should see the good provisions they had there prepared for themselves, told us, That they could not grant our request, because they had some of their fathers that are sick about the fire; saying of their office. One of the *Florentine* gentlemen that was in our company, knowing that the convent was never destitute of provisions, broke out into a passion against the guardian and reproaching him with his base incivility, told him, *That he constantly three times a week sent a good quantity of bread and wine to their great convent at* Florence; *but that he was resolved to stop his hand for time to come, and give them the bag, and that moreover he himself would acquaint them with the reason moving him so to do.* This advertisement made the guardian presently change his note, and having excused himself for what was past, in consideration of the benefactor of his Order, he himself conducted us into the kitchen, where instead of these sick fathers, and mumblers of their offices, we found there four or five fat and bonny friars playing at dice, a great pot boiling over the fire, besides several joints of meat a roasting. One of these friars seeing us come in, very nimbly snatched up the dice and boxes into his gown; but a while after forgetting himself, rose up, and let all tumble down on the ground. The father guardian perceiving the mischance that had happened, excused them the best he could, telling us, that having been that day a great way off a preaching, to refresh themselves they had made bold with a little recreation. In fine, they made

us sup with them, and we were very well treated. After supper, they conducted us to our chamber, where we found a very good fire. The next day, one of these fathers accompanied us to shew us the holy places of Mount *Alverne*. We were extremely surprised to see the surface of this mountain, which we had not had the time the night before to take notice of, because it was very late when we arrived. The whole mountain is nothing else but a company of rocks, heaped one upon another, and all cleft asunder, forming as many hideous precipices, which cannot be viewed without horror. Some believe that these rocks were rent asunder at the death of our Lord: S. *Francis* was of this mind, when he pitched upon this place for his retirement, to meditate upon the sacred mysteries of the passion. They shewed us the place where the history of his life tell us, that Jesus Christ appeared to him in the form of a Seraphim on the cross, and imprinted in his hands, his feet, and his side, the five wounds that were given him on the cross, to the end it might be said, that S. *Francis* had suffered as much as he. But indeed, according to this account, he would have suffered much more; for the same legend adds, that he suffered even till his death, the pains of Jesus Christ as sensibly, as Jesus Christ felt them, when he received them on the cross; and that from that time forward, the life he lived was continued by a perpetual miracle, which preserved his life in the midst of a continual death. For my part, I find this pretended apparition of Jesus Christ like a seraphim with wings extremely improper, not to say ridiculous; why not rather in his human form? He that would not take upon him the nature of angels, shall we believe that he would ever take their figure? And would not this highly favour the opinion of those ancient heretics who maintained, That the son of God

had only taken upon him an airy and phantastical body? And to speak my mind, I believe that this impression of the wounds, was only performed in the strong imagination of S. *Francis*, much like some others have imagined, that they had feet of wax, and a head of glass. The place where it is said that this miraculous operation was celebrated, is under a great stone, whereof the one and only is wedged into the rocks, yet so as according to my understanding is sufficient for its support. Nevertheless, these Fathers every where proclaim this for a great miracle, and that it cannot be conceived but that naturally the stone must needs fall. Near to this they shew us a little path way, very narrow, upon the brink of a vast precipice, which was the way by which S. *Francis* went to pray under that rock, The devil envying his great devotion, attempted upon a time to cast him down headlong; but he seeing the enemy of mankind coming towards him, leaned himself against the rock, which made way for his body, softening like wax to receive him. They still shew this impression of his body left in the rock, but which may as well have been done with a chissel, as the way they tell us. As for the devil, sure it is that the *Roman Catholics* make many pretty stories of him, that are not always very authentic. I remember to have seen in *France*, in the church of S. *Columb*, near *Sens*, a very pleasant history, represented *en relief* upon an holy water bason of *marble*, near the door of the church, concerning an holy hermit called *Beet*. The devil being come on a certain time to distract his thoughts, whilst he was saying of his office, the saint laying hold of him, lift him up by the ears, and put him into the basin, and having laid his *Breviary* upon it, kept him a prisoner there for ten *days together*. Nothing can be imagined *more comical*, than to see the representation o

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this devil, who (as far as he is able) lifts up his great asses ears above the holy-water, with the marks of an extreme rage in his countenance: *For* (say they) *he fears the holy-water, many degrees beyond the fire of hell.* The monks of this abbey thought good to be at the charge of this work, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam.* But I return now to mount *Alverne.* The Fathers afterwards shewed us many other places in the rocks where S. *Francis* performed his religious exercises, and amongst others, that where he wrought the constitutions of his Order, whereof I have seen the original written with his own hand, at our Lady of *Portiuncule*, which is a little chapel, in *Umbria*, about five miles from *Assise.* Here it was, as they tell us, that he had many revelations and appari-tions: amongst the rest, they tell us of an appa-rition of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in consider-ation of the great zeal of this saint for the salva-tion of sinners, granted to him as plenary, an in-dulgence as he could give, that is to say, an entire remission of guilt and punishment for all those, who the first day of *August* should visit this lit-tle chapel: so that the grand universal jubilee of the holy year, is not more saving to sinners than this of S. *Francis.* Any person who on this day goes to visit that chapel, with intention to enjoy the advantage of this jubilee, with saying five *Pater Nosters*, and as many *Ave Maries*, be he the most abominable sinner that lives on earth, becomes as pure and innocent, as he was when newly baptized; and should he die in that con-dition, there is neither hell nor purgatory for him, but would go directly to Paradise. And conform-able to this belief of the Roman Catholics, and more particularly of the *Italians*, there is such a *prodigious* concourse of people on this day from *all parts*, that it causes a famine in all the coun-*try thereabouts*, and many are killed in the throng

that

that is at the door of the church, who then go to enjoy the privilege of their indulgence in the other world. Now seeing all this, must not we avow, that either the Roman Catholics are very blind, or else very negligent of their salvation, when in the most importunate affair imaginable, and the greatest concern of their immortal souls, the remissions of their sins, rely upon the word of a mortal man? Their S. *Francis* has told them, that by going to such a place on such a day, and there saying such and such prayers, their sins, with all the chastisement due to them for the same, shall be entirely forgiven them, and that he has received the assurance of this from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, who (he said appeared in particular to him for this purpose; and without examining that matter any further, they believe it, they rely upon his word, and cast behind their backs (O stupendous *occæcation!*) the sacred oracles of the gospel, which do seriously warn them, that the only way to have their sins pardoned, is true repentance. The Fathers *Soceolanti* of the Order of S. *Francis*, who are extremely enriched by means of this devotion, have built themselves in this place a very fair convent, and forasmuch as the chapel was too little for their use, they have built a great and magnificent church round about it, so as the little church stands now enclosed in the greater. I never yet saw any place of devotion in *Italy*, which had not some fair palace, and a good kitchen for the use and accommodation of those who make the best of it, which I confess, makes them still the more suspicious to me. Five miles distant from hence, we met with *Assise*, which is a pretty town, situate on a hill: this is the place where S. *Francis* was born, and where they say his body reposed at the great convent of the *Franciscans*, in a subterranean chapel, under the high

altar. It is said, that his body, and that of S. *Dominic*, continue there without the least symptom of corruption, and that they stand both upright on their feet, hand in hand, without any thing to uphold them; and that it hath pleased God thus to permit, that these two saints, that had been such great friends during their lives, should not be separated after death. This is a mystery that is not suffered to be seen at present; the Pope himself, for all his pretended power in heaven and on earth, is not admitted to this privilege, since one of his predecessors miscarried in the attempt, who being resolved to take a view of this rare wonder, died suddenly: and soon after, both these saints appeared to an honest *Franciscan* friar, and told him, that the like should happen to all those who should be so fool-hardy to attempt the same thing. But yet notwithstanding all this tradition, the Fathers *Soccolanti*, who constitute a distinct body from that of the *Franciscans*, assures us, that they have the body of S. *Francis* at *Portiuncule*, which (as I have already said) is not above five miles distant from thence; as well as the *Dominicans* maintain, that they have the body of their patriarch in their great convent at *Bononia*. Indeed, the reason why the Popes do not visit this place, is not because they are afraid of meeting death there, but because they are afraid of disobliging of one of these potent parties, I mean the *Franciscans*, or the *Dominicans;* since it is evident, they could not make the discovery without ruining one or other of these devotions, which would be a vast prejudice to these religious orders; wherefore they like better to leave the people in superstition and error, than to open their eyes at their own cost. The Pope is obliged to cultivate and improve the interest of the monks, forasmuch as they support his interest.

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The third thing wherewith I designed to entertain you, before my closing of this *LETTER* concerning S. *Francis*, is, that amongst other things, I saw a small convent which he built himself, with the assistance of his brethren, in a descent from the *Appennine*, leading to a town of *Italy*, called *The Borough of the Holy Sepulchre*. He lived in this convent several years, and designed it for a model to those convents of his Order, that should be built for time to come. To speak the truth, I never in my life saw so wretched a dwelling. The whole convent is nothing else but a company of holes or caves, more proper to lodge bears, than for men to retire in. Now I could wish that men would a little compare this poor hovel, with those magnificent convents which his children, I mean those who profess to live under his rule, have built throughout all *Italy*; to wit, those grand convents of *Rome*, *Naples*, *Venice*, and in a word, of all the other citics. Have not the most famous architects exhausted their art, and racked their brains, to perform the model of them? the most renowned painters employed their utmost skill and choicest colours to make all their walls a pleasing and lively story? the most curious gilders their finest gold, to make thereof ceilings bright and luminous? and lastly, have not the bowels of the *Apennine* been ravaged for the finest marbles, the choicest jaspers, and rarest porphyries, to form the pillars that support them, to pave their cloisters, their refectories, and their dormitories; and to compose all the doors, windows, and chimneys of their cells? The *Capuchin* Fathers are the only men that have witnessed some horror for so extravagant a pomp, so diametrically opposite to the laws of humility and poverty, which they received from their legislator S. *Francis*. They engaged themselves *at the beginning* of their reformation, to a certain standard

standard of building their convents, which was both very modest and regular; only they have always had a great care to provide themselves fair gardens, with fine parterres, pleasant fountains, and great walks of trees, which are commonly frequented by the gentlemen of cities that are near them, to take the air in. The *Capuchins* are at this day the best gardeners in *Europe*. In *Italy*, they furnish all the ladies with flowers, and big-bellied women with fruit. But we find, that of late they have lost much of their modesty in building too: the new buildings they make at present are very lofty, more large, their cells greater, their churches more adorned, and their other regular places more comporting with the modern way of building. They have very fair convents at *Venice*, *Florence*, *Pisa*, and *Milan*. When I passed through the Dutchy of *Burgundy* in *France*, I saw at *Dijon* the fine pile of building these Fathers caused to be raised for their sick, which was not the least inferior to the fair palaces of the presidents and counsellors of parliament of that city. And when I passed through *Germany*, in my way to *England*, I saw upon the *Rhine*, about half a day's journey above *Coblentz*, a stately building, which I took for one of the palaces of the Elector of *Treves*, but was indeed a convent of *Capuchins*, which his Electoral Highness caused to be built for them. Before the foundations of it were laid, he demanded of them a model of their convents, to have it built by; but the Fathers answered him, *That if S.* Francis *were to give the plan, it would be very plain and scanty: but that forasmuch as his Electoral Highness had the goodness to concern himself therewith, it could not well be blamed, if the building did in some degree suit with his greatness.*

The conclusion of all is this, Sir, that whatever

ever these men may pretend to, as long as they shall make the Christian perfection to consist in certain phantastic, stoical, and extraordinary ways of living, a short time's experience will make it appear, they have deceived themselves; all their fine designs will vanish in their own view. And as the principles on which they build are false, they will always find themselves reduced to the impossibility of practising what they have vowed; and will be forced at last to acknowledge, that the great axioms of Christian morality, which are of an infallible truth, and to which only we ought to tie ourselves; are *to avoid evil, and to do good; to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.* I conclude with these excellent words, and am with all my heart,

Sir, your, &c.

LETTER IV.

OF A JOURNEY TO LORETTO, &c.

SIR,

HAVING promised in my last *LETTER* to give an account of my journey to *Loretto*, I doubt not but your curiosity (to be informed about that place of devotion, which makes so great a noise in the world) will incline you to wish for the performance of my promise. To the end therefore, that I may acquit myself thereof, I shall begin where my last *LETTER* left me. After the view I had taken of Mount *Alverne*, I parted with my company, who went no further, and all alone

came

came down the other side of the *Apennine:* and taking my way through the towns of *Fossombrone* and *Urbane*, I came to *Fan*, which is a pretty city, situate on the *Adriatic Sea.* Whilst I was here, going abroad in the morning to look out for some convenience to go to *Loretto*, I saw a great company of persons very comically mounted and dressed, coming into town. They were Pilgrims that came from *Bononia*, being about threescore in number, and all of them mounted on asses, which is a very easy and commodious way of travelling, and more in request in the marquisate of *Ancone*, than the use of horses. The first place where we met with this convenience of travelling, is at *Imola*, half a day's journey from *Bononia.* Formerly travellers were wont to hire their asses at *Bononia;* but forasmuch as some wits took occasion from hence to use an allusion, which did not over-please the scholars and doctors of the university of that city; for it was a common saying, *We will go to* Loretto, *and take an ass at* Bononia, the magistrates for their sakes abolished that custom; so that now these beasts must be hired at *Imola*, and for the value of about a shilling, a man may travel six miles, which is the stage those asses are wont to perform. They are furnished with little saddles and stirrups, in the manner as horses; but there is no need either of a whip or spurs, for as soon as one is got upon their backs, they run continually with all their might until they be come to their journey's end; where being arrived, it is impossible by all the strokes that can be given them, to make them advance one step further; but one is forced to leave them there, and take others. Thus these asses are changed at every six miles end, till one comes to the mountains of *Ancona*, which is not very far from Loretto.

But to return to our Pilgrims, and to give you a further

a further description of them; they were all of them accoutred in their pilgrimage habits, which consisted of a large linen vest, of an ash-grey colour, reaching to the middle of the leg, with very wide sleeves, coming down to the wrist; on the backside of these vests, at the collar, they have a kind of a large cowl, which they put over their heads, and being pulled down, reacheth to the pit of the stomach, so that their faces are wholly covered with them. And to the end, that in this posture they might have their free sight and breathing, these cowls have openings in them, answering to the eyes and mouths, like masks. They never draw these cowls over their heads, but when they come to places where they have no mind to be known; for otherwise, they let them hang backwards upon their shoulders. They gird this vest about them with a girdle, and somewhat above the girdle upon their breasts, they have a scutcheon, representing the arms of their society, confriery, or company, which they call in *Italian*, *Scuola*. There be scarcely any *Italians* that are not of one or other of these societies. These *Pilgrims* moreover have a large row of *pater-noster beads* hanging at their girdles, and a *pilgrim-staff* in their hands, which is the chief mark of their pilgrimaging. These staves are about an half-pike's length, with knots or protuberances at the top and middle of them. They carry them to church, to get them blest by their curates, before their setting forth, which ceremony is performed with many prayers, and the assistance of holy-water. As soon as they have received them, it is not lawful for them to stay any longer than three days at the place of their residence, and cannot be admitted to the communion till they have performed their pilgrimage, except they be pleased to change the vow they have made into a pecuniary mulct; fo

in that case they are very readily discharged by the priest. The *Pilgrims* which I saw, upon their arrival at *Fane*, were all of them dressed in vests of the same colour, and had already run one stage on their *asses*. Their vests were all new, and of very fine linen; and forasmuch as in all appearance, they were not moved to put on that garb from a penitent spirit, they had taken care to tuck them up high enough in several places, to make their fine clothes of gold and silk they had under them to be seen; which made me also believe, that probably they must be persons of quality. Their girdles were of silk of the same colour, with their vests, and extremely well wrought. Upon my enquiry, who they were? it was told me, they were the company or society of our *Lady of Life of Bononia*, which is the name of a very richly endowed hospital, for the relief of poor sick people, and where the priests have erected a congregation or society of noble persons, who have their daily masses and prayers there. Upon their entering into this society, they oblige themselves to assist the poor of that place, with their estates and best endeavours. The greatest part of the gentlemen of *Bononia* are of this society; they go every year by way of procession to *Loretto*, towards the end of autumn, when vintage is past, which is likewise observed by most other companies. As soon as they were come near to the great church, the priests came out to meet them, with the *cross* and *banner*, by way of reception, and bidding them welcome, made a short speech to them; to which the prior of the company, being a *Bononian* earl, returned an answer in few words. After this they entered into the church, where they made some short prayers, and then *dispersed* themselves throughout the best inns of *the city*, whither orders had been sent over night, *to provide* a good dinner. It was about ten o

the clock in the morning when these *Pilgrims* arrived, and near half an hour after, they were followed by about some twenty *caleches*, full of ladies. These were *she-pilgrims*, who had left *Bononia* upon the same design: and who were all of them, either kinswomen or mistresses of the foresaid *pilgrim-gentlemen*. They were all of them most sumptuously attired, and with an air of wantonness and gaiety, that very ill became persons who went a pilgrimaging out of devotion. They had little *pilgrim-staves*, fastened to the body of their gowns; some of them were of *gold*, others of *ivory*, all beset with costly *pearls* and *diamonds*; some had them made up of orange flowers, or of some artificial flowers which are in so great esteem at *Bononia*, and which make the greatest part of traffic of the nuns, of that city. Others again had them all wrought of needle-work, to that height of curiosity, that one of them might probably have been the work of many years; and lastly, others had them of other precious and costly matter. The *Pilgrims* had no sooner taken possession of their inns, and given order to have all things in readiness, but they went forth to meet their ladies: and having bid them welcome, they conducted them with a great deal of honour and ceremony into the apartment prepared for them. My curiosity to observe these proceedings, prompted me to return to my inn; where I had already taken notice of the great preparations that were making for them: and finding that the gentlemen wanted a chamber more to accommodate them, I offered them mine; and in recompence thereof, they very civilly entreated me to dine with them. The table was covered with many dishes, and all dinner-time their discourse was nothing but a continual raillery *upon their ladies pilgrim*-staves: it was *not any hinting* or pinching raillery, but such as

consisted only of some pat allusions, full of wit, and contained ambiguous words, which these *Italians* knew to be for the tooth of their ladies. As soon as dinner was done, every one of them put themselves in order to prosecute their journey. The *Pilgrims* mounted on their *asses*, and the ladies into their *caleches*. As for my part, I joined myself with a very honest man, born at *Parma*, who did not go on pilgrimage, but travelled out of curiosity. We followed this troop of *Pilgrims* at a small distance, being mounted in the same manner as they, though we could not join ourselves in company with them, because we had no *pilgrim's* habits. I demanded of the *Italian*, why those gentlemen, who were all persons of quality, and who probably had their coach and horses at *Bononia*, did make use of these asses in their journey? He told me, that some made use of them out of a frolic, and to make themselves mirth on the road; others, by way of humility, and to obtain more merit; and moreover, that these *asses* by carrying so many devout persons to *Loretto*, had by that means obtained a very particular kind of blessing, which was, that never any mischance happened to those that rid on them; for if by chance any did fall from them, or were cast by them into any slough, they always escaped very happily, without receiving any hurt. By this discourse, I began to perceive, that this honest gentleman believed these *asses* also to be miraculous. He told me, that some *Algier* pirates having lately made a descent in the marquisate of *Ancona*, could not with all their endeavours overtake a company of travellers that were mounted on these holy *asses*, though they pursued them very close, and that having fired very thick at *them, they* neither killed nor wounded any one *of the* company. As we rode on, thus discoursing together, we ever anon cast an eye towards

our *pilgrims* that were before us, and found, they made it their only business on the road, to divert the ladies that rode in the *caleches:* some of them crossing the way before them, strove to put themselves into comical and ridiculous postures, to make them laugh; others fell from their *asses* on purpose; and in a word, as the *Italians* have a very pleasant and ready wit, their behaviour all along the road, was nothing but mirth and comedies. The ladies, without doubt, were not wanting to bestow a thousand blessings on the day and moment, wherein they were so happy to make a vow to go to *Loretto,* forasmuch as probably they had never in all their lives been better diverted. Every body knows the humour of the *Italians,* that no sooner have they married a wife, but they make her a slave. However, their jealousy hath never yet been able to hinder them from going to the church on *Sundays* and holidays, or to the places of pilgrimage, when they have made a vow to that purpose. The church of *Rome* have declared it a mortal sin, not to go to mass on those days, or not to accomplish the pilgrimage one has vowed; and hath deprived husbands of the power to hinder their wives from performing their necessary duties. If any husband should go about to oppose his wife in these particulars, the *inquisition* would take notice of it, and proceed against him, as against a person who does not approve of going to mass or pilgrimages, and consequently is an heretic. The ladies, you may assure yourself, are not wanting to make good use of this their privilege; or to have recourse whenever they think fit, to this last plank of their ship-wreck liberty; *Ultima naufrayæ libertatis tabula.* Scarcely ever shall you see a lady going to these kind of devotions, but she has some very devout lover following her; *and one might judge* with half an eye, from the

air of these he and she *pilgrims*, I am now upon, what was the principal motive that swayed them to undertake the journey. About four of the clock in the afternoon, they stopped at a village to refresh themselves; which done, the gentlemen rode on before to the next town, to compliment the next church before the ladies coming, as they had done in the morning at *Fane*. After which they retired with their ladies to the best inns of the town, where they were not wanting to make good cheer, and divert themselves; and in the foresaid manner continued the rest of their journey, till they came to *Loretto*. I will be judged by you, Sir, whether this be not a very devout way of pilgrimaging, sufficient to confound and abash the *Protestants*, who reject them, and content themselves to call upon their father that is in heaven, without putting themselves to the trouble of going to seek him either at *Rome* or *Loretto*.

We met with, besides these *Pilgrims* already mentioned, whom we followed very close, several other bands of them, consisting of merchants and tradesmen, some of them going to *Loretto*, and others returning thence, all of them making themselves sport with their *pilgrim-staves*, and extravagant habits upon the road; and in all the inns they came to, treating themselves with the best that could be had. I have since understood that all tradesmen in *Italy* do each of them keep a saving-box, into which they put what money they can spare during the whole year, in order to their going in pilgrimage, either to *Loretto*, or to S. *Anthony* of *Padua*, or to some other place, at a further or nearer distance, according as they guess that the money they have gathered will hold out, to defray their charges going and coming, and every where making much of themselves. And to peak the truth, there is nothing more agreeable in

in *Italy*, than these kind of journies in the beginning of the spring, or towards the end of autumn, after the great heat is past; especially when one is in good company, where there is never wanting some or other, that hath the gift of making others laugh. The *Italian* females, especially, make use of a thousand intrigues and inventions, to oblige their parents or their husbands, to let them go on pilgrimaging: there is no vow they make more readily. Above all things, they make great use of the authority of their confessors, to acquaint them, that it is the will of God, that they should go thither according to their vow. In the mean time, the whole journey is spent in fooleries, as I have now hinted; and the merry adventures they meet with in them, furnish them all the winter at the fire-sides, with pleasant stories to divert the company.

Thus I have given you some account of the *Italian* he and she *pilgrims*, according to my promise, which, joined with those that frequent the hospitals, whose description you have seen in my last LETTER, comprehends the whole set of *pilgrims*, from the richest to the poorest. It is to no purpose here for the *Papists* to tell us, that these are only particular instances, which cannot be of any force against the foundation of their doctrine; for this holiness of Pilgrims in general, is no more to be met with, than an universal *aparte rei*. A man indeed may imagine to himself an universal human nature, yet will he never be able to find human nature, but in particulars, or individuals. Besides, if *pilgrimages* were endued with efficacy, to make men holy, without doubt we should find many *pilgrims* so qualified; and the acknowledged truth of the old proverb would be overthrown which saith, *That never did a good horse, or wicked man, become better by going to Rome. If S. Jerome, S. Paula*, and many others

went to visit the Holy Places of *Palastine*, yet it was not this that sanctified them, or made them saints; and, without doubt, they might have done as well to have said at home. I speak not this, as if I had a mind to blame them for so doing, no more than I would reprove an honest man, who out of curiosity, (yet so as not to neglect his business, and without injuring any one) should take a journey to *Constantinople*, or to *Rome*. It is even natural for men to have some respect and veneration for great travellers, and I cannot but own it, to be a worthy curiosity to go to *Jerusalem*, and see all the holy places where Jesus Christ has wrought our redemption; but with reference to our eternal salvation, I look upon it as a very profitable thing, and I shall never believe that any one is the greater saint for having been there: Jesus Christ has not fixed our salvation to any particular places of the world, more than to others; and will never suffer, that those novel additions men have been so bold as to join to the gospel, to accomplish their corrupt ends, should serve as efficacious means for their sanctification. I have conversed with a vast number of persons that have gone a *pilgrimaging;* but never could discern any the least amendment in their lives; but on the contrary, I have seen many who have seemed to me, to be much worse than they were before. They counselled me in *Italy*, to do as a certain *Genouese* did, who was wont frequently to ask his butcher, when he would go to *Loretto?* the butcher wondering at this his oft repeated question, demanded of him one day, what might be the reason, why he so often asked him the same question; *Because* (said the *Genouese) I have a long time observed, that upon your return from your pilgrimage, you never give me my full weight; and for this reason, I am resolved, at your next return, not to make use of you*

you for five or six months. And indeed, he had reason to make use of this caution; for commonly in these journies they spend at a most extravagant rate; and afterwards, to reimburse themselves, they make no scruple, to make use of thiefish and indirect means. Moreover, as I have already intimated in my third LETTER, there be very few that undertake these kind of journies from a true spirit of devotion; but either out of curiosity, or for their recreation; or other such like reasons.

But, forasmuch as I do not pretend to judge of the inward intention of any one by any thing that is outward, I will at present be so favourable as to suppose, that all these *pilgrims* go to their several places with highest sentiments of devotion; but yet, for all this, I say, they are not excuseable before God, notwithstanding their good intention, though we may pity them for being so foully mistaken, as to give the worship which is due to God alone, to a creature. *O quam bona voluntate miseri sunt!* This is all the favour we can do them: for we can by no means justify those adorations they render to the *Blessed Virgin* and *saints;* yea, to the houses where they have lived, and the instruments of their martyrdom.

But forasmuch as this point relates to divinity, and my design is not to write to you as a divine, but only as a traveller, I shall leave it at present, and continue my discourse about my journey to *Loretto.* I arrived there towards the end of *October.* This town is situate in the midst of a very fertile and pleasant plain, two or three miles from the *Adriatic* sea. In former times, there were no buildings here, besides the chapel; but in process of time, they built many houses about; and the Popes, to whom all this country belongs, have ordered a wall with bastions to be built round it; so that at present it is a considerable fortress to secu

secure the ecclesiastical state on that side, and more particularly against the landing of *Turks* and other corsairs, who formerly did use very frequently to come and ravage that part of the country. This chapel is by the *Italians* called *LA SANTA CASA*, that is to say, *The Holy House.* The Roman Catholics believe this to be the very same house, wherein Jesus Christ dwelt at *Nazareth*, with the Blessed Virgin his mother, and his reputed father S. *Joseph*, for the space of thirty years, until the time that he began to preach his holy doctrine, and to confirm it by his divine virtue and miracles. They pretend it was transported by angels from *Nazareth*, where it stood at first, to the place where it is at present. The history they give us of it runs thus: the *Saracens* having made themselves masters of *Palestina*, and the holy places, the Blessed Virgin unwilling to leave so great a treasure, (as was the house wherein she had dwelt with her son Jesus Christ upon the earth,) in the hands of infidels, commanded the angels to transport it into the Christian territories: the angels in obedience to her command, took it up, foundations and all, and carried it by night to *Dalmatia*; but afterwards taking notice of their mistake, and perceiving that the people there, were nothing nigh so good as the *Italians*, they took it up again, and another night carried it near to the city *Recanati* in *Italy*, placing it in a field that belonged to two brothers; where it continued many years, until the brothers began to quarrel about the dividing the alms that were given there; wherefore the Virgin, to punish them, commands the angels to take it up a third time, and carry it to the field of a poor widow-woman called *Loretto*, who was a very devout worshipper of her. This good woman rising in the morning, and finding a little house, where there was not the least sign of the night before,

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was as much surprised as the brothers were to see it fled from their field. In this surprize, she writes to the Pope what had happened, who already was by revelation made acquainted with the whole matter, and immediately bestowed vast indulgences upon all those who should go to pay their bounden duty to that holy house. The succeeding Popes have since confirmed all this, and have granted an infinite number other pardons; this place, in process of time, by great good luck for them, is become an inexhaustible fountain of riches, and still to this day brings them in prodigious sums of money every year. What think you, is not this a very pleasant story, and is not the bare relation sufficient to render it contemptible? The good angels that carried this holy house the first time into *Dalmatia*, sure were very stupid, and did not mind what they did. Moreover, if the Blessed Virgin was pleased to take it away from the two brothers of *Recanati*, because they were at variance about it; I wonder how she had the patience to leave it at present, amongst a company of rascals and robbers, that have nested themselves there, and who for the most part of them are all sellers of *pater-noster* beads and medals; for all that ever were at *Loretto* know, and are warned before they enter the town, that in case they desire to perform their devotions there without having their purses picked, they must hold their beads in one hand, and their purse in the other. I proceed now to the description of this chapel, or the *Santa Casa*. The whole building is of brick, about twenty-five foot long, the length not being proportionable to the breadth of it: the wood with which it was cieled, being consumed and rotten by age, it has since been vaulted with brick. It hath two windows, and two doors on the two sides of it, and another window beneath, by which they say the angel *Gabriel* entered, to an-

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nunciate to the Blessed Virgin the mystery of the incarnation. They have erected an altar, in the very place where they say the Virgin was upon her knees, when the angel entered; and upon the altar is an image of the Virgin, of wood, about four foot and an half high, which is the miraculous statue on which they bestow their adorations. She has changes of clothes for all work-days, and for all holy days and *Sundays;* she has them of all sorts of colours, and mourning clothes for the passion week. They shift or change her clothes with abundance of ceremonies. I was there one *Saturday* in the evening, when the priests undressed her; they took away from her the suit of purple she had on, in order to dress her in a green gown, which they performed in the following manner: they first of all took off her veil, then her great robe or mantle royal; afterwards her gown and her upper and under petticoats, and last of all, with a great deal of reverence, they pulled of her smock, to put her on a clean one. I leave you, Sir, to guess what thoughts this may probably impress on the imagination, as well of those who perform the ceremony, as those who are the assistants and spectators. True it is, that the statue is not made naked; the workman it seems that wrought it, having been more modest than so, and represented her as clothed: but this action of clothing and unclothing the figure of a woman, is a thing that that offends the minds of those that are never so little chaste or modest. I acknowledge, indeed, that they perform this ceremony with a great deal of outward respect, if it may not more properly be called idolatry; for they kiss every part of the apparel they take off from her, bending their knees to the ground before the statue, and adoring it. The people that are present upon their knees all the time the ceremony is performing,

beat their breasts, and nothing is heard throughout the chapel, but sighings and groans, with interrupted words and ejaculations; *Holy Virgin of* Loretto, *help me! Mother of God hear me!* and other such like. As soon as the image is quite naked or undressed, these sighs and groans are doubled, and decrease again by degrees as they dress it. I cannot imagine what should be the cause of this change of their tone, except it should be this, that when the statue is quite undressed, it more strongly affects their imagination, and makes them believe they see the very Virgin in person; and that this therefore is the nick of time, for them to pray with the greatest fervour of devotion. They dressed her in a green suit of apparel, extremely rich, being a flower-work upon a ground of gold. The veil they put upon her head was yet more costly; for besides, that it was of the same cloth of gold, it was all powdered with great fine pearls: after this, they put upon her head, a crown of gold, thick beset with precious stones of an inestimable price: next they put on her neck-jewel, her pendant and her bracelets of diamonds, and many great chains of gold about her neck, to which were fastened abundance of hearts and medals of gold, which are the presents that queens and Catholic princesses have bestowed on the image out of devotion, in testimony that they were resolved to be its staves. The whole adorning and furniture of the altar was equally sumptuous and magnificent, nothing being to be seen but great pots or vessels, basins, lamps, and candlesticks, all of gold and silver, and beset with precious stones, all which, by the light of a vast quantity of wax-candles, that burn there day and night, afforded a lustre whose beauty ravished the soul through the *eyes. It is no* wonder to me that many do *ever themselves to be* sensible of an extraordinary

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devotion in this place; for besides that one cannot enter there without thanking God, because one's imagination is already forestalled with the thought, that it is the chamber where the eternal word became incarnate; it is certain, that it is the property of all bright and lustrous creatures, to raise our hearts to the Creator, more than dark and common ones use to do; and especially when their splendour is seconded with novelty. When we lift up our eyes to the firmament in a clear night when the sky is full of stars, this sight powerfully raises our souls to God, and makes us say, *Quam augusta est domus dei! How glorious is the House of God!* In like manner those persons, who are not wont to see so many lights, so much gold, silver and precious stones which mutually exalt each others glory, as soon as they enter this chapel of *Loretto*, where they meet with all these things together, cannot but naturally be moved with thoughts of devotion. Naturalists observe that precious stones are for the most part extremely friendly and sympathising with the heart of man, and that they recreate and make it light and merry by a secret sympathy they have with the vital spirits; now there being an almost infinite number of all sorts of these precious stones in this chapel, who can doubt but that they must make a corresponding great impression on the hearts of the ravished spectators? This natural effect being by some simple and ignorant people supposed to be a particular grace of God appropriated to that place, makes them take it for no less than a continual miracle: but the extravagancies continually committed here, are a sufficient argument against this weak and ungrounded opinion. They kiss the walls all round about the chapel, they lick the bricks with their tongues, they rub their beads against them, they take thread, and havin[illegible]passed the chapel with

as if they pretended to take the measure or compass of it, they afterwards make a girdle of it, which they say is very efficacious against witchcraft, and all manner of ills. The priests, in the mean time, are not unmindful of their gain; they have persons placed every where in the chapel and great church, who press the people to give alms, and to have masses said for them to our Lady. They pay a crown a piece for every mass, and the priests promise to say them all at our Lady's altar, that is in the chapel. It is certain, that the priests receive money for the saying of above 50000 masses every year; and yet it is as sure that it is impossible for them to say above 10000 in a year at that altar; so that all the rest who have given their money for that purpose, must needs be frustrated of their intentions, and chosed of their money. Those that are rich and wealthy, bestow great presents upon the wooden statue of the Virgin that is in the chapel, which without any addition or modification, they call *The Holy Virgin of* Loretto: they present her with necklaces, and bracelets, of candlesticks, lamps embost, pictures of gold and silver of a prodigious weight, and bigness. Many present her with rings, and most precious jewels, as a token of their espousing of her. She hath above fifty gowns, all of them of an inestimable price, insomuch as she is at this day, the richest puppet that is in the universe, and the piece of wood the most sumptuously dressed that is to be found in the whole world. It is to this image that those famous litanies, which are so much in vogue with the Church of *Rome*, have been addressed, which are commonly called *The Litanies of the Virgin*, or, *the Litanies of our lady of* Loretto, wherein she is termed *the Queen of Angels; Mother of* Divine Grace; *the Gate of Heaven; the Help of* Christians; the *Refuge of Sinners, &c.* However, neither all these

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costly ornaments, or glorious titles have been powerful enough to divert the worms from exciting their activity upon this so highly adorned and adored statue; for I observed as they were changing its clothes, that the wood was rotten and full of worm-holes. Thus we see that this piece of wood, which is supposed to hear the prayers of so many idolaters, carries its own condemnation with it, in that it is not able to rescue itself from corruption. The Popes, who draw more gold and silver from this place, than from any other in the world, have accordingly favoured it with the greatest stock of indulgences. They have granted to this chapel all the privileges appertaining to their S. *Peter* of *Rome*. The grand penitentiaries and confessors, which are all jesuits, do here absolve all sorts of cases, even of those the Popes have reserved for themselves. For seeing it is a place in the Pope's own territories, it is very indifferent to them, whether they be absolved there or at *Rome*, because their profit is the same; but I question not, should the angels think fit once more to take the pains to transport this chapel into the estate of some strange prince, they would soon revoke and cancel all their pardons, forasmuch as then the case would be altered. They are very careful to preserve this chapel whole and entire; to this end they have darted all the thunderbolts of the *Vatican*, against those who shall undertake to loosen the least stone of it, or so much as to scrape the walls; it is lawful to lick them, but not to bite the least particle off from them. The reason of this is because according to the principles of *Rome*, a part is taken for the whole: thus, if they have but a finger, or some other small part of a saint's body, *it is the* same thing as if they had all entire; *whence it* follows, that if any one could get but a *little* piece of brick of the Santa Casa, he might

go and build a chapel in a strange country, and having enclosed the bit of brick, make the place as considerable as this of *Loretto*, and by this means spare so many people the labour of going so far a pilgrimage. By this you may conceive how great a damage this would be to the Popes, and how much it is their interest to affix, as they do in all places within and without the chapel, and the great church which compasseth it about, the *anathemas* and excommunications they have pronounced against those, who should be so unadvised as to take away the least particle thereof. However, being mistrustful of the efficacy of their thunderbolts in this case, and not believing them sufficient to secure this their vast treasure, they have had recourse to subtilty and cunning, and have falsely published that God hath punished many persons with sudden death, who had been so bold to take away some of the bricks thereof, that others have been deprived of motion, until they had vowed to restore what they had so sacrilegiously stolen; and lastly, that angels had come and snatched the bricks out of the hands of those that had stolen them, in order to fix them where they were before. Amongst the rest, they shewed us two bricks, which are fastened to one of the walls of the chapel, with two pieces of iron, to distinguish them from the rest; the one of which a *Polish* gentleman had carried away with the design of having a like chapel to that of *Loretto*, built in his country. They tell us, that by an infinite force he was stopped in his journey, and deprived of all motion, and by this means was forced to send back the brick he robbed, to *Loretto*, which he had no sooner done, but his immobility being taken away, he was in a condition to continue his journey. The other was taken by a *Spanish* Lord, with the same intent, who being on his journey homeward, the angel

pursued him, and after having banged him handsomely, took away the brick from him, and carried it to *Loretto.*

These miracles (and many others of the same stamp, that is to say, every whit as ridiculous) are printed and affixed in several places of the church, that strangers may read them, and beware. For my part, Sir, I can assure you, that all these are no better than great staring lies, forged and invented by the Popes, whereby they craftily endeavour to persuade their *Roman Catholics,* that they have the *Santa Casa,* whole and entire, and that there is not the least scrap of it in any other part of the habitable world. That which makes me assert this with so much confidence, is, that I myself, who write to you, did loosen a considerable piece of this wall of *Loretto,* and carried it away with me, without being banged by the angels, or made immoveable by some invisible power, and if the guardians of the chapel have not taken care to stop up the hole again, I am sure it may be there seen still to this day.

They begin to say their masses every day at the *Virgin's Altar,* by two of the clock in the morning, and I repaired thither about three, and finding but very few persons in the chapel, I kept in the entry, where I could not be taken notice of by any, the people being all before me, and none on either side of me, or behind me; at which time, with an iron instrument I had, I broke off a piece of the wall, and carried it away with me; since which I have travelled throughout all *Italy,* I have been in *France* and *Germany,* neither hath any the least ill accident befallen me; until at last, being weary of carrying this stone so long in my pocket, and looking upon it as an unprofitable *burthen,* I cast it away into the fields by way of *contempt,* and out of a kind of indignation, in that *it had* received such adorations as are due to God alone.

alone. I must own, that about two days journey from *Loretto*, near *Tolenti*, in my way to *Rome*, there happened to fall a very great rain for two days together, whereby the brooks swelled to that degree, that they drowned a great part of the country; and passing over an old bridge, one of the arches shaken with the tread of my horse, fell down with an horrid noise into the water at two steps from me, upon which, swiftly turning my horse, I got over the other half of the bridge behind me, as fast as I could, and at the same moment the brick I had taken at *Loretto*, came to my mind. I deliberated with myself, whether I ought to go back and return it to the place again; but taking reason, rather than the present accident, to be my counsellor, I made these following reflections:

First I considered, that if indeed God were so jealous of preserving that chapel whole and entire in every part of it, he would never have suffered the ceiling thereof, which was a considerable part thereof, to rot and fall down; to repair which defect, (as I hinted before) they had arched it over. In the second place, I considered with myself, that the *manger* at *Bethlehem*, and the *Holy Sepulchre*, were not inferior in dignity to this little house of *Nazareth*, and that nevertheless God had been pleased to leave them in the hands of infidels, and that consequently the story told concerning the transportation of the *Santa Casa*, and the motives of it, could be no better than a fable. And lastly, as I myself had been eye witness of so many cheats and lies, which the *Romish Priests* invent to increase their gains, this served for a convincing argument to me, not to give the least credit to all these pretended miracles, which are only invented either to preserve the chapel of *Loretto*, in the Pope's *territories, or at least*, to dispose the minds of the

people, that in case upon occasion of war, any strange prince should cause the same to be carried to his own country, they might, notwithstanding, believe that the angels had brought it back again to its former place; and, consequently, might boldly deny, that this supposed prince had the true *Santa Casa.*

All this made me conclude, there was nothing extraordinary in the fall of this bridge, as happening by reason of the age and weakness of the bridge, or because the violent torrent of the waters had undermined its foundation. Being thus satisfied, I went to seek another place for to pass the water, and so continued my voyage, thanks be to God, very happily. Had I gone back to restore the stone, the *priests* to be sure would not have been wanting to cry out, *a miracle, a miracle!* and to publish the same every where, a picture would presently have been drawn of this accident, which they would have added to the great number of that kind, which are fastened to the walls of the church, and the piece of brick would have been distinguished with a piece of iron, to be taken notice of by pilgrims and strangers, as an evidence of the said miracle; whereas experience and time have since fully convinced me, that God never concerned himself in the case, and that the fall of the bridge was merely casual. Before I take my leave of *Loretto,* I will tell you in general, that the treasure preserved there is altogether inestimable. A Pope being informed that some had acquainted the *Turks* thereof and that they were projecting to make a descent there, caused the town to be fortified with strong walls and bastions, where he planted abundance of great guns. He apprehended, it seems, that the *Angels* would not be so zealous to preserve the treasure that is there kept, as they had been to secure the bricks of the

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Santa Casa; and to speak the truth, the case is very different; for it is an easy matter to restore the bricks, where any are wanting, and then declare that the *Angels* have returned them to their places; but should the *Turks* come once to take away the precious stones of that inestimable treasury, it is to be feared they would be to seek for a miracle to restore them. The *Jesuits*, who are very vigilant of getting into possession of the best and most advantageous posts, have obtained all the confessor's places of this church, and at certain hours of the day, they repair thither for to hear confessions in all sorts of languages. They have a very peculiar and wonderful dexterousness to squeeze money from strangers; they beg some of all those that come to confess to them, on pretence of assisting poor pilgrims therewith; but indeed, keep all they get for themselves, except only some few pence they give them now and then, making use to this purpose of their mental restriction, as a *Jesuit* (who had quitted their society) told me: for seeing they have made a vow of personal poverty, that is, of never possessing any thing in particular, but all in common, they pretend themselves to be the first and chiefest poor, and Pilgrims too, forasmuch as every man is a pilgrim upon earth. Thus they bestow the alms given them upon themselves, and believe, that by this means, they abundantly answer the intention of those who have trusted them with the distribution of them. A poor priest of *Savoy*, who was reduced to a very pitiful condition, coming to me to beg an alms, I sent him to the *Jesuit*, who I knew had that morning received threescore crowns of a rich man, with whom I had spoken of myself. The *Jesuit* told him, he was very sorry he was not in a condition to *assist him*, for that of a long time he had *not been entrusted* with any charities; and so

sent him away without giving him any thing. Which way soever a man turns himself in this holy city of *Loretto*, he meets with persons that beg money of him. The priests ask it, to say masses for you; the *Jesuits*, to give alms to the poor, as I have told you: an infinite number of box-carriers, that gather in money for the use of the chapel, are continually dunning you as well in the streets as in the church, to put something into them. The shop-keepers of the town, who are all of them sellers of bead-rows and medals, deafen your ears on every side, to come and buy their trumperies. A vast number of vagabonds, in the habit of pilgrims, flock about you to beg the *Passada*, and cut your purse if they can. And lastly, the vintners and innkeepers sell their provisions at a most exorbitant price; alledging, for their excuse, that the Pope lays such vast imposts upon every thing that enters *Loretto*, that it is impossible any otherwise to save themselves harmless; insomuch, as all being well weighed, the Pope proves to be the greatest exacter of all. And is not this now, think you, a place sufficiently qualified with holiness, to make it the darling city of the *Blessed Virgin?* and are not these well chosen people, for whom God should work so many miracles to keep them in the secure possession of this house, which the Papists pretend to be the very same wherein the *Eternal Word* became incarnate? All the walls of the great church are full hung with a vast number of little pictures, in which are represented the miracles the *Holy Virgin* hath wrought in favour of those who have vowed to go thither in pilgrimage.

I shall take occasion here to acquaint you in what manner miracles are still wrought every day *in Italy*, and what they are. I have observed three chief causes of them: the first is, *The covetousness of the Clergy*: the second is, The cunningness

ningness of some Beggars; and the third is *Popular Error,* joined with a custom the priests have introduced of sending *pictures to the churches,* representing the dangers that many have escaped.

As for the first of these, which is the *avarice of the priests* and *religious,* which are the two orders that divide the whole clergy, there can be no better invention to satisfy the same (next to *purgatory)* than this of publishing from time to time some miracles, they pretend to have been wrought in their churches. I say, next to *purgatory,* which is indeed to them an overflowing source of riches, because the thing is more general. All men must die, and all the elect according to their doctrine, must at least pass through the flames of *purgatory* for some hours or some days? Neither was there ever any, say they, except the *Blessed Virgin,* who by a peculiar privilege, has been exempted from it. This is the reason why there is not a *Roman Catholic* to be found who doth not give money for masses and prayers to be said for his deceased friends and kindred; or, who doth not make legacies or foundations, for to have the same said for himself after his death. But as for *miracles,* these only happen in particular cases. Nevertheless, forasmuch as the life of man is subject to many sad accidents or disasters, men would be very glad to be sure of a miracle to relieve them in time of need or danger. This is that which makes those of the *Romish Communion,* to whom their *Priests* promise no less at every moment, upon condition they will signalize their devotion at the chapel of such a miraculous saint, which they pretend to have in their church, or joining themselves to some of their confraternities, suffer themselves *easily to be persuaded* to give them what money *they ask of them.* In the mean time, they find it necessary

necessary from time to time, to awaken and excite the people's attentions by the starting of some new miracles, which they know how to do with a great deal of address and cunning. The most common way they make use of is this; when they go to visit the sick, they carry along with them either wine or water, or some rag of linen, which they have blessed in the name of such an *he* or *she* saint; if the sick person, who has made use of any of these, chance to recover, which very naturally may happen so, because we have instances every day of persons that recover, after that they have been given over by physicians, then the priests are sure to attribute the recovery of their health to the saint of their church: they demand an attestation of it from him who was sick; they make a great noise with it through the city, and the next Sunday they publicly proclaim the miracle from the pulpit. In like manner, if any person be ready to undertake a journey or voyage, they go to him, and persuade him to make a vow to some saint of their church; and if afterwards it happens that this person, meet with some bad accident, as a dangerous storm at sea, a fall from his horse, or the overturning of his coach, and that he escapes with his life and health, as it often happens, to the worst of men; in this case he never fails ascribing it to the *he* or *she* saint of such a church: immediately upon his return, he acquaints the priests or monks therewith, who begin a-new to toss it about, crying, *a miracle! a miracle!* and that nothing can be of greater force against storms and tempests at sea, or mischances by land, than to apply one's self to the saint of their church, and to procure prayers and masses to be said for them there, as the person *who is* lately returned from his voyage, and to *whom this* miracle has happened, did upon his *setting* out. Others, who are endowed with a large

larger conscience, and who believe it is lawful for them to lie, to enhance the honour of their saints, take the boldness to suppose and invent miracles, and to produce themselves for examples, declaring, that they have had revelations, or that the saints themselves have appeared to them, or have healed them of their infirmities. The people, who suffer themselves to be gulled by the outward appearances of godliness of such sorts of men, do not trouble themselves to search any further into the matter, but rely upon their word. There are some men, who from natural imitations, know two or three days before what kind of weather it will be. Thus there are some who by the pains they feel in their *corns*, will tell you whether we shall have fair or foul weather. A certain father, of the Order of the *Servits* at *Vicenza*, a man of a wicked and debauched life, who entertained three lewd women at *Venice*, by whom he had had several children, being seized with a disease not fitting to be named, never failed of feeling excessive pains two or three days before rain. Now there happened an extraordinary drought for three months together, which caused extreme damage to all the fruits of the earth; but at last, the season being about to change, the father was not wanting to have the sad advertisements of it. He was the *Sacristan*, or (as we corruptly speak it) *sexton* of a church called *Madonna del Monto*, or *My Lady of the Hill*, which is about half a league distant from the city of *Vicenza*, situate upon a pleasant hill, where is kept a miraculous image of the *Virgin*. And forasmuch as he perceived, that the devotion of the people was already much abated, which he was very sensible of by the slackness of his purse, he thought of kindling it again. *To this purpose*, making use of the present conjecture, he sent to the Podestà, or go

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vernor of the city of *Vicenza;* acquainting him, that being at prayer in the night time before the image of the Virgin, whose *Sacristan* he had the honour to be; she had told him, with an intelligible voice and a pleasant smile, *That she had a great deal of compassion on the afflictions of her people, by reason of the great draught which spoiled all the country; and that in case the inhabitants of* Vicenza *would within three days make a general procession to his church, she would open the flood-gates of heaven, so that there should be rain in abundance.* The governor hereupon immediately caused an order to be published for a procession against the time the good frier had signified; at which time the weather did not fail to change and favour his wishes; for scarcely was the procession advanced half-way, but there fell so furious a shower, that all those who assisted at it, were almost overthrown, and had much ado to get to the church, where they sung hymns of thanks to the Virgin for that high favour. This miracle being rumoured abroad throughout the country, for two months together, drew a great number of people to this miraculous image. The devout *Sacristan* finding his purse well lined, repaired the next *Carnavel* to *Venice*, to divertize himself there, and to make his mistresses partakers of his good fortune; and frankly acquainted them with the success he had, and how cleverly he had gulled the unthinking people: but sometime after, one of them falling out with him, like another *Dalilah* betrayed him, and discovered his imposture. Had it been in any other country, he would hardly have escaped without bearing the marks of it; but in *Italy* these things are easily excusable; with saying, *That nothing was intended in all this, save only the advancement of the* Blessed Virgin's *honour.*

Another fetch of the priests is something of

own discovery, and which I do not know that ever any one before me has taken notice of; and it is this, they are used to entertain children with an infinite number of false tales and stories, invented at random, concerning apparitions, and miracles that never were. To explain this further to you, you may take notice, That in *Italy* the children are catechized every Sunday and holy-day, throughout the year, in all their churches, at one of the clock in the afternoon. To make them the more ready and willing to come to be catechized, the priests after that they have explained some one point of doctrine, they tell them for a conclusion some pleasant story before they send them home. The little *Italians* listen to it with the greatest attention imaginable, and as soon as they are come home, tell it to their mothers. I have observed, that these priests do commonly take for the subject of their story, some miracle or other, which they pretend to have been wrought in their church. I entered once into a chapel, where one of these your catechizers was informing his young scholars, the chapel was dedicated to S. *Martin*. They ordinarily paint this saint on horseback, and with his sword cutting off the half of his cloak to give it for an alms to a poor beggar. It was in this posture this statue, which was of a very pure white marble, represented him on the altar of that chapel. When the catechizing was over, the priest began to tell these children a very pleasant story concerning this statue: he he told them, *That a good curate of that parish, had often seen him, very fairly come down from the altar, and running a full gallop out of the church, that one day having taken the liberty to ask him, whither he was going?* S. Martin told *him, that he was hasting to the* assistance of a *very honest man, who had* procured many masse

to be said at his alter, and being at present fallen into the hands of robbers, in the midst of a wood, was in great danger of his life; but that he hoped to come timely enough for his relief; and that at his return, he would give him an account of the success of his enterprize. The catechizer flourished his discourse with circumstances so extravagant and ridiculous, that it was impossible to forbear laughing. For he gave a very particular description of S. *Martin's* whole journey, upon his horse of *marble*, how he rid a full gallop over trees, rivers, cities, and all. The poor children all this while listened to him with profound silence and attention. But the conclusion of all, and the cream of the jest was, *That every one that bore a great devotion to that chapel, and procured masses to be said there, in honour of* S. Martin, *might assure themselves never to perish on the highways, by the hands of robbers.* The next day I had occasion to speak to my young clergyman, and put him in mind of his *marble* S. Martin, whom he made to ride post for a diversion to his scholars. He answered me smiling, *What would you have one do, Sir, it is the custom of this country, to entertain the children that come to be catechised, with such stories as these; because without this, we should have none of their company. It is impossible to tell them always true ones; and therefore we are sometimes fain to be beholding to our inventions for them. Things are only so far evil, as they produce ill effects; but these sorts of stories cannot but in time bring forth good fruits, as that of inspiring them with great confidence in the saints, and obliging them to pray, and cause masses to be said in honour of them.* What think you? is not this an excellent piece of sound mo[illegible] and are not these children, think you [illegible] they are called to the sch[illegible]

truth, and yet they teach them nothing but lies. In the mean time, there is nothing capable of making a greater impression on our spirits, or fixing a thing more lastingly in our memory, than what we learn in our first and tender youth. All these foolish discourses do not fail of producing very great effects, and of passing at last, for current truth in the minds of the *Papists*, who, besides this, are accustomed very glibly to swallow a great number of absurdities and contradictions in point of *transubstanciation*, which they so stifly maintain; and this it is probably, that has so over run *Italy* with fables, and impertinent and ridiculous stories. Yet these people are so infatuated therewith, that in case any honest man and lover of truth, should seem too curiously to enquire after these matters, or in the least to disapprove them, he would pass for no better than an heretic. Thus a certain person was cast into the *Inquisition*, for saying, *That he did not believe what was told of the Ass of S.* Anthony *of* Padua, *that kneeled down to worship the host, to confound the Protestants.*

From this first cause of *miracles*, which is the *covetousness of the clergy*, I proceed to the second, which is the *slight and cunning of certain beggars.*

Poverty is a well-spring of great blessings to those who bear it patiently, taking it as from the hand of God, and making good use of it; but withal, it is no less a gulph of all misery and unhappiness, to those who receive it with a contrary spirit; and I do not believe there is any wickedness comparable to that of a wicked beggar. A wicked beggar hath no conscience; he is disposed to undertake any thing in order to rid himself from the wretched circumstances of a destitute *condition. There* be many of this sort

in *Italy*, who live by their wits and invention: there are some that have the patience to counterfeit themselves cripples, blind, or struck with the palsy, for five or six years together, to make the world at least believe, that a miracle has been wrought upon them, attributing their recovery to some image of the Virgin, or to some saint. The profit which accrues to them by this is, that the people being informed of the miracle that hath been wrought for them, presently believe them to be very good men, and great friends of God, as having received such signal favours from him: this makes them to bestow liberal alms upon them, to have a share in their prayers; yea, it often happens, that some rich and devout persons take care of, and make such provision for them, that they never want all the remainder of their lives. The priests and monks also afford them an allowance, when at any times by this means they bring any of their chapels in vogue and request, so as they receive considerable profit thereby. I have been shewn many of these beggars in convents and monasteries, who live there amongst the domestics in great ease, and without doing any thing.

The third spring from whence miracles issue in *Italy*, is a *popular error*, which is crept in amongst them, and at present has taken such deep root, that it is in a manner impossible to pluck it up. It is this, upon the least accident that happens to the *Italians*, and the least sickness or indisposition that seized them, they make a vow to some statue or image of the *Virgin*, or of some saint, to be delivered from it. Now it is evident, that all mishaps do not prove fatal to life, neither do all diseases terminate in death, so that many times they escape and are restored to health again; which by a strange superstition, instead of attributing

buting the glory thereof to God alone, who is the sole LORD of *life* and *death*, they attribute the recovery of their health, or their deliverance from danger, to the statues or images to whom they have made their vows: to make their acknowledgment of their favour, they have received the more authentic, in compliance with the ill-custom introduced amongst them, they cause a picture to be drawn, wherein is set forth what happened to them, and themselves, in the act of imploring the aid of the statue or image, which to that purpose is represented in one of the corners of the picture, and towards which they stretch forth their arms or folded hands with these three letters underneath, P.G.R., which signify in *Italian pro gratia ricevuta; for a favour or grace received.*

These vowed pictures we generally find in all the churches of *Italy;* neither is their any of them without some miraculous image, which receives the honour of all these deliverances and favours, and to whose glory these ship-wreck-tables are hung up. There is no need of any tapestery or hangings in these sorts of chapels; for these small pictures are so thick hung, that they cover all the walls. There are all sorts of them; some of them represent persons persued by murderers; others, that have been wounded; and others beaten at sea by furious tempests. Yea, there are not wanting some of them that are very scandalous; for we find amongst them coaches full of gentlemen and ladies, overthrown, and they tumbling over one another; young women that are forced by their lovers, and women in child-bed, represented in their beds in a very wanton and indecent manner. An *Italian* Lord told me, *That he very willingly went to hear mass at those altars, that were best hung with such pictures as these, because meeting in them with some*

thing for his imaginations to feed upon, the service of the mass did seem less tedious to him. These *pictures*, which are no more than simple vows, have acquired so great credit in the minds of people, that they pass at present for real miracles; and the priests and monks, who write the histories, and the places of devotion which belong to them, make no difficulty to alledge them as such. So that now in *Italy*, they count the miracles by these pictures; and the more of these any statue or image hath about it, the more miraculous it is.

I will take this occasion to tell you of a *picture* which some young monks of the abbey of S. *Victor*, in *Milan*, caused to be made whilst I was there. The accident which happened to them was this: they were gilding the roof of one of the lower isles of the church. These monks out of curiosity, whilst the workmen were gone to get their dinner, did climb up the scaffold to the number of seven or eight of them, to view their work, where one of them, less heedful than the rest, treading upon a board that was not well fastened, fell down upon the floor of the church. All the rest being affrighted at this accident, and supposing that the whole scaffold was coming down, betook themselves to ladders, and let themselves slide down by them, without receiving any hurt, except only the poor monk, who fell down with the loose board, who was much bruised. They took him up in his pitiful condition, and was obliged to keep his bed, two or three months before he was fully recovered.

I was present when the accident happened, and could see nothing in all this, but what was very *natural*. He who fell, hurt himself proportionably to the height from whence he came down, and the rest received no hurt at all, because they [illegible] down by the ladders: in all this there [illegible] not

nothing of a miracle; however, because the scaffold was erected before the chapel of S. *Bernard Sienna*, the monks concluded, that without doubt this saint had helped them. Accordingly they got a *picture* drawn, representing their fall, in one corner whereof the saint was painted, stretching forth his hands for their safety. They published every where throughout the city, that this saint had upheld them in their fall from receiving any harm. The cardinal archbishop was immediately acquainted therewith, and every one did congratulate them, for being so much in favour with that saint.

From this example, and what before I have told you upon this head of miracles, you may easily conceive, how far we are to give credit to those fine legends, of the lives of the *new saints* of the *Romish Church*, and of what weight that great list of miracles ought to be with us, which are the chief stuffing and garniture of them. There is not one of them that has not restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and a clever use of their limbs to cripples; and in a word, they have preserved from all ill accidents, and cured all manner of diseases. But when one comes to an enquiry into particulars, all this vanished in smoak, and the whole of the matter is reduced to some *pictures*, which some superstitious ones (who without reason have imagined themselves, to have received favours from them) have caused to be made. However, when these *legends* are sent to strange countries, that are of the *Romish Communion*, they make a great noise, and are all looked upon as miracles, sufficiently confirmed by authentic proof and evidence. It is a common reproach cast upon Protestants, *That no miracles are done* amongst them, *and they will* needs have this to be an invincible argument, to prove they are in an error. A

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jesuit in a Latin oration, pronounced in the cathedral of *Strasburgh*, soon after that the *French* had taken possession of it, exclaimed in these words, *Quid dubitamus de falsitate religionis eorum, apud quos cessavit propheta & sacerdos, & miracula petiere? What do we doubt any longer of the falseness of their religion, with whom both priest and prophet are ceased, and miracles are lost?* The Protestants might very well have answered him with truth, *That there can be no reason of doubting, but that a religion so fraught with superstition and counterfeit miracles, as the Papists religion is, must needs be false.* The profession of a good Christian is, to live according to the gospel; but not to confirm it by miracles; this is the work of God alone, and therefore we ought not to reproach one another upon that score. We see every day, that jugglers (though we know they deceive us, and though we eye them with all the attention imaginable, for to discover their artifice,) are notwithstanding, so dextrous at their tricks, that they gull us before our face; and shall we blindly believe all the *Italian* priests and monks tell us, who have the gift of cheat and invention? *Sic notus* Ulysses? For my part, considering the times in which we live, I will never believe any miracle as long as my reason tells me, the thing was feasible by men.

It is commonly held, that the body of S. *Nicholas*, of *Bar*, in the *Pouille*, is miraculous: and that from his tomb their continually distills an oil very salutiferous, and proper to restore the sick to health; but it is enough for me to disbelieve this miracle; because I know, that men may easily convey the oil thither, and ingeniously make it to distill down. I have sometimes seen some poor *Pilgrims*, who returned from that pilgrimage, and who had little bottles full of this oil, which had cost them money enough, who would afterwards

fain have given it for a piece of bread, but could find no customers to take it off their hands, which makes it evident, that the *Italians*, for all their bigotry, had no belief in it themselves. In like manner at *Naples*, the priests make shew of a bottle, which they aver to be full of the blood of *Januarius*, archbishop of that city: when at first they bring forth his blood to be seen, it appears all congealed; but as they approach it to the body of this saint, it dissolves by degrees. As to this also, it is sufficient ground for me not to believe it; because I know that this liquor may be congealed, in the manner as they make *sorbets*, and afterwards dissolve by the heat of the place where they shew it, or by the heat of the hands of those who handle it. At *Padua*, is to be seen the tomb of S. *Anthony* of *Padua*, which sends forth a very sweet scent between that of *ambergris* and *musk*. The friars of that convent tell us, that this odour proceeds from the bones of that saint, which are shut up there: but the testimony of these fellows, who are so biassed by their interest, does not give me any satisfaction, as long as I know that they may easily anoint it with odoriferous quintessences, and it is certain they do, because that this odour is the very same with that of the perfumed *pater-nosters*, that are sold in the shops at *Padua*. In the same place they shew us, in a very fair chrystal, supported by a stately pedestal of gold, extremely well wrought, the *tongue* of the said saint, which they say was found in his tomb, being endowed with the privilege of *incorruption*, all the rest of his flesh being consumed. They have the impudence to aver, that this tongue, for having been a lash to the *sacramentarians* of his time, has been preserved thus sound and whole, without the least taint of corruption, that as a perpetual miracle, it might bear witness to the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiatio

tiation. The greatest part of the *Romish legends* tell us, it is as fresh and lively, as when the saint was alive; but that is very false, for I have seen it, and it is dry. Those who have the art of embalming bodies, may preserve a tongue in this manner for many years, yea, many ages, without any thing extraordinary, or so much as bordering upon a miracle.

Thus I have given you a view, Sir, of the most famous and avowed miracles of *Italy*, which the *Roman Catholics* pretend to be so palpable and sensible, that they cannot be denied without giving the lie to sense and reason. I will add to these three bodies of saints, which have been preserved without any taint of corruption, and which I have seen all three: the one is the body of S. *Rose*, of *Viterbo;* the other of S. *Clara*, of *Montfaucon*, and the third of S. *Katherine*, of *Bononia*. These bodies have been preserved whole and uncorrupted; but without any the least beauty, being altogether dried up, and as hard as pasteboard, and very black; they are very frightful to behold, notwithstanding they have drest them in very rich habits, and adorned them with more jewels, than the queens are embellished with on their coronation-days. Some have a great esteem for these incorrupted bodies, and so should I too, in case they enjoyed their former lively tincture and natural colour; but to be so dry, so black, and so ghastly, it were more eligible in my mind, to return to the universal way of all flesh, than to be made partakers of such a kind of incorruption; neither can I see that God herein hath conferred any great favour upon these blessed saints, by preserving them in a condition proper to terrify nature, and affright mankind. The *works* of God are all perfect, he never bestows a *favour* by halves; and if he were pleased to grant *incorruption* to bodies, he would also probably preserv

reserve them. Wherefore I do not believe, that he defective incorruptions of the bodies of these aints can truly be ascribed to any thing else, ut the dexterity of those who have dried or emalmed them.

We saw at the *Chartreuse* of *Venice*, the body f a noble *Venetian*, which being embalmed, has een preserved whole and entire for above an hunred years. This person was never accounted a aint, and yet I found his body much fairer to the ye, than were those of the three saints now menoned, though it be much more disregarded and eglected than they are; for they have left the ody in an old wooden coffin, which does not shut lose, and where all those that go to the *Charreuse*, do view it and touch it; whereas the boies of these saints are kept in very dry chapels, here the great wax tapers, that burn day and ight, purify the air, and clear it of all moistures nd impurity. I have also seen in *France* and *Vandosme*, in the collegiate church of the castle, he body of *Jane d' Albert*, who died a very zeaous *Protestant*, above an hundred years since; ier body hath been very well embalmed; and if t present one would take it up from the place where it lies, and dress it, and keep it in a very lry place, it would undoubtedly appear much airer than that of these religious: and yet I am very well assured, the *Roman Catholics* will never ay, she was a saint,

And forasmuch as I am now upon the chapter of these saints, I shall acquaint you, that I have often read the history of their lives, and of many others in the *legends* of the *Church of Rome*, but never in all my life did I meet with any thing more ridiculous: and I have observed, that these are those prophetesses of which the Jesuit spoke at *Strasburgh*, and which the Protestants are deprived of, *Apud quos cessavit prophet*[illegible] who ha

no prophets amongst them. In a manner, all their religious, (after they are arrived to the state of perfection, as they call it) they take upon them to prophesy. For the better understanding of this you may take notice, that at *Rome* they have distinguished or divided the spiritual life, into several states; as an house hath many stories, the lowermost, the middle, aud the highest or uppermost. There is one state they call *Active*, this is the lowest, and consists only in action, and an ordinary regulation of the senses, according to the law of God: the second is the *contemplative state*, which consists in the meditation of those things which have no communication with the senses; the third is a state of *extatical*, abstracted and purely *passive*, in which the soul does nothing but by a simple application, adhersion, and union with the divine essence, receive, (without any action, affection, or contemplation on her part) impressions from God. There are but few that arrive to this uppermost story; but when any one once got thither, whatever word they utter or action they do, it is no more they themselves who act or speak, but God that speaks and acts in them; for, as for them, they never depart from this their intimate union with God. Whatsoever they say or speak in this state, is very carefully heeded, as being all divine: if they speak of things past, they are *revelations*, if of things to come, they are all *prophecies*. It is by this door so many new notions are entered into the church of *Rome*, which they believe as firmly as the gospel, though they have no other foundation, but the over-heated brains of these saints. Many of these, have themselves penned their own revelations, as S. *Briget*, S. *Melchilda*, S. *Katharine of Sienna*, S. *Gertrude*, and many others. By means of these saintesses, the church of Rome hath obtained the knowledge of all the particulars

our Saviour's passion; how many strokes he received at his whipping; how often he fell to the ground under the heavy burden of his cross; how many thorns pierced his sacred head; and how many times they spit in his holy face. By the same way they have discovered whatsoever happened in the manger at *Bethlehem;* how the *Blessed Virgin* took the veil from her head, and made clouts of it for her little *Jesus;* what she said and did, before she was delivered of him; and a vast number of other particulars which are not to be met with in the gospel. By this means they were informed of the great mystery of the *assumption* of the *Blessed Virgin*, when she ascended up to heaven in soul and body, the discourse she had with the apostles, how she by degrees mounted up into the air, bestowing her blessings all the way she went. In a word, almost all the new doctrine of popery, is derived from this overflowing spring, which is not yet dried up, nor ever will, as long as there are any of these prophetesses left in their church. To give more weight to these new imaginations, these saints assured, that Jesus Christ appeared to them very often, and was become very familiar with them, that he talked with them as a bridegroom does with his bride, and that they took occasion in these familiarities, to ask him whatsoever they desired to know. Jesus Christ himself, taught S. *Katherine* of *Sienna*, to read; he came and did blow her fire for her, he swept her chamber, as may be seen in the history of her life, by which means she had occasion of discoursing with him often. Others of them received visits from Jesus Christ, who came and visited them, accompanied with his mother and his apostles, where they had great conferences together, and those saintesses that heard them, *discovered* many secrets and mysteries in *their discourse, which* they afterwards communi-

cated to the Popes and the church; and this is that which at this day, in great measure, makes the difference between the doctrine of the Papists, and of the Protestants, *apud quos cessavit propheta*, who have no prophet to boast of. There is never a convent of nuns in *Italy*, that has not some prophetesses, which is always some old mother, that hath been twice or thrice superior of the convent, and who not being in a condition of doing any thing else, applies herself to the unitive life.

During the long stay I made at *Vicenza*, I often went to visit the abbess of the nuns of S. *Thomas:* I upon a time enquired of her concerning the state of her nuns, who told me that she had forty-four that were in the active life, three in the contemplative, and only one in the mystical or unitive. A young countess, who was in the same convent, and who was visited by four or five gallants, who came to see her at the grate, was got no farther yet than the active life. I will engage myself no farther at present in entertaining you about the nuns of *Italy*, because probably I may have an occasion to do it more at leisure.

I return now to my *she* saints, whose bodies remain uncorrupt. They were all three of them arrived at the unitive state, and have all of them left prophesies behind them: S. *Rose of Viterbo*, did for a long time inportune the *Dominican* nuns of that city to receive her among them, and to give her the habit of their Order; but the nuns knowing she was extremely poor, and she could not do, as the rest did, bring money to the convent, refused her company, and would not so much as receive her into the number of convent sisters. The saint understanding this their rejecting her, told them, that though they would have none of her now she was alive; yet they should be very glad to have her when she was dead. This

This prophecy proved true, for *Rose* being deceased with the odour of sanctity, and many miracles, after the *Italian* manner, being wrought at her tomb, these same nuns desired her body, which was granted them. The great number of masses which are procured to be said to her, and the abundance of alms that travellers and pilgrims do leave there, makes them consider this body at present, as their greatest treasure. This prophecy of S. *Rose*, was very easy to be made; she knew she was already advanced in the good opinion of the people, for to make them esteem her a saint after her death. She knew, moreover, that the bodies of such are always very gainful, that the nuns of their convent, as well as others in *Italy*, were very covetous; and that by virtue of a vow she had made to S. *Dominicus*, they would not fail to demand her relics, as of right belonging to them, and so was in a condition to prophesy on a sure ground. The saint whose body is to be seen at *Monte Faucon*, is accompanied with something that is very remarkable; they shew you all the instruments of the passion of our Saviour, which they say were found in her heart after her decease; they are all of dried flesh, like as her heart is; they are very confused, neither are all of them sufficiently distinguishable or discernable. They shew you likewise three little round pellets of flesh, which they say were likewise taken out of her heart. One of these pellets being laid in a pair of scales, weighs as much as all the three together, and all the three weigh no more than one alone. This makes them say, that God was willing to imprint in the heart of this saint a resemblance of the most Holy Trinity: for in like manner, as these three pellets, though different in number, yet make *but one weight*, and that the weight of one

alone, is no less than that of all the three together, so likewise, though there be three persons in the Holy Trinity, yet there is but one essence, and one of these persons is in no less divine perfection, than the other two. I have seen these three pellets: but so far as they from suffering one to try the experiment, that they will not suffer you to touch it with your finger, to feel whether it be flesh or no. Every one knows, that a strong imagination is capable of producing strange effects in the body. We see every day children that come into the world bearing the marks of their mothers longings, which are the effects of their imagination. It may be that this saint did so strongly imagine the instruments of the passion, as to leave them engraved in her heart; but it seems to me, that this is a violence done to nature, which can no way be pleasing to God, who is the author of it. As for S. *Catherine* of *Bononia*, she more particularly rendered herself famous by her abstracted life. The history of her life tells us, that she was in a continual union with God. Doctor *Molinus* was no stranger to this unitive life, for this is what he calls his prayer of rest: I doubt not at all, but that one day he would have been one of the saints of *Rome*, had not obedience to superiors, and particularly to the Pope, been concerned in the case. The Pope will suffer you to unite with God, as much as you please, provided always that this union do not hinder you from obeying him, more than God himself. I doubt not indeed, but that there may be, even to this day, perfect souls amongst them that are ravished even into the third heaven; but these are extraordinary graces, which *do not* depend on any natural endeavour we can *exert to* obtain them. But when I consider that *the Roman Catholics* have a made fixed state of union,

union, that they prescribe rules to attain it, and it is sufficient, according to them, to put themselves into the hands of one of these mystical or unitive doctors, and follow their directions, in order to arrive at this state. When I consider this, I say, I cannot but condemn their error. It is a piece of impiety to make the divine operations dependent on the humours of men; to give rules for the obtaining of that by way of merit, which is the mere gift of grace, and to make one's self the dispenser and disposer of the gifts of heaven, as these sorts of doctors pretend to do. Moreover, the ill consequences that follow from hence, are very pernicious to souls. First of all, this assurance only, received from these mystical masters, of once being advanced to the unitive life, whilst so many others are left behind in the contemplative and active lives, which are so far below it, is very proper to inspire the parties concerned with pride and vain glory. Secondly, this may prove a very great discouragement to those who are necessarily engaged in active life, to consider that there are such perfect states beyond them, which it is impossible for them ever to attain to; because these doctors do not think them fit to be admitted thereto. Thirdly, this opens a door to manifold superstitions and errors: for they who are engaged in the active life, never take the pains to examine what the contemplative say; nor these, what the unitive or mystical do alledge for truth; so that the two first do both of them rely upon these last, who for the most part are persons of weak brains, and most extravagant thoughts, who believe, that whatsoever they speak or act, is from God, It is evident, that the opinion of transubstantiation is only an effect of their whimsey, by the impropriety, abuse, and confusion of the terms they make use of to explain themselves. For in like manner, as they

call their mystical life sometimes union, unity, indentity, confusion, or mingling of the soul with God; sometimes the loss of the soul in God; the pure sight of God; peaceable possession of God, and many more which may be seen in the books that treat of the mystical life, whereof some are very false and impious, as those of unity, identity, confusion, and losing of one's self in God; and all the others do only belong to the future life: now in like manner, say I, as they make use of these terms to signify a simple adherence, compliance and acquiescence of our souls in the good pleasure of God, which cannot produce identification; so of old times they called the Holy Supper, the real union of Jesus Christ with our souls, and the bread we partake therein, the truth, reality, and substance of the body of Jesus Christ, which notwithstanding, is only there in a figure; and afterwards, when this error had taken good root, it brought forth this big word of *transubstantiation*, which at this day makes the chief difference between Papists who maintain it tooth and nail, and the Protestants who oppose it: neither is it any great matter of wonder, that an error of such consequence is crept into the church of *Rome*, without making any great noise; for in the first place, there was nothing in it contradictory to the Pope's authority: and again, it was not lawful for the people to examine what the mystical tribe asserted, insomuch that even to this day in *Italy*, if you chance in discourse with a contemplative or unitive person to contradict them in any thing, they tell you freely, that these are matters too high for your capacity, and that you are to believe them in the things they assert, as being better acquainted than you with the ways of God, and as having already spent a considerable time in tracing the [illegible] path[illegible] of a spiritual life. I have [illegible]

ever seen any of these mystical persons, but were very proud: they look upon themselves as eagles who take their flights in the highest part of the air; and upon other men, as beasts creeping upon the earth. A common and humble life, full of affibility, benignity and sweetness towards one's neighbour, shall always be more desirable to me than all these great sublimations of spirit, which are apt to inspire men with so much pride; and if ever it shall please God to raise me to the high degree of contemplation or union, it shall be his work, and not the effect of any rules or directions which men can afford me. In *Italy* they make a kind of trade of it, and if a man doth not put himself into the hands of some of these mystical doctors, who pretend to be old travellers, and thoroughly well acquainted with the way to heaven, and who profess the art of guiding souls thither, he can never hope of arriving there. These professors are ordinarily old jesuits, old capuchins, or old fathers, missionaries, which being no more able to scout it up and down in strange countries, in *Holland* and in *England* to pervert Protestants, apply themselves in their convents to play the seraphic fathers, to the end they may be followed by a company of *he* and *she* votaries, whom they discourse to morning and evening in their churches. When they are met together in their assemblies, you hear nothing but sighs, groans, and some broken words, at another guess rate than the *Quakers* in *England*, and certainly in this respect, they have nothing to cast them in the teeth with! The director is seated in his confessional chair, in the midst of all these people, whom he calls his sons and daughters; and there, as from a tribunal or throne, he determines, without appeal of their *sighs, and of their* postures, whether they proceed *from God, the devil*, or self-love: young women

or married, are seldom found at these sorts of assemblies, because commonly they are kept in on working days, on which days the *Italians* keep them shut up under lock and key; but they are commonly widows and old maids, who have no persons to command them. They call them in *Italy*, *Beati*, or Blessed Ones, good sisters, devout women, and sometimes by way of derision, *Bigots*. The father directors are very zealous of their advancement in the mystical life, and never leave them, till they have so wholly divested them of all love for the good things and riches of this world, that to be delivered from the burthen of them, they settle them on their convent: then it is, they are arrived at perfection. They call them sisters, and tell them, that having made a gift of their goods to their monasteries, it is the same thing, as if they had professed amongst them. They bestow upon them pieces of their habits, they call them *Little Scapularies*, which they wear next their bodies; by virtue of which bits of cloth, they are made partakers of all the good works they do, and of all the graces, privileges, blessings, and indulgences granted to their order: when they are dead, they bury them in their churches, and they endeavour, if they can, to make them pass for saints, for an encouragement to others. And indeed, it is very easy for them to do it: to this purpose they have but this course to take; the first sick person they go to visit, they amply discourse about the high state of perfection to which madam such an one was arrived, who was lately buried in their church; that they do not doubt in the least, but she is a great saint, and that if the sick person can resolve to pray to, and call upon her with *full assurance*, they question not but she will *work a miracle* in favour of him; yea, they many *times offer* to bless some wine, syrup, or some

other

other liquor in the name of this saint, or to dip it in something or other that in her life time she used to wear, as her discipline, or *pater noster:* and having done this, they offer this liquor to the sick party to drink, who if they chance to recover, the saint hath wrought a miracle; they cause a *picture* to be drawn of what happened, which they carry to the saint's tomb. But if it happen that the patient die, or that the sickness continue very long, there is not a word made of it, but all hushed in hopes of better opportunity for the future. Those who are any thing acquainted with the state of affairs in *Italy*, know that in all this, I advance nothing but what is very true. Hence it is easy to conceive by what means so many new saints are entered into the *Church of Rome*, to whom at present altars are erected. It is to no purpose to alledge here, the great precautions they take at *Rome*, in examining matters of fact in the verbal processes they make of their canonization; so that is impossible for any thing to escape the cognizance of those who have the charge of it. Alas, it is but too well known, how great a power silver and gold have at *Rome;* and it is certain, they never canonize any saint, but it brings them in immense sums of money. In case any difficulties be started, it is only to get the money doubled.

My design at first, was only to give you some account of the *Italic pilgrimages;* but the occasion of mentioning these three saints, whose bodies are preserved in incorruption, have put me upon this digression. Wherefore to make an end in few words of what I have yet to say of my first subject, you may take notice, that all other pilgrimages of *Italy*, besides those of *Loretto*, *Rome*, and S. *Anthony* of *Padua*, are very inconsiderable. Some Pilgrims go to S. *Michael*, which is at *Mount Gargan*, in the *Pouille*, others to S. Nicholo

chelas of *Bar;* but the most that go to these places are beggars, because the way thither is very troublesome from the city of *Naples;* lying all over high mountains, and the inhabitants of the country are almost all robbers: the *Italian* lords are very backward to lead their ladies a walk thither, with their pilgrim-staves all set with diamonds. The delicious march of *Ancona,* is much more proper and secure for this sort of pilgrims: the pilgrimage of S. *Anthony* of *Padua,* in the pleasant *Venetian* country, is, for the same reason, much more suitable to them. There be very few *Italians* who do not take this journey every three years, and some of them go regularly every year. This saint has gained so great credit in *Italy* that he is of equal esteem with the Virgin, yea, with God himself; some with a great deal of reason have called him the God of *Italy, Italiæ Deus.* When an *Italian* has sworn by S. *Antonio,* it is the greatest oath he can swear. And whereas, in other countries they are wont to say, *I intend to go to such or such a place at such a time, if God preserve my life;* or, *I will do this or that, if it please God;* it is their custom to say, *I will go thither, or or do this, if it please the Virgin and S.* Anthony. Their most common interjection, whenever they are in any danger, surprize, or admiration, is to cry *Madonna Santissima!* or *Antonio!* And by a strange kind of blasphemy, though they make it a great point of devotion, they have the impiety to say, *I hope in S.* Anthony, *that I shall never perish.* They call him the saint, by way of emphasis, *Il Santa,* which is a great honour, but of right, due to God only, to whom the angels cry continually, *holy, holy, holy!* There is never a church in *Italy,* where there is not an altar dedicated to S. *Anthony of Padua.* They make their addresses in particular to this saint, for all things that are lost.

lost, to which purpose they tell you this following story:

A rich *Venetian* merchant being at sea, by mischance let a diamond of a very great price fall into the sea, who immediately upon his return to *Venice*, went to *Padua*, and betook himself *al Santo;* he desired the friars of that convent to say nine masses for him, and to join their prayers with his for the recovery of his diamond. The ninth day, after his nine masses were ended, the merchant designing to treat all the monks of the convent with a dinner, he brought amongst other things a very large fish and sent it to them; the friar cook having opened and gutted this fish, found the diamond in the intrails of it, which the merchant had dropped into the sea, which was immediately restored to him, and thanks returned to the saint, who had heard their prayers.

This story is related at large in the legend of his life; but does it not seem to you, Sir, to be contrived or invented of these good monks, to persuade men to send them in good dinners, and to get them to say masses for them?

They tell another pleasant story, which however they were very cautious of inserting in their legend. The friars *del Santo*, go without contradiction for the most debauched that are in all *Padua*, and who in this quality out-vie the scholars themselves of the university. One of these monks having for some months solicited a young woman to comply with his lust, she at last fell under the temptation; but soon after was so extremely grieved for the sin she had committed, that she was ready to despair: the friar perceiving it, notwithstanding what was past, made a shift to persuade her, that in case she would give him some considerable sum of money, for masses to be said to *S. Anthony*, that saint should restore her the virginity she had lost. Thus besides the

satisfyin

satisfying of his lust, he got money of her, wherewith to glut his luxury elsewhere. I will not oblige you to believe this story, having no sufficient warrant to believe it myself; however, sure I am, that these jolly monks, under the cloak of their S. *Anthony*, play many tricks not a whit inferior to this.

I may possibly have occasion to entertain you with some of them in one of my LETTERS, and in the mean time conclude this, assuring you that I shall be all my life,

Sir, your, &c.

LETTER V.

OF FESTIVALS AND CONFRATERNITIES, &c.

SIR,

I MET with nothing considerable in my journey from *Loretto* to *Rome*, save the accident that happened to me in passing of a bridge, whereof I gave you an account in my last LETTER. I arrived there about *Christmas*, and continued in that city all the holidays, and the *Lent* following, until *Easter*. My principal employment during my stay here, was to frequent their festivals, to hear their sermons, and to be present at their confraternities, which accordingly I do intend shall be the subject of this present LETTER.

This word *feast* or *festival*, in the *Church of Rome*, properly signifies those days of the year which are more religiously observed than the rest, [illegible] honour either of the Virgin, or of some mys-

tery of the gospel, or of some saint, which we in *England* call *Holydays*. Some of these *feasts* are universal, others only particular. The *universal feasts* are those that are generally observed in all countries that profess the *Romish religion*, and on these days, they are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to go to *mass*. The *particular feasts* are such as are only kept in certain provinces, cities, parishes, or chapels. Thus, forasmuch as at *Rome*, there is a prodigious number of churches and chapels, it is every day *holyday*, in divers parts of that city.

But they have another sort of feasts in *Italy*, which for distinction sake, I may call *Feasts of Gallantry*. These are when some noble or wealthy persons do at their own costs and charges undertake to have the first and second *vespers*, together with the *mass*, sung in music, in honour of some *he* or *she* saint: I give them the name of *Gallant Feasts*, not so much for the music's sake, (that is to say, for the admirable symphony of voices and concerts of instruments, which are so great a part of them,) but with respect to the ladies who are invited to them, or who do commonly frequent them.

After that I had for some days rested myself at *Rome*, I went abroad to take a view of the curiosities and antiquities of that great city. As I was walking one evening on the *Piazza Noronna*, I passed by a very fine church, called *de la Pace;* the porch, which of itself was a most exquisite piece of architecture, of the fairest white marble, was over and above magnificently embellished and adorned with most curious pictures, and a multitude of figures made of small sheets of silk of different colours, of the *Bononia* fashion. This gave me the curiosity of entering into the church, where I saw a very fine company of gentlemen, who had caused a kind of a

throne to be made for them in a part of the church from whence they could very commodiously view those who either came in or went out. It was one of these gentlemen, as I understood afterwards, at whose appointment and charges this feast was celebrated in honour of S. *Agnes;* though it was not the day of the year which is consecrated to her, *viz.*, the 21st. of *January*, but there was another mystery in the case, which we shall presently discover.

These young lords had each of them in their turns appointed the celebration of their mistresses festivals: they were eight of them in all, whereof the four first had already kept theirs in other churches, and this was the feast appointed by the fifth of them. He was of the family of *Carpegna*, and his mistresses name was *Agnes Victorini*. The church *de la Pace*, that is, of Peace, is extremely well adorned; it is gilt and painted all within in like manner, as almost all the churches of *Rome* are; however, the more to exalt its *beauty*, and to add something peculiar with relation to this feast, now to be solemnized there, there were several triumphal arches erected in the middle of the church, which afforded a *lively* representation of the *History of S. Agnes*, who *by* her *constancy* triumphed over all the torments which *tyrants* could inflict upon her.

This whole history was represented to the life, with little scrowls of silk: these are of different sizes, and of all sorts of colours. They know the set price they are to *pay* for an hundred ells thereof *ready* wrought, and every one chuseth what pleaseth them best. There are a sort of men at *Rome*, and throughout all *Italy*, who are called *Addobbatori*, or *Adorners of Churches;* these *furnish* the silk themselves, and are extremely ingenious and artificial to fold and form them in all manner of shapes and figures. They had been

three weeks a preparing these ornaments I am speaking of: there were two theatres erected on each side of the choir, which were embellished all over with histories represented in the foresaid silken figures; the one being designed for the vocal music, the other for the instrumental, each consisting of fifty musicians; besides these, there were in a little box near the altar, four musicians, called *Singalones*, which were said to be four of the best musicians that were in *Rome*, who were to sing by themselves, the one after the other. They never go any where to sing, but they are paid forty crowns for each *Motet*.

The *Italians*, more than any other nation of the world, love concerts of music, and those amongst them that have good ears, follow those excellent musicians to all places, so that there was a vast concourse to this church. When I entered, the music was not yet begun, and I took my place near to the throne, where these gentlemen were seated. They seemed to be somewhat restless to have *vespers* or *eve-song* begin, for it was already near six o'clock, and all the wax candles had already been lighted above a quarter of an hour, and the musicians were all at their posts. Some boys that had counted the wax-tapers, said there were four hundred and forty of them, of an extraordinary white wax. However, the gentlemen, all impatient as they were, durst not order the beginning of the ceremony, because the fair *Agnes*, for whose dear sake all these preparations were made, was not yet come; and forasmuch as they were willing not to be understood, they made use of the little *French* they had learnt, to talk to one another. The principal (who was at the cost of this festival, somewhat to quiet the mind of his companions) told them, he was assured his Agnes would quickly be there; that he had sent one of

his lackeys, to come and give him notice, as soon as he should see her set forth from home; that she precisely knew the hour, and having promised to be there, she would certainly be as good as her word. Some of them answered him, that they feared lest her mother, who was very difficult and humoursome, might keep her at home, and advised him to send another lackey to acquaint her mother, that if she would not suffer her daughter to come, *she should repent it.* But just as they were in consultation about this point, in comes the first lackey, and tells his master, that the long-looked for *Agnes* was coming, and already very near the church; whereupon, immediately a signal was given to the musicians to be in a readiness, and at the very moment she set her foot in the church, upon another signal given them, they thundered away the first *anthem* of the common-eve song for the Feast of Virgins, beginning thus, *Hæc est Virgo sapiens & una de numero prudentum. This is a wise Virgin, and one of the prudent ones.* Whereupon our gentlemen in a trice changed their restlessness into an excess of joy and satisfaction, which might easily be read in their faces. I heard them say, that ladies often took pleasure to make their lovers wait for them, to make their presence, after a long attendance, the more acceptable and welcome. I should never have known this fair idol, amongst those throngs of ladies, that entered every moment, if the young gentleman, who had prepared all this incense for her, had not gone to meet her, and led her to her place. She seemed to me very modestly dressed, having her head, covered with a large black scarf, which almost reached down to her feet; her face was wholly covered, according to the custom of the *Romish* ladies, whenever they go abroad: her

mother

mother followed her, the custom of the country being for the daughters to go before, and the mothers after. Near to the throne where these gentlemen were seated, there was prepared for her a *reading-desk*, covered with a very fair carpet of blue velvet, set round with a deep golden fringe, and great cushions of the same, richly embroidered, whereon she and her mothor kneeled down. I was very near her, and observed, that as long as the music lasted, she did her utmost endeavour, under pretext of sticking some pins about her head, to discover some part of her face, in favour of those gentlemen, who had their eyes almost continually fixed upon her; she made a shift to send them some smiles: her breasts were scandalously exposed to view, for there being nothing to cover them, save only that of her veil, which hung down over them, she knew so dexterously to play with it, that every one who was not deprived of his eye-sight, might at times have a full view of them. In the mean time, the music was incomparable and ravishing, and all the anthems that were sung, though for the most part they were taken out of the *Canticles*, were more applicable to this young lady, than to S. *Agnes*, whose feast they pretended to celebrate. Whilst I was here, I chanced to cast an eye upon a picture of this saint, which was placed upon the altar, at which the masses were to be said the next morning, and I easily perceived it to be the very face of *Agnes Victorini*, except only, that it was surrounded with rays, as the saints are used to be, and that they had painted a little lamb by her, as is customary in all the representations of S. *Agnes*. I saw by this, that the young gentleman had forgot nothing that might manifest his devotion to his lady, having taken care to place her upon the very altars, there to be adored by every one. About the middle of the even-

song two of these gentlemen took a great charger full of flowers, with an intent to present all the ladies there present with nosegays made of *Carnations*, knops of *roses*, and *orange flowers* mixed together, (for at *Rome* you may have every sort of flowers at any season of the year,) they were tied together with a golden twist, to which was fastened a fair knot of about three or four yards of ribband; so that each nosegay could not be worth less than two crowns, or thereabouts. The first of these was presented to the fair *Agnes;* and I took notice, that there was a little note conveyed between the flowers, which she immediately took thence and put in her *Hours*, or Book of Devotion, to peruse it. It was not possible for me to discern the contents, and though I was very nigh to her, I could not discover any more than these two words, *Mia Diva, My Goddess.* No sooner were these nosegays distributed, but there came flying from the upper galleries of the church, a vast quantity of printed papers, which the people strove to catch. These prints contained sonnets in the praise of S. *Agnes*, but which really and indeed reached the lady, much more than the saint; for the poem was almost a continual allusion to victories; being a sufficient hint they were calculated for her, whose name was *Victorini*. The concert of music lasted almost four hours, and it was very late before all was over; however, so exceeding charming and delightful was the music, that it seemed to me I had not been above half an hour in the church.

The next day I returned thither again, and was present at the whole serviee; which was celebrated with all the pomp and solemnity imaginable. All the morning they celebrated a great number of masses, and many abbots (to honour the young *Carpagna* and his mistress) came and said mass at the altar, but now mentioned before the

the fair image. At the beginning of high mass, they threw down from the upper galleries other sonnets; some of them in praise of S. *Agnes*, and others in commendation of the young gentleman, who was the master of the festival: for the priests of this church finding themselves much obliged to him for that he had been pleased to make choice of their church for this solemnity (whence they always reap a considerable profit) had caused this poem to be made in praise of his devotion and extraordinary worth. There are a sort of men in *Italy*, whom they call *Virtuosi*, or *Poets*, who make a livelihood of praising others; that is, of making encomiastical songs or poems. Neither is it expenceful to make use of their wit; for if you do but give them the subject, they furnish you with a good one for a single crown, so that you are at no further charges, save only that of printing it.

It was one of the clock in the afternoon by that time the morning service was ended, when the ladies retired to their own homes, and the gentlemen, with the priests, to an apartment near the *Church of Peace*, whither they had taken care to send abundance of provisions, to make a sumptuous dinner. The musicians retired into the sextory, whither some hours after they sent into them several large dishes of meat, abundance of all sorts of wine, with sugared cooling waters. The notes distributed to that purpose, specified, that the second even-song was to begin about three in the afternoon; wherefore I made it my business to be there about that time; but I found I was come too soon, for the musicians had not dined yet, more dishes of meat being still sent into them, neither did service begin till about five of the clock; and the same order was observed as at the former even-song, except only that the verses and anthems were changed, and that the ladies (before they departed) were not only presented wi

with nosegays, as before, but with great charges of sweetmeats, with which they filled their handkerchiefs, and so returned home laden with flowers and fruits. The young *Carpagna*, not a little proud and pleased, for having so magnificently discharged all the part of that solemnity, received the congratulatory applauses of all his companions; and another of them (whose turn was next) appointed the next Sunday for a like festival to be celebrated at the church of S. *Andrew of the Valley*, where he had ordered all things to be prepared for the solemnizing of the Feast of S. *Catherine*

I was willing, Sir, somewhat to enlarge myself in the description of the particulars of this feast; not as if it were a thing rare and extraordinary, (for indeed, what I have here related is but as one of a thousand that I have seen, and which it would be very superfluous to repeat to you, there being, indeed, nothing more common in *Italy*,) but my design was only to give you a more distinct idea of this thing, when you shall chance to hear any discourse concerning these *Italian* feasts. I have lived seven years in that country, and in in all that time, never did a week pass over my head, in which I was not present at some or other of them; wherefore I have reason to be able to speak with good ground concerning them. I shall only add one thing, which may well make the *Roman Catholics* blush, *viz.*: that it is at these sorts of feasts, that young women are debauched and corrupted.

There are bawds, who (by their emissaries) acquaint them with the places where any of these feasts are to be kept, whereupon they never fail to resort thither in troops, very lasciviously dressed: and as for other women and maidens, as the only pretext they can have to oblige their parents or husbands to let them go abroad, is that of ge-

ıg to church; they continually sigh and long ɔr these sorts of feasts, to have so fair an opporınity to go abroad and divert themselves. It is t these feasts, I say, that meetings are appointed, nd notes secretly conveyed; here it is they learn ɔ make love with their eyes, and to discourse with ne another by gests and signs; and in a word, ere it is, O shame! that their lewd and infamous argains are made. Neither do I assert aught ı all this, but what is fully confirmed by their wn proverb; which tells us, *Chimanda la sua gliuola ad ogni festy, in puoco tempo ne fa na puttana; that he who sends his daughter to ɔery feast, will make her a whore in a short me.* The young and married women set themɜlves on each side of the church, and the gentleıen walk in the midst, whereby they have an oportunity to look them in the face. They push ne another, they laugh, they talk aloud, and ntertain one another with discourses, very unecoming the sacredness of the place where they re. The Holy Sacrament, which they believe to e the true living body of our Saviour Jesus Christ, is for the most part exposed upon the igh altar, or in some particular chapel, to make he solemnity the greater; but they have so little espect for it, that they turn their backs upon it, o face the ladies and musicians. Whence it is vident, that they do very slightly, if at all, beieve that main point of their doctrine, or at least, hat their practice gives their faith the lie. The ɔriests reap a considerable advantage from these easts; for all the ceremonies they officiate, and he masses they say, are dearly paid them, and hey are highly feasted into the bargain.

But more particularly, we meet with these kind ıf feasts very frequent in convents and monas*eries; the religious* whereof, may be distinguish*l into three sorts,* either such are endowed with

mean

means for their subsistance, as generally all those called Monks are; or else they live partly on their incomes, and partly on alms, as are all those who are called *Frati*, or *Friars;* or lastly, they are such who live wholly upon alms, as the *capuchins*, and other *mendicant* orders. Now each of these are very ambitious, and do their utmost endeavours to have these feasts made in their churches. The monks desire it, to make a shew of their riches and grandeur; the whole ceremony is carried on their own charges, and the feast they make, is called a *Pontifical*, and is, indeed, the most pompous and magnificent show that can be seen.

I will endeavour to give you here the most exact description of it that possibly I can. To this purpose I will take for my subject one of those I saw in the famous abbey of S. *Michael* in *Bosco* of *Bononia*, where I taught for two years together; the monks thereof are of the Order of Mount *Olivet*. The abbot is not commendatory, but regular, and has the power of officiating pontifically. He caused his *pontifical* to be published in *Bononia*, three weeks before the feast of S. *Bernard*, founder of their order, which happened to be on a *Thursday:* and accordingly the first evensong began on *Wednesday*, in the evening. The church of this abbey is a mere jewel of a thing, for the extraordinary curiosity of the *marble*, *jasper*, and *porphyry* stones, that do in part compose and embellish it; the gilding and painting that adorn it, are of an inestimable price; the roof and all the walls of the church are gilt; the high altar, as well as the other lesser ones of the chapels, are all of precious stones. All the seats of the choir are of inlaid work, wherein the *whole life* of S. *Bennét*, and many histories of the *Bible* are represented; the ballisters of iron that *shut* the choir and chapels, are all gilt, and very delic-

elicately wrought; the pavement is of black and white marble, insomuch that there is not the least part in the whole church, that stands in need of any superadded ornament.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, the abbot sent for the most dexterous adorners of churches to set it forth with silken machines of *Bononia*, with which all the windows and walls of the church were filled, affording various historical representations, though to speak the truth, this was a very needless cost, because what was hid by these silken figures, was more curious and costly, than the figures themselves. He ordered arms of silver to be fixed round the church, and candlesticks of the same, to be placed on all the cornices and pillars of the church, to support a prodigious number of white wax candles, which were to burn all the time of the service. The high altar was set as thick as it could hold with plate, brought out of the treasury of that abbey, to make a shew of it to all men. About three of the clock in the afternoon, the abbot, accompanied with all his monks, and many gentlemen of his relations and friends following him, marched forwards towards the church. He was apparelled in the habit of his order, being distinguished from the rest of the monks by his ring, his hood, and his cap. The monks of this abbey, are wont to enter into the church by the gate of the cloister which is near the choir; but for the more state, and to make a greater shew of their abbot in his pomp and majesty, they chose this time to come out of the monastery, and to make a round, in order to their entering the church by the great gate, at the west-end of it. As soon as they entered, the bells, organs, and other musical instruments, sounded a march; and as for the monks, they gave forth such an air in their going, as discovered rather the vanity of their hearts

than that majesty which becomes the ministers at the altar.

When they were come to the church, the abbot made a halt before the chapel of S. *Bernard*, which is at the lower end of the church, and kneeled down upon cushions of violet coloured velvet, very richly embroidered, which were laid upon a desk, covered with a carpet of the same, garnished with rich golden fringe. And at the same time the musicians sung an anthem in praise of that saint. After this the abbot was conducted to his throne, which they had erected at the right side of the altar. It was covered on high with a magnificent canopy of state, and surrounded with several seats, very richly adorned, for all the officers that were to officiate at the *pontifical*. Being arrived here, he seated himself, having two abbots of his friends on each side of him, and immediately fourteen of his monks, in their surplices, went and took the ornaments that were laid on tables placed near the high altar, wherewith he was to be invested; and having each of them taken what belonged to their place, they ranged themselves one behind another, making a long row. The first of them carried in a large silver gilt charger the *abbatical-buskins*; the second in another like charger, the *abbatical-shoes* of violet coloured velvet, richly embroidered; a third carried the *coif*, a fourth the *rochet*; which as also the *coif*, was of most fine linen, laced round about, and at the hands, with a very curious *point de Venice* of a foot deep; the fifth, followed with a very costly *girdle*, of white silk, woven and wrought to admiration; the sixth, carried the *stole*; the seventh and eighth, each of them a *tunicle* of white taffety; the ninth, the *cap*, which, like the *stole*, was of cloth of gold, the edges of it being raised by embroidery into several curious figures, composed of seed-pearls

and furnished with golden clasps; the tenth, carried the *little cross of diamonds*, valued at two thousand crowns; the eleventh, in a great charger gilt and enamelled, carried the *abbatical-gloves*; and the twelfth, the *abbatical-ring*, being an *amethist* of extraordinary size; the thirteenth, followed with the *mitre*, thick set with pearls and precious stones; and the fourteenth and last, carried the *crosier* or *pastoral-staff*. Every one of these in order, as they drew near to the abbot, seated on his throne, bowed the knee before him; and after they had delivered their several charges into the hands of the assistant abbots, who were to attire their prelate, having first worshipped him with another genuflexion, retired again in good order. At every ornament that was put upon him, there were particular prayers which the assisting abbots repeated, and the officiating prelate read himself in the Pontifical Book, which was supported by two monks, and two others in their surplices and tunicles, held wax candles to light him, whilst the master of the ceremonies turned the leaves for him.

The abbot being accoutred with all these ornaments, and having the mitre on his head, seated himself on his throne in the midst of the two abbots assistants, and immediately all the officers who were to officiate at the ceremony, ranged themselves near to him. These officers were four chaunters in their *rochets* and *hoods*, four sub-chaunters in their *surplices*, two deacons in their *stoles* and *tunicles*, two sub-deacons in their *tunicles*, two taper-bearers, to hold the *candlesticks*, and two incense bearers dressed in *surplices* and their *silver censers* in their hands; besides another officer to hold the *crosier-staff*, and the master of the ceremonies with his *rod* or *wand*. All these were only to officiate till about the middle of evening, at which time, as if they had been extreme-

ly tired with the attendance they had given, they were relieved by others yet more gorgeously apparelled, who were to officiate till the service was ended. Their music was very numerous and choice; the abbot sung the first verse of even-song, which was continued by the music and singing men with abundance of ceremonies, which I shall not insist upon at present, that which I have already delivered being sufficient to give you an idea of that extraordinary majesty and external pomp, wherewith the feasts are solemnized in the churches of *Italy*. For in case it be a bishop or archbishop that officiates, the magnificence is much greater; and if it be a cardinal or pope that celebrates the feast, these ceremonies are carried to the highest point of elevation and grandeur imaginable.

I remember to have read somewhere in an *English* Protestant author, the commendations and elogies he bestows upon those of the Romish communion, in this point of ceremonies, saying, *That in this only they are praise-worthy and to be commended, that they spare nothing that may contribute to the costliness and solemnity of their feasts.* For my part, I have very industriously applied myself to search out the principle from whence so much false lustre doth proceed, which they make use of in *the Church of Rome*, to dazzle the eyes of the inconsiderate and unthinking people, and I have found that it is not their great zeal for the house of God, that is the motive of it, but only interest, vain glory and self-love, as I abundantly discovered upon this occasion.

The even-song ended about six of the clock in the evening; after which the abbot and his officers, having put off their ornaments, went into *the sextry*, where they found great tables covered and thick set with dry and wet confects, neat's-tongues, *Bononia* sausages, and fine pastry-meat

All the ladies and gentlemen of quality that were n the church, were desired to enter: and as for nyself, having a free access to that abbey, as being in a manner one of the family, because I publicly taught there the liberal arts, and had a good allowance, besides the abbot's table. I entered into the *sextry* with them, and had moreover the privilege of bringing some *Frenchmen* of my acquaintance in with me, which are now in *London.* The gentlemen and ladies were not wanting to bestow great *encomiums* on the abbot, each declaring how admirably well his *pontifical habit* did become him, and how gracefully he did officiate. In the mean time, the monks applied themselves to the ladies of their acquaintance, and entered into close discourse with them, but what it was, I could not be witness to; only thus much I can aver, that their beauty had so far charmed them, that for a whole month after it was the great subject of their discourse. It seems they had so well studied them, during the converse they had with them, that they could give an exact account of the clothes, ribbands, and laces they had on.

The abbot, during the entertainment, addressed himself to two ladies of quality, the one a lady marquiss, and the other a countess; and demanded of them, whether they had not found a desire stirring in them, to persuade some of their children to become religious of his Order? the lady marquiss answered, *she would consider of it.* But the countess very frankly assured him, *That she had been so extremely satisfied with the pontifical, which had been celebrated with so much pomp and majesty, that it had even ravished her; and that she was absolutely resolved, her son should take the habit of the order.* She told the abbot, *That the Jesuits did their utmost endeavours, to draw him over to them;* but that s

would be sure to break all their measures, and hoped that her son would behave himself so well in the monastery, that one day she might have the joy and comfort to see him made abbot of the order, and pontifically officiating.

All our good natured monks, in the mean time, notwithstanding all the pains they had taken in assisting at the church ceremonies, were very ready to wait upon the fair ladies at table, and to keep them company, as being in this regard a thousand fold more happy than other *Italian laymen*, who have not the privilege of making feasts to get sight of their ladies, and who can scarcely ever meet with an opportunity of rendering them the like services. I cannot deny, but that some of these ladies were of kin to them; but however, it must needs be a great satisfaction to have an occasion of treating them so splendidly out of the public stock of the abbey, which cannot be done, but in those sorts of ceremonies; for at any time, if they desire to do it, it must cost them a round sum of money. The ladies, in the mean while, were in so good humour, and so extraordinarily well pleased, as well with their entertainment in the *church* as in the *sextry*, that they very freely asked the abbot, when they might expect to come to another *pontifical?* who promised them to celebrate another on the day of S. *Francis* of *Romé.*

It is impossible, Sir, you should not take notice in all this I have related to you concerning the solemnity of this feast, what indeed were the true motives of it. The abbot hereby pleased his vain-glorious humour, by appearing in a pontifical dress, with so many pompous ornaments, amidst so many adorations and so many incensings, as were presented to him. Besides this, he made also his advantage of it; for [illegible]nce he took occasion to solicit persons

of quality, after he had dazzled their eyes with the magnificent splendour of his pontifical, to persuade their children to take the habit of the order. I know very well how gainful it is to the abbot and other principal officers of the abbey, when the children of persons of quality, take upon them the habit. They never admit them to the profession, till their parents have presented them very liberally, besides, the annual pension they are bound to allow their son; and the more honourable the persons are, the more considerable still are the presents that are made them. The rest of their religious find their pleasure and satisfaction in these festivals; their eyes are feasted with the sumptuous adorning of their churches, and their ears with the sweetness of the most choice and exquisite music; neither is the feast that concludes the solemnity, and the ladies company, the least charm to make them desirable; so that, in a word, the glory of God, and the zeal of his holy temple, are at the best, and to speak most favourably, but the more remote object of these pompous solemnities.

I have already told you in one of my LETTERS, that I feared to pass for a severe censor in your judgment, who takes pleasure to put a rigorous sense upon actions, otherwise capable of a favourable interpretation; and for this reason, I always back what I say with the reasons that induce me to pass these sorts of judgments; and I question not, in the least, but that if you will be pleased well to weigh them, you will find that I have used abundance of moderation in my expressions. To apply this therefore to the present subject, I shall proceed to tell you, that the *festival of S. Francis of Rome* approaching, on which day the abbot had promised the ladies another *pontifical*, preparations were made for greater *pomp and splendour*, than before had been at th

feast of S. *Bernard.* They had sent for m
cians from *Florence* and *Venice*, who, two d
before the feast were arrived at the abbey, wh
they were very splendidly entertained. The ev
ing before the abbot and the monks pra
heartily for fair weather, and the air being
that time very clear and serene, there was all
appearance imaginable that it would continue
which hopes filled them with unutterable j
There was only one good old convent friar amon
them, who being better informed than all this,
the twitches his corn gave him, very perempto
avered, it would rain the next day. Upon
ominous intimation, the abbot himself went
after supper, to star-gaze what weather they w
like to have the next day; and seeing the sky
very clear and full of stars, declared there was
need to fear, but they should have a fair day
it, and that the old friar was a *turba festa*
meer *trouble feast*, to talk so at random. U
this assurance the monks retired to their ap
ments that evening with a great deal of j
But forasmuch as it is not for men to kn
the times and seasons, which God has
served in his own power, about midnight
weather changed, and the next morning there
so furious a shower, that it was impossible
stir abroad without being wet to the skin. T
tempestuous weather continued till night, whi
seized the spirits of the poor monks with a stran
consternation. The next morning they appea
all pale-faced, and gave evident proof how gr
a change crossed desires are able to produce
the body of man. Some of them openly m
mured against heaven, because that almost ev
year it disturbed or disappointed their feast of
Francis; others of them retained still some ho
that the rain might hold up within a few hou
but alas? their hopes were all in vain; the

vens were too resolved, and the storm was so far from ceasing and diminishing, that it increased more and more. The abbot perceiving there was no remedy, sent word to the sexton to shut up the ornaments of the *Pontifical*; however he ordered the music should play, because the musicians were present, and that most of them were paid before-hand; but he forbid the great rows of wax candles to be lighted, which had been disposed of round the church, or to burn the incense that had been prepared for the altars: so that, excepting only the music, the office was very simply and plainly celebrated after the ordinary manner. The abbot did not appear at it himself, and all this great pomp and solemnity vanished in smoke.

Now I desire you, sir, only to draw a rational and obvious consequence from all these proceedings. Can you persuade yourself, that God or the saint were the object or motive of all this ado? God is immense and infinite, every where present, whether it be fair or foul; and the saint also is supposed to be always the same in heaven; how came it to pass then that the solemnity was changed, and put off? but because the gentlemen and ladies that had been invited, and for whose sake the feast was intended, could not come; *Sublata causa tollitur effectus; take away the cause, and the effect ceaseth.* Or can we draw a more just consequence, or more proper to stop the mouths of our adversaries of the *Roman Communion*, who object to us their divine service, as celebrated with so much pomp and magnificence, and who find so much fault with the simplicity and modesty of ours? when they celebrate their *Mattins*, or *Morning Service*, on their greatest holidays before day-light, they scarcely light two wax-candles on the altar, (because, say they, no body frequents them;)

where

whereas in the day-time, when there is abundance of company, they light a matter of three or four hundred. May we not therefore with great reason reproach them, that all their pompous feasts and solemnities are only to satisfy their own pleasure, vain-glory and avarice? And that therefore God abhors and abominates these their services; so far are they from being any proof of the truth of their religion. In the mean time I must need acknowledge, that this is that which deludes many, and is a stone of offence to all those, only in matters of religious worship, who consider only that which strikes the senses.

I knew a papist in *England*, that was turned protestant many years before, who told me he was returning again to *Italy*, in order to join himself again to the *Romish Communion*; and his reason was, *Because forsooth the Divine Service was not solemnized here with that solemnity as it was in his country.* I wonder, why by the dint of the same argument he was not persuaded to turn *Jew*, who use more ceremonies than the church of *Rome*; or rather, I am astonished he did not consider with himself, that all these ceremonies and pompous vanities being only arbitary things, which depend only on the will of men, if the protestants were inclined that way, might contrive and institute such as should be more magnificient than those of *Rome*, and might make their bishops to appear every day in as pompous ornaments as the pope does on S. *Peter's* day: and if they do not do it, the reason is, *Because they are well persuaded, that what is most pleasing in the eye of men, is not always most acceptable to God*, who requires pure *and holy hearts, and not rich* and pompous apparel, and *to whom the fervency* of our prayers is far more acceptable

acceptable than clouds of the sweetest incense. Besides, the service and worship of God, as it is celebrated in their churches, is not altogether destitute of decent ornaments neither: the ministers habit are such as distinguisheth them from all others in their ministry, but yet so, as without any thing of superstition: there is no divine virtue attributed to them, that renders the wearers thereof more holy than others: whereas, in the church of *Rome*, should a priest celebrate mass without his hood, or *Amict*, and that wilfully, they hold it to be a mortal sin.

I return now to our feasts again, and having given you an account how the same are celebrated by those monks who live upon their incomes; I shall proceed now to those of other religious, who partly live of incomes and partly of alms, as well known in *Italy* by the name of *Frati*. During my stay at *Rome*, I went to the *Minerva*, which is a famous convent of the *Dominicans*, in was on a *Saturday*, at which time they were celebrating a festival in honour of the *Rosary* of the *Blessed Virgin*. I learned, that the heads of that confraternity met every *Saturday*, and did every one of them, by turns, celebrate the feast of the *Rosary* at their own charges. It is the humour of the *Italians*, in such like cases, to strive for the honour of surpassing one another, and spare no cost, to the end they may in magnificence out-vie others; this is an emulation that is natural to them, and which I believe cannot with good ground be attributed to their virtue; because herein they feed their vanity as much as in those sumptuous *Cavalcades* they make, and in which (after the same manner) their great aim is to out-do one another.

These religious, or frati, have contrived a form of feasts for their own tooth: the monks (as wa

so

said before) make them at their own charges, and to set forth their riches and glory; but these always celebrate them upon other men's purses, and with such caution, as withal to fill their own into the bargain. The laws they have established to this purpose, are, that whosoever causeth a feast to be solemnized, must send, before-hand, a sufficient sum of money to defray all the masses that the religious of the convent do celebrate that day: in the second place, he must be at the charge of adorning the chapel, or church where the feast is to be kept; and in the third place, he is obliged to send a splendid dinner for all the good friars of the convent. Some amongst them, for this very reason, do very aptly call these feasts, *the friars' milch-cows.* As for those friars which are called *mendicants*, such as the *capuchins*, and some others, who live wholly on alms; forasmuch as they cannot receive money for their masses, there is this difference, that instead of delivering the money for that purpose into their own hands, it is to be paid to him whom they call their temporal father, that is a layman, who has the disposal of their money for their use, and whom they call every month to an account, even to the utmost farthing. Their patriarch S. *Francis*, never dreamt of this piece of subtilty, and consequently also he has not made the least mention of it in his rule, or directory; but as for these good fathers, they have quite out-done him in refined wit and invention. They do not think it convenient, so wholly to rely upon the divine providence, as not to think their own the more safe and sure way. *What would you have us do? (say they) alas! the times are changed, and laymen are not so charitable now, as they were in the time of S.* Francis! For my part, I durst undertake to prove to their faces, that in case they lived with as much frugality as their ancient fathers

athers (who, to speak truth, are of no great aniquity neither) they would find superstitious people enough, to furnish them with a sufficiency, for a sober and penitential diet. But who would take delight to incommode themselves, o cram a company of lazy lubbers, who do nothing but go about from house to house to fill heir bellies, especially leading so scandalous a ife as they do? true it is, that by their cunning hey have so ordered the matter, that they want 'or nothing: and one of the best inventions they ave ever yet found out, to be sumptuously and lelicately treated, is their feasts.

And forasmuch as a regular feast, I mean those that are marked in the almanack, are only to be found once in the year, they have invented the useful contrivance of *confraternities*, as being most fruitful nurseries of feasts, or holidays, for them, so as ever to produce many for them in one and the same week. A *confraternity*, according to the definition they give us of it, is an association of many persons, who unite themselves and agree together, at certain times, to render some religious worship to God, to the virgin, or to some other saint, in such a manner as is not common to all: but at the bottom, it is indeed nothingelse, but the most sure and refined art the *church* of *Rome* has to catch money; and they have always some good crafty father or other, that has the trade of drawing in people at his fingers end, who is the director of it: it is to him all those that desire to be admitted to the *confraternity* must address themselves, where (for writing down his name in the book, and for entrance-money) it costs him a *crown* at least; and every year at the same day, he must come to have his name renewed, and pay over the same entrance-money as at his first admittance, *otherwise*, you are, without mercy, *ignominiously* expelled the *confraternity*, an fro

from that time forwards are excluded from having any share in their *prayers*, or partaking of their *indulgences*. Over and above all this, there is some money to be paid every month, towards the lights of the *chapel* where the *confraternity* is erected: which considering the vast number of those who are enrolled in it, produceth a prodigious sum of money.

The least *confraternities* that are, consist of three or four hundred persons; there are some have a thousand, yea, two or three thousand belonging to them. I have myself seen above twenty thousand names enrolled in the book of the *confraternity* of the *scapulary* of the *Carmelites* of *Milan*; and in that of the great *confraternity* of the *rosary* of S. *John*, and S. *Paul* of *Venice*, I have been certainly informed there are above forty thousand brothers: suppose every one of the brethren should only give a penny every month towards the *chapel-lights*, it would be impossible to burn all the wax-candles that money would buy; which by consequence turns to the profit of these good friars. They are continually hankering about the richest persons of their *confraternity*, endeavouring to persuade them to make feasts in honour of the he or she saints in whose name their *confraternity* is erected.

I happened once to be in company of an *Italian* count, who was of the *confraternity* of the *little Scapulary* of the Virgin, erected in the *great convent* of the *Carmelites* at *Rome*, at the time when the father director of the *confraternity*, came in to him, and told him with a smiling countenance, *Conte Giovanni, I have a great complaint against you, from one of your very good she friends.* The *Count* supposing it to be from one of his mistresses, asked him who it was? the director answered, *That it was from the Blessed Virgin, and that he had no reason to doubt,* [illegible]

that she was very angry with him, for having for so long a time neglected, to cause the feast of the Holy Scapulary to be celebrated. The *Count* excused himself upon the account of some extraordinary business, that had put it out of his thoughts; and desired the director to send him in next week the list of their religious. When he was departed, the *Count* told me, that what he had told him implied as much as that he would make the feast of the *scapulary* the next week; because on the like occasion it is customary to send in as many couples of *capons* and bottles of wine, as there are religious in the *convent*, besides money to pay for the masses that are to be said that day: so that his demanding a list of the director, was a full intimation that he had granted his suit; and accordingly he took his leave very well satisfied, saying, *he would take care to pacify his she friend.* The *Count* told me afterwards, that this feast would cost him a round sum; because commonly the note of the director of the *confraternity* amounted very high, as well for the lights as for the musicians and adorners of the *church.*

And in order to the multiplication of these feasts, they have pitched upon one day of the week, for the assembling or meeting together of their *confraternities*; that of the *rosary* meets every *Saturday;* of the *little scapulary* on *Thursdays*, as likewise that of the *holy sacraments;* the *confraternity* of S. *Francis's cord* on *Fridays;* that of the *annunciation* on *Wednesdays;* that of S. *Antonio* on *Tuesdays;* and lastly, *Mondays* are peculiarly appropriated to the *confraternities* of the *souls in Purgatory.* So that you see, they are fairly provided with feasts for every day of the week, and that without counting several other particular *confraternities*, the number whereof is unknown to me, these which I have mentioned being

being only the more general. They are not indeed all of them to be met with in one *church*, nor in one and the same order of religious; for the *rosary* belongs to the *Dominicans;* the *little scapulary* to the *Carmelites;* the *cord of* S. *Francis* to the *Franciscans;* the *annuciation* to the *Soccolanti;* S. *Anthony* of *Padua* appertains in general to all the religious that live under the rule of S. *Francis;* and the *Souls in Purgatory* do not only belong to all the religious orders, but also to all parishes and churches under the inspection of secular priests.

After all this, it cannot be denied but that those of the *Roman communion* are certainly fallen in love with their own blindness, in that they will not so much as take the pains to open their eyes, to see how miserably these fellows gull and cheat them: for what can be imagined more ridiculous than all these sorts of *confraternities?* because S. *Francis* forsooth wore a cord or rope instead of a girdle, they have erected a *confraternity* in honour of it; accordingly every brother of the society must wear a small cord: these small cords or bands, do not in the least resemble that which S. *Francis* wore, which I have seen at *Assize,* and is as thick as some of the greatest ropes that wind up buckets in a well; but these are very delicately wrought, and artificially knotted in several places. The custom is to bless them publicly, with many ceremonies and prayers; which being performed, they tell us, *they have the virtue to blot out all venial sins; to drive away the devil, and troublesome temptations of the flesh.* Most of the ladies of *Italy* wear this cord of S. *Francis;* they tie them round about their bodies, and the ends of them reach to the bottom of their petticoats; they are full of pretty little knots, and they serve them to play withal, as the *English* ladies do with their fans.

Were it true indeed, that these cords had the power of repressing carnal temptations, the ladies of *Italy*, who wear such lovely ones, could not fail of being the chastest women in the world; and yet I am sure this is not the commendation that is given them. But be it as it will, this *cord* is a thing so extraordinary holy, that great feasts are celebrated in honour of it every week, in all the churches belonging to the *Franciscans;* and the popes have been pleased to bestow great indulgences to all those who shall enroll themselves in this society of the *cord.* They are only the poor protestants that do not enjoy all these fair advantages, because they look upon them as no better than meer folly; and for my part, I believe they have very good reason for being of this opinion; and that the surest and safest way is, to believe with them. That the only thing that can make us of proof against all temptations, and endue us with the power to overcome sin, is the *grace* of *God*, and that by means of it alone, we shall become conquerors over the *devil*, the *flesh*, and the *world*, without the assistance of either *rope* or *cord.*

The confraternity of the *rosary* is no less superstitiously founded than the foregoing. Since the *salutation* of the angel *Gabriel* to the *Virgin*, has passed in the church of *Rome* for the most holy prayer that can be made to her, the father *Dominicans*, who pretend to be the greatest favorites of the *holy Virgin*, to the end they might have some particular devotion to distinguish them from the common, have invented that which is now called the *rosary*, which is nothing else but an aggregation of several *Ave Maries;* there are ten times ten of them in the *rosary*, and at the end of each ten they add the *Lord's prayer.* And to the end they might not fail of saying the just number *(for in case* that only one *Ave Mary should chance to be omitted*, it would be the loss

of the whole indulgence) they have brought into use their *paternosters*, or *beads*, by which they count the prayers as they say them, that there may be no mistake. And as it is the belief of the church of *Rome*, that the elements and material subjects of the sacraments, are not only signs, but physical instrumental causes, producing grace in the soul; for they say, that the *water* in baptism, the *oil* in the extreme unction, and the matter presented in the collation of orders, do physically produce grace in the soul; so in like manner the popes have affixed to these *beads* of wood, glass, or any other matter, the graces and privileges that belong to the *rosary*. So that if a person should repeat all the prayers ordered and established for the *rosary*, without having one of these *paternosters*; yea, though (to be exact in his tale) he should count them on his *buttons*, or *fingers*, yet would he not thereby obtain the indulgence; no, by no means, there must be *paternosters* in the case, as being the instrumental causes of producing grace in the soul. There are scarcely any *Italians* but have these *paternosters* about them, either in in their pockets, or hanging about their necks, between their shirt and doublets. The ladies carry them on their arms, and they have nowadays made an ornamental bravery of it, not inferior to their *necklaces* and *bracelets* of pearls and diamonds. They sometimes go abroad without a *fan*, but never without their *beads*. The most common, for women of a mean condition, are of *coral* or *amber*; but the ladies of quality have them of *precious stones*, or of *odoriferous pastes*, adorned with the most curious *ribbons*, and garnished with abundance of *gold* and *silver medals*. The greatest prostitutes would be ashamed to go abroad without their *great paternosters* on their arms, which hang down to their feet; not that their devotion is so great

in running of them over, but meerly because it is customary, and a kind of necessary implement for them to trifle with, which they cannot well be without. Neither do they make any difficulty to ask of their lovers a *paternoster* for the price of their infamous commerce.

The *little scapulary*, or *habit of the Virgin*, is a piece of the same worth and value, and belongs to these *Carmelites*; for it is their own habit to which they make people pay so great respect, and so many adorations. These fathers were originally *hermits*, who had their place of retirement on *Carmel*. They pretend, that the *blessed Virgin* appeared to them there, and gave them the form of the habit they were to wear, which is a *vest* and a *scapulary* of a brown colour, and a great *white hood*; and that she told them at the same time, *That all those who wear that habit, should be blessed by her, and her son*, Jesus Christ, *and should never die in any mortal sin*. Now forasmuch as it is not possible to persuade all the world to become *Carmelites*, that so they might enjoy the privileges of this miraculous habit, they have found out a way to cut their old habits into a little square piece of the bigness of four or five fingers' breadth, which they (for the money) bestow upon laymen, to wear about them. They have persons on purpose, standing at the doors of their churches, who sell them for four-pence or five-pence a piece. Certainly, this is the best improvement of old clothes that ever was thought of; and the most excellent invention never to want new ones, and to be always well clad, that could possibly be imagined. And indeed, I scarcely remember ever to have seen any *Carmelites*, that were not very well accoutered, and that with new clothes too. True it is, there are some of those to be sold, that are very curiously wrought over with silk, for those, who not contenting themselves with

with these foolish devotions, must needs have them set forth with abundance of vanity; but however the ground of them must be always a shred of a *Carmelite's* old frock. They have instituted several *confraternities* in honour of this holy habit; they celebrate great feasts every week, with almost exquisite music, and have particular masses said in reverence and respect to this habit. As for this *little scapulary*, as well as the *rosary*, S. *Francis's* cord, blest *pastes* and *medals* of our lady of *Loretto*, it is still one and the same song; it, as all the rest, forgives *venial sins*, prevents ones dying in *mortal sin*, and procures a speedy deliverance from the *flames of Purgatory*. I desire you, Sir, to represent to yourself a poor *Roman Catholic* with all this gear and harness about him, one of the *little scapularies* on his back, S. *Francis's rope* about his waist, a *rosary*, or great *paternoster* in his hand; abundance of *medals* and *blest pastes Images*, *written prayers*, and *saints' bones* about his neck, upon his breast, or in his pockets, who is cock-sure, that by means of these he shall not only escape hell, but also the scorching *flames of Purgatory*. What think you? have we not all the reason of the world, to write about his head in great characters, *error et superstitio?* On the other hand, set before your eyes a good *Protestant* who neglecting all these things, wholly applies himself to live well, placing all his hope and confidence in God alone, and the merits of his saviour Jesus Christ; and then tell me sincerely and without bias, which of both has more reason of his side, and better ground for what he does. And yet this error and superstition is so deeply rooted in the minds of the *Papists*, that there is scarcely any way left to disabuse and unhood-wink them, so fatally have their *priests* and *monks* enchanted them.

I knew in Germany, a German captain, who

had no great faith in all these *confraternities*, and *contrived devotions;* I tabled at his house in the city of *Mentz;* whenever there happened to be any discourse concerning them, he always discovered his aversion to them, and declared with abundance of reason, that they were only the effect of priest and monk-craft to get money; and that he believed, God would most severely punish them for it in the other world, as well as those who suffer themselve to be abused by such follies. This captain, some time after, fell into a consumption, and about three or four hours before his death, I was with him in his chamber; and forasmuch as he had still the free use of his senses and speech, he discoursed concerning the things of eternal life; and (as a good father) exhorted his children, which stood about his bed, to an honest and truly christian life. Whilst he was thus employed, in comes a father *Dominican*, who had been sent for by the mistress of the house: he was the director of the confraternity of the *rosary*, with a great *paternoster* in his hand, and drawing near to the dying man, he exhorted him to enroll himself in the *confraternity* before his death. The sick man desired him not to interrupt the exhortation he was giving to his children, which might be far more profit to them than his *rosary;* the words of a dying father to his children remain commonly impressed on their minds as long as they live. The *Dominican* giving little heed to all this, obstinately prosecuted his design, repeating continually to him, *that should he come to die without enrolling his name in the* confraternity, *he would lie a tedious while in Purgatory, and that there he would have time enough, and to spare, to repent him at leisure.* The sick man told him, *if you believe it to be so good and saving a thing for my soul, why do not you set down my name of your own accord!* But the father not finding

finding his account in this, continued to affright and terrify the patient; who at last being scared by the horrid representations he had made him, cried out to his wife, *pray give him a crown, and let him write down my name.* Whereupon the father after he had given him a *paternoster*, went his way, and as he was going out of doors, told his wife, *That in case he had not happily come to her husband, he would have died like a dog.* The good father having obtained his end, came no more to look after him; and this poor gentleman died about three or four hours after, with his great *bead-row* about his neck. I confess, I should have been extremely surprized to see, that a man, who had all his life time witnessed so great an aversion for these foppish superstitions, should himself at last fall under them a little before his death; I say, I should have been very much astonished at it, had I not myself heard the frightful discourse wherewith the *Dominican* entertained him, taking occasion from his weak and dying condition, to impress in his mind all the panic terrors of *Hell* and *Purgatory;* for he talked at such a dreadful rate to him, as if it were possible for him (without giving his consent to be admitted of the *confraternity*, with a *crown* at the tail of it) to be ever saved, but would be sure to be damned with all the devils in hell to all eternity.

See here, Sir, the goodly use is made of these *confraternities*, and what all these affected and contrived devotions of the papists do end in. I am now entered into so large a field, and have so many true stories to produce on this subject, that I should never make an end, should I once begin with them; and am therefore obliged, that this LETTER may not swell too big, to pass by them in silence. Nevertheless, I think I cannot in reason exempt myself from giving you a word of information more concerning the society of the

souls in *Purgatory*. This is the most general of them all, as belonging to all churches, and to all priests, as well secular as regular: this is their true nursing mother; for in *Italy* the dead (which is strange) maintain the living, and the priests and the monks are the ravens and crows, that fatten and cram themselves with the carcasses of the dead. This is that probably which inspires them with that inhuman cruelty and barbarity, that makes them desire the death of all men.

I shall not spend my time here to oppose the false opinion of *Purgatory*, because being a point of doctrine, it is no part of the task I have undertaken; but shall only acquaint you with the use that is made of it in the church of *Rome;* and how dexterously the priests and monks have turned it to their great gain and advantage. I cannot but own, that person who is persuaded of the existence of a *Purgatory*, and that so dreadful an one as the *Roman Catholics* represent to us, cannot but apprehend it is his interest to think seriously of it; and according to this persuasion, I do not think it strange, if a papist in his last will appropriates some considerable part of his estate for prayers and masses to be said for the relief of his soul after death, or even bestowing something by way of charity, to have them said for others also; but when this is done with indiscretion and excess. and to the great prejudice of ones neighbour, this is a thing I can in no wise approve of. I know well, that in this point I shall have all the clergy of the Roman communion against me; for they maintain, that in this case there can be no indiscretion or excess committed, nor any prejudice or hurt done to any whatsoever, grounding themselves on this principle (which they extremely mis-construe,) *That a well ordered charity begins from a man's self; Charitas bene ordinata incipit à seipso.* So that conform to their hypothesis, a man should

disinherit all his children without any other cause, but the desire he has to bestow all his estate upon the priests, that they may pray to God, and say masses for his soul after his death, does them no injury at all; and that they would be ready to represent him as a man who did not consult with flesh and blood, in a case where the good of his own soul lay at stake, and was concerned.

I shall to this purpose relate to you a matter of fact, the rememberance only whereof doth still afflict and grieve me, because it proved the ruin of some persons, whom I was particularly acquainted with. In a second journey I took to *Rome*, I took a lodging in the house of a very honest widow, who was plentifully provided for, her husband having left her a good estate; and forasmuch as she had no children, she took two of her sisters to live with her, and entertained them very charitably. The father *Jesuits*, who are far better acquainted with how many widows there are in *Rome*, than how many chapters there are in the bible, had not forgot to set this good woman on their list; neither were they wanting in their diligence and application to court her, in hopes to get her estate, Her confessors, who probably wanted to have her in the other world, ordered her (during the greatest heat of summer) to take a journey to *Loretto;* which she failed not to perform; but returned very sick to *Rome*, where the physicans soon despaired of her recovery; whereupon she made her last will, whereby she left all her estate to her two sisters, except only two hundred *livres*, which she assigned for masses to be said for her after her decease. The fathers *Jesuits* had soon notice of this, and without delay presented themselves before the bed of their dying votary; they *forgot* nothing which they conceived might *prevail* on her to change her testament. They *represented* to her, that it was the greatest folly imaginable

imaginable to bestow ones goods upon relations, who commonly were very unthankful; that her chiefest care ought to be, to procure her own rest and happiness in the other world; that she might be sure her sisters would never be at a farthing charge to procure prayers for her; yea, so far was it from that, that they had discovered, that her sisters fostered a secret and mortal hatred against her, and that consequently (by a trick of an *Italian* revenge) they should be glad to leave her to swelter a good while in *Purgatory*. Last of all, they told her, that her sisters were too far engaged in a worldly spirit, and would probably make a very ill use of the estate she should leave them; and that to leave them any money, would be no better than trusting a knife in the hand of a child or fool, who might hurt themselves therewith: and by this means, said they, she would give an occasion to her sisters of offending God, and damning their own souls, and consequently would become responsible therefore before God: that her sisters could work, and so might honestly gain their livelihood with the labour of their hands, which at the same time would secure them from idleness, which is the mother of all vices. All these fair reasons being uttered with all the artifice and retoric imaginable, prevailed with this poor widow, who a violent fever, and the pangs of approaching death, made yet more apprehensive of the pains of *Purgatory*; so that without any more ado she revoked her testament, and made but one article of it, disposing all she had to the house of the father *Jesuits* of *Rome*, that they might cause prayers and masses to be said for her. Thus she died in the midst of four *Jesuits*: and scarcely had they shut her eyes, but they turned her sisters out of doors, and possessed themselves of all she had. These poor gentlewomen, with tears in their eyes, desired only the

that they would be pleased to give them some of their sister's clothes; but the *Jesuits* utterly refused it, saying, *that they could not dispose of the least thing that belonged to their sister, for that all was to be turned into money to pray to God for her soul, who was now actually burning in the flames of* Purgatory: *so that they could not in concience deprive her of the least refreshment or comfort she had so wisely provided for herself.* Thus these poor afflicted young women were fain to leave the house in a most disconsolate condition; and learned since, that one of them died in an hospital, and that the other (pressed by want) had suffered herself to be debauched, and at present lived a lewd and scandalous life in *Rome.*

What think your, Sir? is not this an excellent use that is made of the doctrine of *Purgatory*, by these wretched and accursed *Jesuits*? I will spend no more time in representing to you the deformity and abominableness of the fact, since the sole recital of it evidenceth it as clear as the sun.

Now, to bring this false devotion the more in request, and to procure ways and means of multiplying it, they teach in *Italy*, that the souls in *Purgatory* are not only succoured and relieved by the prayers and masses of the priests, but that by the same means they become helps and assistants to others. If we believe them, they assist persons upon earth in all their concerns and occasions; if any one hat a suit at law, or is engaged in some troublesome business; or if a man be desirous to obtain a place, command or dignity, the surest way (say they) in these cases, is to have recourse to these suffering souls, and to get a number of masses said for them: for then by way of gratitude and acknowledgment, they *take all* rubs out of ones way; they influence the *spirits of* the judges, and procure the favour of

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great men. If a man be to go a journey, there is nothing more common in *Italy*, than to send him away with this good prayer or wish: *go, and may the* Blessed Virgin, *S.* Anthony *of* Padua, *and the souls of* Purgatory *accompany you every where, and deliver you from all dangers.* This is so universal, that even the boys that go to the *Jesuits'* school are taught, that if they would rise at the set hour in the morning, they must recommend themselves to the souls in *Purgatory* over night, before they go to sleep. But pray, what appearance is there, that those poor souls who cannot help themselves, should be in a condition to concern themselves about, and help others? I have seen lewd women impudently come into the *sextry*, and to order a company of masses to be said for the souls in *Purgatory*, to recover the good-will of some of their lovers, and to get more practice; neither indeed are they so much to be blamed, for they are no better taught.

The power of the souls in *Purgatory* is conceived to be of that extent, and so general, as to believe that by this means they can obtain even unlawful things at the hand of God. If it be demanded, who they are that entertain the people in this gross ignorance? It is evident that they are no other but the priests and monks; and the motive for which they do it, is purely their own interest. They agree admirably well in the doctrine of *Purgatory;* but in sharing the money that is assigned for the prayers, they are all of them together by the ears, and it is neither better nor worse, than catch that catch can.

A noble *Venetian*, in a company where I happened to be present, gave a very pleasant relation of the sport he had on this occasion; he was left executor of a will, and made the guardian of a *pupil: the* lady who was dead, had bequeathed a sum of money for two thousand masses

to be said for her. The monks and priests are very diligent to inform themselves, by means of their emissaries, when any person of quality dies to the end they may prevent one another if they can, and get the masses for themselves. The *Jesuits*, as being the most crafty of all, had first got the scent of it, and before any others, addressed themselves to the noble *Venetian;* and as their custom is, they began to enlarge on the subject of their own praises, and averred, that there were no religious in the church of God, who did celebrate masses with more modesty and devotion than themselves; and that the great zeal they had for the speedy deliverance of the deceased party, had induced them to come and desire the discharging of the two thousand masses left by her last will. They said, it was an open shame to see in what manner the other religious and secular priests did dispatch their masses with so much hurry and precipitation, that a mass did not last above half a quarter of an hour, and that without doubt God was rather dishonoured, than honoured, by such services. The noble *Venetian* having heard this fair speech, told them, *he was glad to see the great zeal they had for the soul of his kinswoman, though he was not so fully persuaded of the indevotion of all other ecclesiastics, as they seemed willing to represent them; that they might say masses for the dead as well as others; and though he knew well, that it was not lawful for the* Jesuits, *according to their constitution, to receive the least money for the masses they said; yet because he would not seem altogether to reject them, he would give them money for fifty of them.* The *Jesuits* being sorely vexed, thus to be put by the two thousand masses they had *already* devoured, went away.

Soon after them the Sacristans or Sextons of *the father Dominicans*, were introduced; who represente

represented, that they had in their churches of *Castello*, and of S. *Giovanni* and *Paolo*, many privileged altars (these are altars to which the popes have affixed so many *Indulgences*, that if only one mass be said at them for any soul in *Purgatory*, they are infallibly delivered thence) they alleged besides, that all the other religious make no bones of it, to sing one high mass instead of many, and which they made to pass for an hundred common masses; but that as for them, they scorned any sinister ways, and promised, fairly to say them all without the least abatement of the tale; and that moreover, to testify their superabundant kindness to the deceased party, they would, over and above the number, cause several masses to be sung for her on the grand privileged altar, in their chapel of the holy *rosary*. The noble *Venetian*, without taking any great notice of their discourse, treated them no better than the *Jesuits*; and having granted them only some few masses, sent them packing.

After them followed a great number of *seatons* of other religious houses, and all for the love of these two thousand masses. If a man might believe them, they were every one of them more holy than their brethren of other orders; all others, according to them, were persons without concience, who devoured the money assigned to masses, without performing the obligations they took upon them. The *Venetian*, however, gave to all of them a pretty competent number of masses, so that of the two thousand, he had only five hundred left.

He sent, in the evening, one of his servants to the place of S. *Mark*, to inform the *secular priests* (who commonly have their walks there, to acquaint themselves where they may meet with money *for their masses*) that the next morning his *master would be* there, in order to distribute

number of *masses*. According to his promise the *Venetian* nobleman repaired thither with five hundred notes (this being the way of giving *masses* in *Italy;* they give a note, whereupon he that hath received, goes and says mass, and enters it into the *sexton's* book, and then returns it to him who hath given it him, to receive his money) and went up to the *Procuracies* of S. *Mark*, which are the buildings which surround the place of S. *Mark*, and there placed himself, throwing down these notes amongst them from some of the upper windows. There were about three or four hundred priests below greedily waiting for them; who, as soon as they saw the papers fly about, put themselves in a posture to catch, each of them, the most they could; they pushed one another, they flung one another in the dirt, they beat one another, they plucked one another by the hair, and tore one another bands and cassocks, whilst a great number of people looked on, and laughed at them. There can be no better way of representing this action, than by fancying to ourselves a crowd of common people, or rather of the scum or filth of the people, to whom some pieces of money are thrown out of the windows, as I saw some persons of quality did on the day of the coronation of their majesties; for this was a perfect representation of the behaviour of the good priests of the *Roman* church on this occasion. And seeing many in the scuffle had dropped their cloaks and hats, some of their companions, more dexterous than they, who chose rather to get a cloak, or a hat, than a note, took them up, and having slily conveyed them under their own, skulked away with two cloaks instead of one. The notes being thus distributed, or rather chance and force having thus disposed of them, these good priests departed each of them to their several posts, to say their masses.

Probably

Probably, Sir, you will think very strange of this relation of the noble *Venetian;* yet I dare assure you, you need not question the belief of every part of it. The priests and monks do agree the best in the world, and are but as one, as long as their common interest cements and keeps them together; but they are all at daggers-drawing when the least particular interest divides them. And as for those priests, who beat one another in the place of S. *Mark*, for to catch the assignation to say masses, that is no strange thing in *Italy*, I myself have seen it with mine own eyes above an hundred times: Alas! they do far worse than this, for even while they are in the *sextry*, invested with their sacredotal ornaments, they sometimes fight together for the priority or precedency in saying their masses, and call one another the most infamous names imaginable. The *Italians* in this also excuse them with a great deal of favourableness, or rather with too much indulgence. *What would you have them do?* (say they) *they are a company of poor priests, that live by their masses, and have nothing else to help themselves with; when that fails them, all fails them: and therefore they have great reason to exert their utmost activity for the obtaining them.* However, I am not a little amazed, that the bishops take no course to prevent these scandalous disorders, and that they ordain so many priests, without providing them some benefices. There is nothing more scandalous in the clergy, than to see those who are the members of it, to be reduced by a necessity of subsistence, to base and mean actions, and altogether unworthy of their character. This disgrace cannot but with a great deal of reason reflect upon them; and it is an evident demonstration either of their negligence to remedy it, or their want of charity to procure the means of it. The most part of these poor priests in Italy

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live by their masses, or else by filching, when masses fail them. They take all they can get, even in the churches themselves; the calices, the linen covering of the altar, the wax-candles, the books, and in a word, all that comes to hand. Wherefore we need make no difficulty to believe what this noble *Venetian* averred, that some in the scuffle had stolen the cloaks of their companions.

Another thing mentioned in his discourse, and whereon I desire you to make some reflection, is the great division and enmity of those religious who went to demand the *masses*: they accused one another as persons without conscience, and false and faithless in discharging the trust they took upon them, and for which they were paid. What the *Jacobite* said of the *Cordelier*, the very same the *Cordelier* said of the *Jacobite*, and so of the rest; and indeed herein they all spoke truth. It is a matter of common practice in *Italy*, that when any one sends money to a convent for an hundred masses, they content themselves with singing one, with the assistance of a deacon and sub-deacon. It is the prior, or guardian of the college that sings: they call this a *mass sung*, an *high mass*, a *solemn mass*; and they maintain that one of these *masses*, is an equivalent to many common ones; they call this *making a reduction*.

But, pray Sir, what can this singing, or these ceremonies contribute towards the rendering one *mass* as efficacious as an hundred? I know a Protestant may easily solve this difficulty, by saying, that one mass is as good as an hundred, and that an hundred are of no more value than one; because they are good for nought, whether singly or aggregate considered. But you who are a Roman Catholic, how can you answer this? If you have never so little sincerity, you cannot but own your *priests* and *monks* are not only content

to satisfy their covetousness, to make use of the doctrine of *purgatory*, to induce laymen to lavish their money for the celebrating of masses; but, that after all this, they would, by this artifice of *reduction*, exempt themselves from the trouble of saying them.

The deceased Pope *Innocent* the eleventh, was no way favouring this trick of *reduction;* for, being informed that the *Carmalites of Naples* had celebrated a mass in music, to acquit themselves of all the masses they were obliged to say, he sent down a commission, to examine the registers and books of the sexton; and upon examination, there were found no less than four and forty thousand masses, which were not discharged. *Innocent* being acquainted herewith, did not believe, that so vast a number of masses could ever be satisfied by one mass only, how solemn soever it might be. He let them know, that seeing they had received the money, they ought to say them first; and because they had not priests enough in their convent to celebrate them, they must take in some secular priests to their assistance. The thing taking wind, being divulged through *Naples*, many stranger-priests went and presented themselves to celebrate some of them, and for fifteen days they admitted them; within which time they said about four thousand masses at several altars; and the fathers paid them at the rate of one half of what they had received for them. At the end of three weeks, some priests that I was acquainted with, came and told me, that having been to offer themselves, to say more masses of them, they were refused, and told, *That all the masses were celebrated;* though indeed it were a thing absolutely impossible for so many masses to be said in that compass of time: *but the truth* of the matter was, that they *were grieved at* the heart to squander their mo

ne

ney thus abroad, and therefore were resolved rather to tell a gross lye, than to part with any more. They alledged for their excuse, *That they had celebrated several masses at their privileged altar.* This is another stratagem of those priests, which is never a whit inferior to that of *reduction*, and against which, the Pope's have nothing to alledge: for otherwise they would contradict themselves, as to the power they pretend to have over the affair of *purgatory*.

These *privileged altars* (as was hinted before) are such as be endowed with great *indulgences*. To obtain one of these altars, great sums of money must be given: but what care they, as long as the bubled multitude refund in an hundred fold. A mass celebrated at this sort of altars, on such a day of the week, which commonly is *Monday*, doth infallibly deliver a soul out of *purgatory*, and a man who should dare to question this, would be looked upon as an heretic, and committed to the *inquisition*, as if he had denied one of the fundamentals of Christianity. According now to this principle they argue thus: (and indeed, granting their supposition, I find their argument strong enough) *The Pope*, (say they) *grants a privilege to one of our altars, and declares, that when they shall procure a mass to be said there for any soul* in purgatory, *though the most obnoxious that is there, it shall in the same moment be delivered thence. Now, the Pope is infallible in all he declares, especially about the concerns of the other world; wherefore to draw a conclusion, we have money sent us to celebrate so many hundred or thousand masses, to say for such a man or woman; what is to be done in this case?* Frustra sit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora: It is a folly to go about, when their lies a short cut before us; *we will therefore cause one mass to be said at our privileged altar*, which will infallibly

libly deliver the party concerned out of purgatory, *and will trouble ourselves no farther about saying the rest; forasmuch as they, being only in order to procure the same end, would be altogether superfluous and unprofitable; so that by this fair way we have (without the least pains taken) gained a good lump of money, as well as without the least discomposure to our peace of conscience.* This argument was once most vigourously enforced against the *Jesuits* of *Rome*, upon this occasion.

A rich merchant by his last will had left them all his estate, to have so many millions of masses said for the deliverance of his soul from purgatory after his death: his near kinsman, who of right was to have been his heir, being made acquainted with his will, lost no time, but as soon as he was dead, went to the Jesuits, and gave them money to say a mass at their privileged altar, for the soul of the deceased; he himself was present at it, and took an attestation in writing of them, that they had said it. Having done this, he ordered all the goods of his kinsman to be arrested, alledging, that the end of the testament being obtained, the goods ought to return to their natural channel; that is to say, to the heir at law; that he could prove, that his relation was either in paradise or in hell, and that in either of those places, they stood in no need of masses. This case was brought to the bar, and pleaded with great heat on both sides; the Jesuits being plaintiffs, and the merchant the defendant. But, alas! the case was to be determined by an ecclesiastic's court, where all the judges were parties, who (had they done right) would have condemned what themselves do every day: so the suit was carried in favour of the *Jesuits*, under pretence, forsooth, that the church must always be fe

voured. However, it is evident, that right and reason were on the merchant's side, and that he could not be condemned without injustice. But I return to our *confraternities*.

There is never a village in *Italy*, how small and inconsiderable soever, which has not a *confraternity* for the souls in *purgatory*, and at the least, a score of priests, who live upon it very plentiful. Besides, the money they receive for their masses, which never fail them, they have a sort of people who carry boxes through the streets, from house to house, begging of all those they meet with, with a great deal of importunity, some money for the souls in *purgatory;* which money the priests afterwards share amongst themselves. In many places of *Italy*, especially in the great cities, in order to their having a fixed and settled income, they let to farm this *purgatory-money*, to some layman or other, as I have seen at *Milan*, in that famous confraternity of *the souls in purgatory*, established in the church of S. *John de Casa Ratta*. The farmer here pays four thousand crowns every year to the priests of that church, and makes his profit of the rest: he maintains for this end, forty box-carriers, who are clothed in white, and wear upon their short white cloaks, the arms of the *confraternity*, to distinguish them. They have each of them a shilling per day allowed them, and their business is to run through all the streets of the city, and beg money for the souls in *purgatory*. These box-carriers are picked men, very cunning and skilful at their trade of begging. Sometimes they are so importunate and impertinent, that they follow a man the length of two or three streets, without quitting *him*, to force him by their importunity to give *them something*. Neither is it without danger to give them any rude or churlish answer; for

in that case, they have the malice to tell you to your face, *That they see well enough that you have no consideration for the souls in purgatory.* And should you continue to revile them, might probably get you recommended to the *Inquisition*, to learn more manners. The farmer of the souls in purgatory, has the keys of all these boxes, and they are bound once or twice a week to bring them in to him. When at any time they bring them full, and well lined, he gives them something over and above their ordinary pay, to encourage them to perform the quest with so much the more application and dexterity. He takes care to place some of his boxes in all inns, ordinaries, taverns, victualling houses, and other public places. Those who have travelled *Italy*, know, that the host doth commonly, at the end of every meal, bring in his box for the souls in purgatory, and desire his guests to put in their charity. At the time of harvest and vintage, the farmer sends some of his emissaries into the field, to carry on the quest there for the said souls; they have great waggons with them, and beg some portion of what is gathered, in corn, wine, wood, rice, hemp, even to the very eggs and hens. Which done, they either spend what they have got themselves, or else sell it and turn it to money.

Now the poor country people being extremely simple and ignorant, and the persons employed to receive their charity, being very subtil and crafty, make them believe what they please themselves, and abuse them extremely. I overheard once a poor country woman, who gave some hemp to some of these crafty collectors, saying, *She was very sorry she could not give them enough to make a great shift of*; but one of the questmen told her, *That they would take care to make a little shift of it*, for some small

soul in purgatory. They turned their heads, and laughed at the simplicity of this poor woman; but not one of them had the charity to inform her better.

Ignorance in the Church of *Rome*, passeth for *simplicity*, and it is to this, ignorant simplicity, or simple ignorance, that they attribute the blessing of the gospel, *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* Whereas, it seems to me, that this poverty of spirit, is to be understood of a simplicity equally devoid of malice and ignorance, and of a candid and open spirit, without any foldings or deceit, or else of those, who having their hearts set loose from the desire of the riches of this world, are the true lovers of evangelical poverty. But to speak truth, the reason hereof is, because this ignorant simplicity, is a thing of such exceeding profit and advantage to the priests and religious of *Rome*. The more ideots the people are, the more easy it is to chouse them, and to pick their pockets.

This is, Sir, some part of what I have observed concerning the use that is made of the doctrine of *purgatory* in *Italy*. I might produce many instances of every different point I have treated of in my LETTERS; but commonly I alledge one only, and very rarely two; and indeed never, but when some particular circumstance, which deserves one's notice, does oblige me to it. I shall only add a word or two concerning their *Pictures of Purgatory*, before I conclude this LETTER.

There is never a church or chapel in *Italy* which has not some large picture in it, representing *purgatory*. The saints that are there, are painted in the resemblance of naked young men and women, with some flames surrounding them; these flames, indeed, are harmless enough, because they burn not; but I fear those whom

naked figures, kindle very dangerous flames in the hearts of many spectators. An *Italian* having caused his mistress to be painted in the flames of *purgatory*, because she had refused him some favours, had these two lines written at the bottom of the picture:—

S' e cosi piacevole divederla in purgatorio,
Che cosa sarebbo divederla nel Cielo.

His fancy was this: *if it be so pleasing a thing to see her in purgatory, where the flames hide some part of her naked body, how great would the pleasure be, to see her painted in heaven stark naked, where no part of her body would be hid?* For after this manner do they of the Church of *Rome* represent the last judgment, and the *blessed souls in heaven.* They publicly expose these pictures on their altars, and the people have them before their eyes, whilst they hear mass. I know that they alledge, *That this is done to impress these great truths of Christianity the more strongly upon the imagination;* as if Christians were only to be led by their imaginations, and not by their reason. They will have a man to submit his reason in all things, and at the same time pare nothing to fortify his imagination. Whereas, the Protestants do quite the contrary: they disregard and neglect material things that vigourously affect the senses, that they may *worship God in spirit and in truth*, and to render him a *reasonable service.*

They practise one thing in *Italy*, which indeed is very horrible. When a poor criminal is led to punishment, he has always two priests by his side, who hold a picture of *purgatory* before his eyes; yea, they go up the ladder or scaffold with him, still holding the picture before him *till execution be done*, and talk to him of nothing else.

else. Is not this indeed to double the fright and terror of these poor wretches, who are but too much terrified already with the death they see prepared for them? The same thing they practise towards those that lie a dying; they place a picture of *Purgatory* at the feet of their bed, between two lighted wax candles, to make it appear with more lustre, and the patient is exhorted to keep his eyes upon it. Some are fain to beseech them, to speak to them of the goodness and mercy of God, because they are already sufficiently terrified with his justice: but for the most part, they do but knock at a dead man's door, for the priests are so wedded to their songs of *purgatory*, that if they chance to make a small digression, they presently fall again into their old track. For my part, I am of opinion, that after we have spoken to a sick person concerning the justice of God, of punishing of sin in the other world, by the eternal pains of hell, to the end to make him seriously examine his own conscience, it is very fitting afterwards to lay before him the great *mercy of God*, to raise his hope and enflame his charity. We fear God, because he is just to punish; but we love him because he is kind to pardon; and surely it is better the last moments of a Christian's life should be spent in loving God, than in the fears and terrors of his judgments. This is that which hath cast many into those terrors, which wanted little of downright despair. But, alas! it is but too evident, that the doctrine of *purgatory* was never contrived so much for the comfort of dying persons, as for the profit of the living; I mean of those lazy priests, who think of nothing but of pleasing themselves, and to enjoy ease and plenty *in this* world.

I should now come to speak something of the *principal* means they make use of, to confirm and maintain

maintain the doctrine of *purgatory*, which is to preach it up with an incomparable zeal and earnestness. I call to mind also, that I promised you at the beginning of this LETTER, to give you some account of their manner of preaching in *Italy*. But, forasmuch as I perceive my LETTER to be long enough already, and that this subject cannot be dispatched in few words, I shall reserve it for the next occasion I shall have of writing to you; and in the mean time, Sir, I beseech you to believe, that I shall continue all my life,

Your's, &c.

LETTER VI.

OF THE DEPLORABLE ABUSE OF PREACHING IN ITALY, &c.

You know, Sir, that which supports the Church of God, and is, as it were, the life and soul of it, are the sacraments and the word of God, wherefore it is of the highest consequence that both these be faithfully and decently administred; and I shall always take the due and faithful dispensation thereof for a sure mark of the true church. This motive engaged me, whilst I was at *Rome*, particularly to inspect the practices of the Church of *Rome;* in reference to both these, I supposed I could not meet with any place more favourable to this my design, than this great city, which boasts herself

self, if we will believe her, not only to contain, within her precinct, the principal and Mother Church of the whole world, but over and above, doth attribute to herself (though it be hard to say upon what good ground) the name of HOLY, *Roma Sancta*. As for what concerns the administration of the Sacraments, I cannot deny, but the same is performed there both very orderly and solemnly, and indeed with an overplus of ceremonies, even to superstition. Here I should give you an account of those ceremonies which are observed at the consecration of priests, the celebrating of the Eucharist, and of the pompous preparations that are made against *Easter*, the week before, they call *The Holy Week*, which by their splendour and magnificence, draw an infinite number of strangers to *Rome*, towards the end of *Lent*, to be spectators thereof. It is a common saying, *That he who would pass his time most agreeably in* Italy, *must be at* Venice *at* Shrovetide *and* Ascension-day; the octave *of the Holy Sacrament at* Bononia, *and the* Holy Week *at* Rome.

Here also, I should have occasion to relate to you an infinite number of fopperies, that are practised here on certain feasts in the year; as at *Christmas*, *Ascension*, and *Pentecost*; but because this would take up a great deal of time, I shall pass them by in silence at present, to enlarge myself on a more considerable subject, wherewith my intent is to entertain you particularly at this time, which is their way and manner of preaching. As much as there is of superstition and excess in the pompous administration of the Sacraments, so great a deficiency, negligence, and unfaithfulness do we meet with in the dispensing of the word. During the space of seven years that I was in *Italy*, in all the cities where I have been

been at the times of *Advent* and *Shrovetide*, I have heard vast number of sermons; but I have never seen or known any curate, or secular priest to preach, except once a canon at S. *John* of *Lateran*, and a cardinal on *Easter-day*, in the cathedral church of *Milan*. So that in case the word of God be corrupted and abused, as indeed it is very considerably every day, we cannot charge the secular priests of *Italy* therewith, who do not preach at all, or who indeed are, for the most part, so ignorant, that they cannot, if they would; but the fault is wholly to be laid at the door of the monks, and other religious, who have in a manner wholly engrossed the performance thereof. Methinks it is enough said, when I tell you, that the true pastors, who are the *curates*, take no pains to feed their own flock, but recommend that care to strangers, I mean to monks, who are more solicitous to satisfy their own interest and vain-glory, than to procure the salvation of souls. Yea, the monks have so absolutely possessed themselves of this ministry, that they will not suffer a secular priest to preach in his own church; and if any of them should undertake so to do, and they should find that they could not supplant him, they would *maliciously* employ all manner of means to blacken and misrepresent him in the eyes of the people, and rob him of his credit and reputation.

True it is, that on the other hand, the *curates* being generally lovers of ease and idleness, make no great endeavours to reclaim their right to the pulpit: they declare openly, that it is the business of the monks to preach, forasmuch as not being engaged in the business and trouble of the world, they have leisure enough in their monasteries to study their sermons; but that as for them, *being wholly* employed in the administration

tration of the sacraments, in hearing of confessions, and assisting at funerals, they have no spare time to turn their thoughts that way. So that we seldom meet with any quarrels on this occasion between them and the monks.

Whilst I was at *Rome*, I often went to the *Minerva* to hear sermons: they are the Father *Dominicans* that preach here, who are also called the *Preaching Brothers*, because, in the sharing and division of the gifts and graces of God, the monks have made amongst themselves, these have boldly appropriated to themselves the gift of preaching. But we find that this is nothing but an arrogant usurpation of theirs, without the consent of the Holy Spirit; for I have scarcely found any monks more unsuccessful in this ministry than themselves. God will never permit the pride of men to dispose of those gifts which belong to him alone. The *Jesuits* have arrogated to themselves the gifts of tongues, and of informing youth; and yet, experience shews, that they are indeed very ignorant and unskilful in both these; and that the scholars who have studied in the universities under other masters, are incomparably better grounded in learning, than theirs are. The monks of S. *Bennet* have appropriated to themselves, the character of *Retirement* and *Silence*, and yet we find no people more gadding up and down in cities and country, than they.

But to return to my discourse; it was one of these old *Dominicans*, or preaching brothers, that preached at the *Minerva*; but he did it in so unworthy and indecent a manner, that I wonder how I could resolve to go and hear him more than once. All that was attractive in him was, that notwithstanding he was very old, yet he was *extremely* comical, and an egregious buffoon; so that he made his auditors laugh with open throats.

valked in his pulpits (for in *Italy* they have
ı very long and wide,) he thumped the pulpit
his hands and feet; he rolled his eyes in his
l, and put himself into an hundred ridiculous
ures.

shall give you here a small account of one of
sermons, which I still remember, that by the
ern you may judge of the whole piece. He
a mind, it seems, to make a moral application
he history in the twenty-first chapter of
book of *Genesis*, where *Abraham* turned his
l *Hagar* out of doors. He begins thus; *Sirs*,
he, *come follow me, and take a walk with
n the Holy Scripture:* then fetching three
l in the pulpit, having one of his arms a-
bow, he stopped short at the fourth, as a man
in an horrid desert, saw somebody at a great
nce, he stood still a good while without
king a word, and very attentively fixing his
till the near approach of the object; he be-
to say, *What is that I see there? sure it is a
an*; and keeping silence again a good while,
aid, *O God! if I be not much mistaken, it
agar*, Abraham's *servant: ah, sure enough it
e very same. God save you* Hagar! *Pray thee
me, what is thy business here in this lone-
desert, which is so dismal and frightful to
re?* Then making, as if he viewed her from
to foot, *I perceive one thing already*, (said
*hat she has not robbed her master, as many
ants do now a-days; for she is in a very pi-
equipage. Tell me*, Hagar, *Why is it then
have left your master?* Here making *Hagar*
k in a most afflicted and sorrowful manner,
as it were, all in tears, *That it was because
er mistresses jealousy;* he answered, laugh-
*A very fine reason, believe me: what was
all? hum! this is very pleasant:* madam
h turns away her servant because she is
jealous

jealous of her. Come Hagar, *come thou along with me; I will at this instant go and speak to thy master about it.* And then taking seven or eight turns in the pulpit, muttering all the while to himself; Sarah *turns away her servant because she is jealous of her; a staunch reason indeed;* and then stopped, striking two great thumps against the pulpit, he said, *Who is there? Pray tell* Abraham *I would speak with him:* and soon after, making a very low bow, as if he had seen *Abraham*, he said to him, Abraham, *pray tell me, for what reason you have turned away your servant* Hagar? *She tells me it is, because your wife is jealous of her:* then personating *Abraham, Abraham* answers him, *If I have turned away my servant, I have had an order from God for it, and therefore do not think myself bound to give you any further reason of it. Though indeed,* Hagar *has not told you all: it was not only upon the account of jealousy, she was turned out of doors, but because she has a little boy of her own, that is very naughty; she beats him that I had by my wife, they are continually wrangling together; they pull one another by the hair; they cry, and make an intolerable noise in the house. My wife has several times spoke friendly to her servant about it, but* Hagar *is become too bold and impertinent, she gives saucy answers, and has too much tongue: for these reasons, therefore, and to have quiet in mine house, I have been fain to turn her out of doors.* Here the old Father *Dominican*, rolling his eyes in his head, and wrinkling his brow, as one that was very angry with *Hagar: Hagar,* (said he) *I find now, that thou didst not tell me the cream of the jest: thou art just like the servants of* Rome, *when they are turned out of service, it is never any of their fault, it is because their mistresses are of an intolerable*

difficult

ficult temper; they are exceeding humour-
ıe, they are very jealous, and it is impossible
live with them; but by that I can perceive,
was because you began to play the mistress,
l because there was a continual disturbance in
house upon your account. I know well
ugh that jealousy could not be a sufficient rea-
for sending a good servant packing; for
erwise our Roman *dames, who are extremely*
lous, would never be able to keep any: but
re must be this besides in the case, that this
lousy causeth disturbance and noise in the
se between the husband and his wife, or be-
en the children; and then I am clearly of
raham's *opinion, the* servant must turn out,
ice Ancillam & Filium ejus. The Father, af-
he had very dexterously played the buffoon
this history of the Bible, past on another,
ich he handled in the same comical manner,
king all his hearers to burst out into a loud
ghter: and after all, fell upon the devotion
ımon to their order, which is the *Rosary;*
they bring this in by the head and shoulders
ın all occasion, let their subjects be what they
ase. This was his constant mode of preach-
, and the church was always full of people.
The *Italians* are extremely in love with ser-
ns that make them laugh, which is the reason
t the most part of their preachers apply them-
ves to a comical and drolling style. The *Je-*
ts have another way of preaching, which I
y call a *poetical style;* for they being per-
s who have spent their youth in teaching
nan learning in their colleges, they have
ir head and fancies filled with *Ovid's Meta-*
rphosis and *Æsop's Fables;* and accordingly
their sermons are stuffed with them. If they
ak *concerning the Incarnation of the Word,*
they

they would think they had not expressed themselves well without saying, that the divine *Prometheus* brought down fire from heaven to the earth; that is to say, *Has personally united the divine with the human nature.* They commonly quote a vast number of passages drawn from profane authors and poets; as from *Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Martial, &c.;* yea, I have heard some of them that have quoted *Terence's Comedies,* and *Ovid de Arte Amandi;* but they very seldom are heard citing the fathers, and yet more seldom the Holy Scripture. The great converse they have with persons of quality, make their words and expressions to be choice; their discourse, neat and refined, though substance and solidity be for the most part wanting in them: their gesture is very proper, and their declamation or elocution not amiss. For to gain the more credit to their order, which is of late standing, and yet so powerful, they very frequently quote the book of the exercise of their founder S. *Ignatus,* which after all, is but a very poor book, and, as it is said, none of his own neither, having stolen it when he was convert brother in the abbey of the *Benedictines* of *Montserra.*

The *Capuchins* have another way of preaching, and their style is stoical, emphatical, and thundering: they commonly make choice of very terrible subjects, *as death,* the *last judgment, purgatory,* and *hell:* they fill the air with exclamations, thump the pulpit with their hands and feet; they lay hold of their great beards, and roar with such a tone, as terrifies all men, yea, and the dogs too; for I have observed, that when a *capuchin* preached, all the dogs run out of the church. In a word, almost all the religious have a different way of preaching, and different divines too, whom they follow, whose opinions are frequently

frequently opposite to one another. The *Cordeliers* have their *Scotus* and S. *Bonaventura;* the *Dominicans*, S. *Thomas;* the *Jesuits*, their *Suarez;* and so of the rest.

As for the order observed in respect to the partition of their sermon, it is the same throughout all *Italy;* they all begin their sermons with the *Angelical Salutation*, or *Ave Maria;* and not with the invocation of our heavenly father, in praying, *Our Father*, &c. or by calling upon the *Holy Ghost*, which yet are the most proper, or rather the only necessary for this purpose. But indeed, the doctrine they preach is so extremely corrupt and wrested, that it is no wonder to find their introductions tainted with the same infection. God, by this very thing manifesting to us, that what they preach is not the pure word of God, by permitting them to preface their human inventions with the invocation of a creature. After their address to the *Virgin*, they pronounce their text, which commonly is a place of scripture, or sometimes a part of a prayer of their church, or some entrance of the mass. They cite the text of scripture only by halves, and in abstracted and interrupted sense, without declaring what goes before or follows after, which yet they ought to do, to render the sense perfect. After this, they proceed to their proposition, and then continue their discourse of a piece, without any division or subdivision at all. They divide their sermon indeed, into two parts; but the second, is nothing else but an heap of examples, histories, and tales, made at pleasure, to divert their auditors. In the interval between the first and second part, they gather the alms in the church for the poor. There are men appointed for this purpose, who have bags fastened to the end of long staves, with little bells at the bottom of them, and they pass by all the ranks and seats of the hearers, to receive

receive their charity. The preacher in the mean time, whilst these bags or purses are marching about, doth, with an incomparable zeal exhort them to give freely. I never in my life, saw people more enflamed with charity for their neighbours, than they are in the pulpit; you would say, *They are the very fathers of the poor.* Herein I cannot but do them the justice to own, that our *Protestant ministers* are not so good advocates for the necessitous members of Jesus Christ, and do not take the cause of the poor to heart with so much heat and zeal, as these men do. However, Sir, I would have you know, that when I praise your *Italian* monks, it is their person I praise, by their action, or rather the external appearance of their action: for if we cut this fair apple in two, we shall find the worm there, which makes it all rotten and corrupt within. To make short, my meaning is, that the motive that prompts them so seriously and zealously to recommend the poor to their auditors, is a piece of self-interest: for the one half of the alms that are gathered in the church, as well as at the church door, during the sermon, belongs to the father-preacher; otherwise, it were impossible to induce those hard-hearted and pitiless monks, those hearts of brass and marble, who are so signally qualified with insensibleness and cruelty; I say, it would be impossible to induce them to any sentiments of mercy and compassion for the miseries of their neighbour, if laymen had not found out a way to join the interest of the preachers with that of the poor, and to make but one of them. This, this Sir, is the great spring that moves the whole engine, and makes the monks to study such importunate motives and reasons, to draw money from their hearers' purses; yea, there be some of them, who are so extremely malapert and insolent,

that

that I am astonished they do not pull them out of the pulpit.

I went one day in *Lent* to hear one of the sermons at the church of S. *Andrew* of the *Valley*, at *Rome*; it was a Father *Franciscan* that then preached there; his sermon was concerning *Predestination;* and after he had declared, that the number of those that were predestinate, was not so small as some did imagine; *I speak now*, (said he) *of* Catholics; *for as for all infidels, who do not believe in Jesus Christ, as well as all heretics, as the* Lutherans, Calvinists, Zuinglians, &c. *our mother (the holy church Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman) teacheth us, that they are all undoubtedly damned, and we ought to believe accordingly.* Afterwards, making a long enumeration of all those he firmly believed would certainly be saved, he, amongst the rest, mentioned all those who were enrolled in the confraternity of S. *Francis's rope*, which peculiarly belong to those of his order: *Because*, (said he) *it is impossible, according to the bulls we have concerning it from the Popes, that any such should die in mortal sin.* He very frankly allowed the same grace also, to all those who wore the habit of the order, and so very handsomely justled in himself into the number of the elect. Finally, putting a question to himself, whether there were not some visible mark upon earth, by which one might distinguish the elect from the reprobate? He answered himself, *Yes, that certainly there were such signs.* Amongst other signs he reckoned up, I remember this was one, *To love music, and the sound of instruments*; but that the principal sign of all was, *to give alms.* This indeed, was the point he would be at, and very dexterously he took occasion from hence, to exhort all his auditors, *to expose that day* to the eyes of all men, the

undoubted tokens of their predestination, by their liberal putting into the purses; and that for his part, he would take exact notice from his station on high, of all those who gave this evidence of their election, that so he might know who were reprobate, and who were predestinate amongst them. Accordingly, he sets himself down in his pulpit, and was silent; and staring with his great eyes that way they carried the bags, having perceived all the first rank had shewed themselves very liberal: *This is well,* (said he) *I find that there is one rank already of my auditors that are predestinate.* And the second and third, having followed the same example; *In very truth,* (said he) *I believe, that my whole auditory will prove to be of the number of the elect. This is an extraordinary comfort for me, that I have preached here this* Lent, *and I render thanks to God for it; because it is a sign that sinners are converted.* By this means, this Father procured a very liberal collection. I observed all this while, that he put many of his auditors into great trouble and confusion, especially some women, who probably had no money about them; they blushed exceedingly, and to avoid the confusion of being accounted reprobates, they reached forth their hands to the bags, as if they had put in something. I myself heard an handicraftsman saying to one of his acquaintance, *That monk there,* (with his signs of predestination) *made me, sore against my will, put a crown into the bag, because I had no other small money about me; for if I had given nothing, it would have spoiled my reputation; they would have taken me for a damned wretch, which would have been enough to have frightened all customers from my shop.*

The monk, ravished to have seen so many elect in his auditory, very joyfully fell to the second

part of his discourse, and being put into an extreme good humour by their liberality, he played the buffoon to admiration. After he had told them many little pleasant stories, he began his second quest for the souls in *purgatory*. He made use of the same motive, with which he had speeded so well before. He represented to them, *That it was not enough to have shewed charity to the living, but that it was necessary for the completing of the evidence of their predestination, to extend it also to those that are dead;* that is, *to the members of the suffering church;* for that is the title they give to *purgatory*. The money of this quest goes to the priests or monks to whom the church belongs where the sermon is preached; and to encourage the preacher to do it more effectually, they allow him the fourth part of the collection. This is that which makes them so zealous to exhort the people from their pulpits, to a liberal contribution. There are some who are so far transported with zeal for these suffering souls, that not content to have made one quest in general on this subject, they back the same with two others. The second is, with an intention to relieve some relation or friend, that any of the auditors are more particularly obliged to assist; and the third, for that soul in purgatory, which is the most neglected as to matter of suffrages, and who hath neither relations nor friends to pray God for her. Thus it is, that these foolish and rash men, imprudently exalt their mercy and compassion above that of God himself; implying, that if their charity did not extend itself to these wretched souls, destitute of all help and assistance, as they say, God would be pitiless and cruel enough, to let them suffer a vast number of years, yea, even to the day of judgment, without shewing any mercy *to them*.

I have been told a story of a countryman who perceived that the preacher of his parish, after having made three quests one after another, was about to make the fourth, for the *soul that suffered most*, called out to him aloud, *father, I would advise you, to shut up your purgatory at present; for if you let one soul more out, she will be in danger to return from whence she came without any thing; for my part*, (said he) *I tell you plainly, I have no more money to give.* Whether this be a true story, or no, I cannot aver; only this I know, that very often they give a fair occasion for their auditors to say as much. It is in the interval of their gathering this collect, that the good father preachers do utter whatsoever comes into their crowns, to persuade their auditors to so charitable a work. Here it is, that with a great deal of heat they vent all their fables and tales of *purgatory*.

I heard a Father *Carmelite*, in the parish of S. *Sophia*, in *Venice*, who having made a sign with his hand, to oblige his auditory to be silent, and listening attentively with his ear, as if he heard something, he at length asked them whether they did not hear a kind of indistinct noise, as of many voices at a distance? Afterwards, lending his ear a second time, he told them, that he heard the souls of purgatory calling upon them, *Not to spare their charities, but to relieve them with a liberal contribution*; corrupting to this purpose that passage of the Revelations, *Audivi sub altare anima interfectorum clamantium, vindica sanguinem nostrum, Deus noster: I heard under the altar the souls of those that were slain; crying, avenge our blood, O God.* For he made bold to change most of the words, to accommodate them to his purpose; saying, *Audio sub altare animas defunctorum clamantium, refrigerate sanguinem nostrum fratres nostri*: I

heard

heard under the altar the souls in purgatory, that cry, Refresh and cool our blood, our dear brethren. I took this action of the preacher for an excellent figure of rhetoric, which is called *Fictio;* but I am sure, that many there did not take it in my sense, but did really believe, that the preacher had indeed heard the souls in *purgatory* crying under the high altar; a sure sign of which was, that many rose up from their seats to look that way. The sermon being ended, the preacher comes down out of the pulpit, and is led into the sextry, whither the purses are brought, and they are opened in his presence, and his share or dividend counted out to him; the preachers herein resembling fowls of prey, or hunting dogs, to whom always a portion is given of the prey they have taken.

In those parts of *Italy* that border upon *Germany* and *France,* the people do not suffer the priests and monks to lead them by the nose, so much as the inhabitants of the provinces that are nearer to *Rome.* True it is, the priests are not wanting to use their utmost endeavours to bring their *purgatory* into request; but the laymen look upon them no better than mountebanks for their pains, who spare no lies to persuade the people to buy their drugs.

I was once desired by the curate of *Campo Doleino,* in the *Alps,* to take the pains to clamber up the mount *Splug,* to go and preach the day of the *Assumption* of the *Blessed Virgin,* in a small village. I went thither, and did my utmost endeavour to stir up their devotion, and make it beneficial to their curate; but it was impossible for me to exalt their beneficence beyond a few pounds of butter, notwithstanding the curate had earnestly entreated me, to be importunate with them for some money. Money it seems is very scarce in those mountains, they

affording nothing besides butter, cheese, chesnuts, and salt meat; and the poor country people carry to the church such as they have, to bestow upon their curate. At the place I went to preach, the inhabitants cannot continue, but about two months in the very midst of the summer; after which, the extreme cold drives them from thence, and obliges them to remove lower, where they continue about two months longer with their cattle; thus descending by degrees, till they come down to the vallies, where they continue all the winter. But to return to our preachers.

The second part of their sermon, as is already mentioned, is made up of nothing but idle tales and drollery; which is the reason why many persons, who take no delight in those jests and fooleries, and probably also, for fear they should be forced against their wills, by the impudence of the preacher, to put money into the purses, go out of the church towards the end of the first part. This first part contains the body and substance of their discourse; and they who print their *Quadragesimals* and their *Advent* sermons, that they may not disparage themselves, never print the second part of them, but make a shift to divide their first part, and make two of it.

The *Buffoon*, or *Comical-preachers*, are the most followed by the common people; but those that preach by curious thought, are the most esteemed; and those who are called *Dotti*, or *Virtuosi*, do generally frequent them. This way of preaching by curious thoughts, consist chiefly in never representing things in their natural sense. If they alledge a text of Scripture, it is a sense that is forced, subtil, curious, and far fetched, which is not the meaning of the Scripture; and a preacher who should stop at the literal and natural sense, would be looked upon no better than a simpleton, ignoramus, and ideot; and except

he had something of a comical air with him, would be very slenderly provided with auditors. I have made it my observation, that they commonly take no place of Scripture in the literal sense, besides, the sacramental words, *hoc est corpus meum; this is my body;* for here they obstinately keep to the letter. And yet I once heard a Father *Minim*, in *Trinity Church*, on the hill at *Rome*, who interpreted the whole history of the institution of the Lord's Supper in another sense, applying it wholly to the doctrine of alms. *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, (said he) *the more engagingly to recommend to us the care of the poor, would have the last action he ever did here on earth, should be an act of charity; to this purpose, when he had nothing more to dispose of, save one poor morsel of bread he had in his hand, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples.* This thought of his was found very quaint and curious, though in the mean time it is very evident, that this is not the true and natural sense of the Holy History; for Jesus Christ in this action, did not in the least pretend to give an alms, but to institute a sacrament, that might serve for the sustenance and spiritual nourishment of our souls. However, the monk was extraordinarily applauded for this his curious thought, and he was not wanting to make good use of it at his quest. And to the end they may be more fruitful and copious in these fine thoughts, the monks ordinarily retire, and take their walks in pleasant places, as in gardens and woods, there to meditate their sermons: others again, betake themselves to dark and subterranean places, there to contemplate without disturbance. Some of them drink good wine, and that in great quantity too, because, (according to the common proverb) *Vinum acuit ingenium; Wine exites invention.* And lastly, *others follow their* particular humours.

The superiors of religious houses, suffer their preaching monks to do what they please, and go whither they will, to favour their invention, or (as they term it) their curious thoughts. They deal with them as charitibly, as we used to do with big-bellied women, whom nothing must be refused, for fear of spoiling their fruit, which are their fine thoughts. It is this great liberty and indulgence that makes so many monks in *Italy* apply themselves to preaching, because, being once engaged in this way, they are exempted from all the observances their rule obliged them to.

The way of setting forth these their fine thoughts in the pulpit, is this: as soon as they have uttered any thing that is neat and curious, to make appear that it doth not want solidity, they, in order to back it) endeavour to find out some texts of scripture that seem to favour it, and to which, for the most part, they give as forced a turn, as to that which is the basis and ground of their neat thought. They commonly quote nothing but ends and scraps of verses, without telling what goes before, or what follows, and seldom or never cite the books from whence they are taken. They content themselves with saying, *As it is written;* or, *according to the oracle of the holy spirit;* or, *as it is set down in the sacred text;* and then quote the place they intend: but it is impossible to know, whether what they alledge be faithfully reported by them or no. Thus it is an easy thing for these corrupters of the Holy Writ, (that they may authorize their near thoughts and high sublimations of wit) to seduce poor people which never read the Scripture, and to whom the reading of *it is* not so much as permitted. After they have *thus* endeavoured to back their curious thought scripture, they endeavour further to strengthen

on it by the authority of the fathers. They reckon amongst the fathers, not only the ancient doctors of the church, as S. *Chrysostom*, S. *Ambrose*, S. *Jerome*, and S. *Austin*, *&c.* but also their most modern doctors, as S. *Thomas Aquinas*, Cardinal *Bellarmine*, *&c.*, insomuch as at this rate they have a very large and wide field to go a chusing in; and forasmuch as it is an ordinary saying, that *good wits jump*, this egregiously flatters their pride to make out to the people, that those great understandings of ancient times do accord so well with theirs. Some have the sottish vanity to say, in the pulpit, *S.* Austin, *or S.* Ambrose, *had the same thought when he said, &c.* They very seldom quote the books and chapters from whence they have their authorities, and they content themselves with saying in general, *As saith S.* Austin; *as S.* Ambrose *affirms.* But experience does evidence it beyond dispute, that they cite a vast number of authorities falsly, or else do so extremely mangle and corrupt them, that if we should go to look for them in the original, from whence they pretend to have drawn them, it would be a very hard matter to know them.

I once heard a *Benedictine* monk in the Church of S. *Praxed*, at *Rome*, who having made an objection to himself, why amongst so many persons who have recourse to the *Blessed Virgin* in their needs, so few are relieved by her? An event indeed which seems directly opposed to the belief of the Church of *Rome*, *viz.* that all those who address themselves with confidence to the *Blessed Virgin*, are infallibly assisted by her. He answered this objection by saying, *That those who failed of her aid, were such as did not lift up their hearts to her. They indeed* (said he) *do often enough lift up their eyes, their hands, and their voice, to* Mary; *but their hearts all*

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the while are groveling on the earth, and they never lift them up towards her. To this purpose he quoted S. *Jerome, si volumus exaudiri a* Maria, *erigamus corda nostra ad* Mariam; *If we would have* Mary *hear us, we must lift up our heart to* Mary. I have read S. *Jerome* before, and I have read him over since, having always this passage of the *Benedictine* well imprest in my memory, but I could never find it there; and I am well assured that no body will be able to find it there after me: but the mystery of it was, that this passage was very proper to back and confirm the fine thought of the monk.

We need not wonder to find the *Roman Catholics* boast of having the fathers on their side; for if at any time they are not so, they soon make them come over to them by force, and draw them in, as we say, by head and shoulders. In this case, they do imitate another *Italian* monk, who not being able to make a passage of S. *Chrysestom*, favour a fine thought, was come into his head, he began to be in a passion, and having changed two or three words in the text, which did in a manner spoil the whole sense of it, he said in bad Latin, but very expressive of what he would be at, *Faciam te bene venire*, and thus forced the text to comply with his foolish imaginations. By this means it is these miserable monks make those venerable ancient fathers to assert that which they never thought of, and can never be found in their writings; and all this is only to feed their vain glorious humour, and to obtrude their own dreams for authentic truths, owned and believed by the purest times of Christendom.

Moreover, to set forth these their curious *thoughts* with the greater lustre, they do adorn *them* with many quaint figures of rhetoric; all *their* discourse being made up of metaphors, &c. luxuri

iusions, and holy allegories, with a taking elocution, and curious select words; and all of them *Antitheta*, or opposed to one another, wherein the *Italian* language is happy beyond others. See here the fair and glittering cup of gold, wherein the whore mingles her poison, lies and errors, to intoxicate the souls of men. This is the wide gate by which so many extravagant and dangerous opinions are entered into the Church of *Rome*. You may easily judge, by the nature of the pasture, of the condition the flock is in; and by the qualifications of their new pastors, I mean the monks, the wretched estate of the sheepfold committed to their charge. These are those pastors, who share the wool, and feed on the fattest of the flock; but have little or no concern for the salvation of their souls, so they may but glut and satisfy their covetousness and ambition.

Loredano, a noble *Venetian*, so famous in *Italy* for his witty and curious compositions, writing to *Almoro Grimano* of *Verona*, to recommend to him a preacher of his acquaintance, expressed himself in his letter to him in these words: *Sene viene in cotesta Città il Padre* Fra. Girolamo Olivi, *à far pompad' elequenza nel corso Quadragesimale: The father* Jerom Olivi *goes to* Verona *to make a pompous shew of his eloqnence during* Lent. He saith not, that this monk goes to preach the gospel, or to strive to gain souls to Jesus Christ; but saith, *that he goes to make a shew of his eloquence*, in which words he very fully expresseth the motive that puts these monks upon preaching.

I have no words, Sir, to express to you the cabals, intrigues, solicitations and intercessions that are made to get into the best pulpit: that is to say, those where the most money or honour is to be got. They interpose favour of grandees and princes, to assure themselves of them, and that

four or five years before they become vacant. There are some of these pulpits, that are worth to the preacher from an *Advent* or *Lent*, four hundred, five hundred, and six hundred crowns: yea, some of them a thousand and more, without reckoning the share of the alms given to the poor. As for those, from whence there is no great profit to be expected, the press is not so great; and as for the poor parishes in the country, where nothing at all is to be had, there is not a monk to be found that will bestow so much as one sermon upon them.

They have ordinarily no preaching in *Italy*, save only during *Advent* and *Lent*: on all other feasts and Sundays of the year, they have no sermons at the parishes; and instead thereof, they only sing an high mass in music; but the word of God is not preached at all in them. Yet in some convents of monks, they have sermons in the afternoon: but these are sermons peculiar to the order of which the monks are, and always on the same subject. The *Dominicans* preach eternally on the *Rosary*; the *Carmelites* on the *Scapulary*; the *Franciscans* on the *Rope* of S. *Francis*; and the *Soccolanti* have for their subject, S. *Anthony* of *Padua*. True it is, these matters are of themselves very dry and barren, and I am astonished how they can continually make them yield something to talk of. One greater part of their sermons is made up of a relation of miracles, which a preacher of good invention may almost with as much ease coin, as utter.

The *Jesuits* also have erected in their houses congregations, which they denominate from the *Blessed Virgin*, where they preach on Sundays and holydays: and to the end they may draw to them all sorts of people, they make a distinction of persons; they have one congregation for artizans and handicrafts-men, and

ther for scholars, a third for merchants, and a fourth for gentlemen and noblemen. They have also set-days on which they preach in their churches, to prepare people to die well; they have very happily possessed themselves of this post; for it is exceeding gainful and profitable to them. Upon this score it is, that they are sent for to exhort the sick, and such as lie at the point of death, which is the most proper time, and fairest occasion for them to get themselves put into their last will.

There is yet another sort of preachers in *Italy*, which I never saw in any other parts, where the Popish religion is professed: these preachers are called, *Preachers of the Plate.* To give you a more distinct idea hereof, you must know, Sir, that in the great cities of *Italy*, towards evening, when the great heat of the day is past, the *Italians* (of what rank or quality soever they be) go and take a walk in the *Piazza:* here it is they give audience, and discourse about their business. If any has a mind to meet with any person about that time, the first thing he does, is to go and look for him at this place. Here you are sure always to meet with a great number of ballad-singers, juglers, mountebanks, fortune-tellers, and other such like, who find their greatest profit amongst the greatest crowds: and the people do not fail to get about them, for their diversion and recreation: and amongst these, you meet with more priests and monks, than laymen; for after they have discharged themselves of their masses in the morning, there are none more idle than they all the rest of the day. No sooner are the mountebanks got up to their stage, but at the same time (by what motive or zeal I know not) a monk, with a great crucifix *carried before* him, with a little bell they *ring, to give notice of* his coming, mounts a por-

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tative pulpit prepared for him in one of the corners of the place, opposite to the theatre of the rope-dancers, and there begins to preach; a multitude of people running from all parts to hear him.

When I first saw this, I was extremely edified to see such crowds of people leave these actors and rope dancers, to hear a sermon; but drawing near myself to hear the discourse, I found that these preachers were better qualified to make the people laugh by their pleasant discourse and mimical gesture, than the *merry andrews* of the stage. The mountebanks play the fool on their stages, and they, the buffoons and drolls in their pulpits. Whilst those use their utmost effort to sell their drugs; these make quest in the place which goes in the name of *Being for the Poor*, whom they recommend with a great deal of zeal and earnestness to their hearers; though indeed all the money they gather comes into their own pockets. I chanced once to be in the company of some monks, who imprudently did aver, that these sermons in the *Piazza's*, were a manifest proof of the truth of the religion at *Rome* against the heretics, because in them there was a visible accomplishment of that oracle of the Holy Ghost, which we find in the first chapter of the *Proverbs*, where it is said, that *wisdom cries in the public places;* and that it was only to be found amongst the *Roman Catholics*, where *wisdom*, that is, *The word of God*, made itself to be heard in public, by means of these preachers of the places.

To tell you my thoughts, Sir, I am fully persuaded, that if *wisdom* do indeed cry there, it is *for* vengeance upon the horrid abuse and affront *done to* his gospel, which is there ridiculed and *made* the subject of their drollery, to make people laugh. Neither can it be said, that wisdom can

causeth her voice to be heard there, with respect to the persons of the preachers, the most of them being monks of the most debauched and profligate lives. I knew one of them at *Venice*, that was a most wicked wretch, who no sooner got out of the pulpit, but went and spent the money he had got at his quest, in infamous places upon whores.

The Roman Catholics are at a loss, whither to betake themselves for visible signs of the truth of their church. They produce some others every whit as pitiful as that now mentioned, amongst which they reckon a certain custom introduced, in *Italy*, to make little children preach publicly in their churches, from *Christmas* till *Twelve-tide*. They take pretty children of about three or four years of age, and they make them get by heart some short sermons upon the birth of our saviour, which may last above a quarter of an hour; they spend much time to exercise them in the utterance of them with a good grace; and on *Christmas-day*, they preach them, before the *mangers* that are prepared in all churches at that time. These little children observe all the ceremonies of preachers: they begin with their *Ave Maria*, then proceed to a short introduction, and afterwards to a division. As soon as they have made an end of their first part, they make a quest, and all their auditors give them something. This done, they preach for the souls in *purgatory*. No sooner has one of them made an end of his sermon, but another takes his place, and begins; and thus they continue till *Twelve-tide*. They begin early in the morning, and do not make an end till far in the night. The money they get at their quests, serves them afterwards to make a collation with, and buy them sweetmeats, and other junkets. Thus it is they educate and accustom these young lions betimes to the prey, to the end (when they ar

grown up to be great preachers) they may be expert at devouring the alms, which are given to the poor only.

Now all this pretty intrigue is produced by the *Italians*, as a mark, forsooth, of the truth of their religion, applying it to that verse of the Psalmist, *Ex ore infantium & lactentium perfecisti laudem; Thou hast* (according to their explication of it) *perfected the work of preaching out of the mouth of infants.* They say, that this is no where to be found, save only in their church. This gives me an occasion to speak to you of that signal mark of their church, of which they boast so much, and which with so much vehemence they object to the Protestants, *viz.* the mission of their evangelical preachers, which they send into foreign countries. This, I can assure you, that should the *Jesuits* of *Italy*, and other countries of the Roman communion, send thither their missionaries, proportionably to the money that is given them for this purpose, all the fathers of that order would not be sufficient to supply the places. It is impossible to imagine the immense sums that are given them upon this account. This is their great pretence, in the frequent visits they make to the palaces of the great ones, as well as to the houses of widows and rich men, to induce them to contribute to so holy a work. And after all, they content themselves with sending only a certain number of their *Jesuits*, whom they provide for, employing the rest of the money in building those stately houses, or rather some sumptuous palaces for themselves, as they do; (for they will not have them called *Monasteries and Convents*) and with the same money they proportionably increase the rents and incomes thereof. A poor *Capuchin*, who goes about begging an alms, is very well content, if he get

but wherewith to fill his hungry belly; but the pretext of the *Jesuits* is far more specious, it is for the *conversion of souls*, and one must open wide one's purse strings to them, *ad majorem Dei gloriam; for the greater glory of God;* else they are not well satisfied. In the mean time we see with our eyes the work they made in *England*, insomuch as their name is become execrable and abominable; not so much for their earnest application to convert, or rather to pervert souls, as for the intrigues they carry on to trouble the public peace: for finding it impossible to persuade people by the weakness of their pitiful arguments, they endeavour to put a whole kingdom into combustion, and to set *Protestants* together by the ears, to the end, that having by their mutual animosities and quarrels, plentifully drawn blood from each other, some *Catholic prince* may afterwards subdue them more easily, and so bring about that by the sword which it was impossible for them to do by their reasons.

This is that I was told by a *Jesuit* of *Milan* about four years since: *Our reverend fathers, the* Jesuits *in* England (said he) *write to us, That the* English *are exceeding obstinate in persisting in their heresy, and that the only way of converting them, is totally to exterminate and root them out. This is that therefore* (continued he) *for which our fathers do incessantly labour, and we hope, within a short time to see, that God has blest their endeavours with an answerable success.*

One thing here is remarkable, which is, that we do not find the *Jesuits* so zealous to go to other Protestants countries, as they are to come to *England;* for we meet but with very few of them in *Swisserland* or *Germany*; the reason is because *England* is furnished with a charm th

is irresistible for them; it is a country well stored with money, and could they but once wriggle in themselves to be the confessors and directors of all the English ladies, it would be a very pleasing employment for them. Besides, it is well known what kind of life they lead here, and that it is nothing less than a *penetential way of living*, as they would make others believe. Wherefore I cannot see how their mission can be an infallible mark of the truth of the Roman religion, as the Papists pretend: but sure I am, that this mark (if there must be any at this time) may with greater justice be attributed to those zealous Protestant ministers, who having already suffered imprisonment and banishment for the defence of the gospel, are privately returned to *France*, in the great heat of the *persecution*, and betaken themselves to those provinces where they were altogether unknown, for to strengthen and encourage their brethren, to preserve in them the profession of the truth, and to endeavour to raise up those again, who by their frailty had renounced it. Here, to be sure, were no temporal advantages for them to hope for; and they could easily be assured, that in case they were taken in the fact, they would be sent to the gallies, or condemned to death, as hath happened to many of them.

But as for the *Jesuits*, they are so well persuaded, that they are never like to suffer any thing here in *England*, upon the account of their religion, that notwithstanding all the acts of Parliament, which are only levelled to prevent their wicked designs, they still continue here very freely and openly: and yet, when they are got home, they will not be wanting to publish every where, as it is their custom to do, that they have been persecuted, clapped up in prison, tormented and had certainly been put to death, had not the intercessi

tercession of the *Blessed Virgin*, or of some saint to whom they have devoted themselves, most miraculously delivered them.

But it is time I return again to *Italy*, where I find yet another sort of missionaries, which are not to be employed in foreign countries, but in *Italy* itself. These are all monks, sometimes of one, and sometimes of another order, but mostly *Capuchins*, and yet more ordinarily a certain sort of friars, which are called, *The Fathers of the Mission:* these, after they have furnished themselves with a good stock of sermons upon different subjects, they send to *Rome*, and demand a mission from the Pope; that is, leave to go and preach their sermons in certain towns and provinces, with all the indulgences and power to absolve in, reserved, as is customarily granted on like occasions.

The first I ever saw of this sort, was at *Montefiascon*, two days journey and an half from *Rome*. These were *Capuchins*, who besides their habit, which was very odd and antique, with their great beards, they had on their heads great red *calots*, or close caps, to signify their zeal, and the red hot ardour of their charity for the *conversion of souls;* for this (if we will believe them) is yet another mark of the true church; for even as the Holy Ghost did visibly descend on the heads of the Apostles, in the form of *fiery tongues*, so there are to this day found those heads in the Church of *Rome*, whom the *fire of scarlet* distinguished from others; and that this also is the reason why the Cardinals, who are all Divine Love, (or to speak more truly, who ought to be so) wear red hats, and the Pope a cap of the same colour. Well, to return to my *red caps;* I had the curiosity to go and *hear them preach;* I entered the church where I *saw one of them* in the pulpit, with a gre

rope or cord about his neck, and a great crucifix in his arms, who did his utmost endeavour, to excite sensible affections in the hearts of his auditors. The chief aim of these preachers, is, *To make the people weep;* if they can once effect this, they are happy, and this is all they desire; for this procures them the reputation of being great missionaries, and men of a truly apostolic spirit. To this end, they make use of the most tender, melting, and affectionate expressions they can think of, to draw tears from their hearers.

The preacher I heard at this time, was paraphrasing the History of the Passion of our Saviour, and after he had employed his utmost skill in setting forth our Saviour as the most lovely and beautiful of all men: he, on the other hand, represented those pitiless tormentors, who, with great cords tied his fair hands, white as the driven snow, and beat his lovely countenance where the lilly and the rose did urge for mastery. He added to all these expressions, a most lamentable and affecting tone, with gestures very proper, and according to the subject; I perceived that this father was an excellent declaimer. When on a sudden some good women, wholly melted into tenderness and compassion (as were those women of *Jerusalem*, who wept, seeing Jesus Christ carrying his cross up to Mount *Calvary*, and whom our Saviour bade not to weep for him, but for themselves) caused their sighs to be heard aloud; and a few minutes after, all that quarter where the woman sat, being all in tears; the emotion soon caught amongst the men also, so that the whole church was filled with groans, sighs, and sobs. Whereupon the *Capuchin* resolved to prosecute his conquest, cast himself down upon his knees, and fixing his great crucifix upon the pulpit, he lifted up both his hands to heaven, and with a mournful and terrible voice, twinkling

twisting the cord about his neck, as if he had a mind to strangle himself, he cried out, *merey, mercy;* and continued in the same manner, to repeat the same word about forty or fifty times, till he made all his auditory to cry after him. Then there was a most dreadful noise heard in the church, which continued for a good quarter of an hour, till their breaths being spent, the noise began to lessen by degrees, and at last, ended in a great silence; which gave occasion to the father to resume his discourse, which he continued with the same tender affections to the end.

I do not pretend in the least to blame here the sensibleness and tenderness of men's hearts, with respect to our Saviour's passion; I am so far from that, that I wish it were in my power to make a most deep impression thereof in the hearts of all men: but withall, this shall never hinder me from averring, that these affections do ordinarily pass away like lightning, and that good solid motives laid down in a sermon, to engage people to a truly Christian life, make a longer stay in a man's mind, and are there ready upon occasion to move the will; and this is that which these missionaries wholly neglect. Accordingly, we do not find, that the *Italians* (after all these missions) are yet a whit the better men. At the end of three weeks or a month, which commonly is the term of these missions, they go with a great deal of solemnity, and plant a great cross of wood (of about thirty or forty foot high) on some eminent place near the cities where the mission has been discharged, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam.* This action is performed with a great deal of ceremony and superstition; thither repair all, and worship bare-footed, with cords about their necks; and here it is the preacher concludes and seals his mission, in giving the peop

people a good *benediction*, and all the *indulgences* the Pope has afforded him.

I once happened to meet with some *missionaries* on Mount *Apennin*, who came from preaching in a city belonging to the country of *Urban*. A lusty young man, who had been their guide for seven or eight miles together, and who had carried them on his shoulders over a brook, declared, that he had never found any thing more light than they were, and that he thought that they weighed no more than a feather. The hostess, at whose house they had lodged, answered smiling, *That this miracle did surprize her the more, because she had given them a good dinner just before their going away; and if there were nothing but what they had eaten they must needs weigh something.* The place where I met them, was at another inn, where they, notwithstanding, caused a second dinner to be prepared for them. By this I perceived, that all these zealous *missionaries* with their ropes about their necks, are not always the greatest lovers of penance, herein resembling the *pharisees*, who though they carried the commandments of the law written on their foreheads, yet were not the strictest observers of it. And yet it is to these kind of missionaries, the Roman Catholics assure us, *That the gift of preaching is particularly communicated by the Holy Ghost, in the particular dispensation and division of his graces and gifts.* For my part, I should rather believe, that this excellent privilege does in the first place belong to the bishops and ministers of the churches: these are the true pastors, whom the sheep are to hear. Indeed, we may say in one sense, that the ministry of preaching is quite ceased in *Italy*, where they hear in a manner nothing else but the voice of strangers; I mean, of a vast number of miserable monks who are not curates of churches.

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I have already mentioned in one of my LETTERS, that during the space of seven years that I lived there, I never heard any man preach that had ecclesiastic authority; that is to say, who was either curate or bishop, except only Cardinal *Visconti*, archbishop of *Milan*, whose custom was to preach on the four principal feasts or holy-days of the year, in his own cathedral. And yet herein also, I found a great inconvenience; for this cardinal-archbishop, that he might preach with the greater magnificence, and probably also by a motive of vain glory, would not permit any sermon to be preached that day, neither in the morning nor afternoon; and this in *Milan*, which is a very great city, and full of people. The church indeed, is very spacious, but yet I do not believe it can contain the fiftieth part of the inhabitants, at such a distance that they may understand the preacher: so that excepting only a certain number of persons, all the rest are deprived of hearing the Word of God.

I went once to hear him preach on an *Easter-day*; I could say indeed, that I saw him preach, but I could not hear him, the sound of his voice not reaching so far as where I was: and because of the great crowd, it was not possible for me to get near. He was magnificently appareled in his pontifical habiliments, with the mitre on his head; and the pulpit of that cathedral being very spacious, he had several canons that assisted on each side of him, likewise dressed in all their most pompous ornaments. Having therefore seen him for a good while, shaking his head, and casting abroad of his hands, I went out of the church, without having understood one word that he said. And forasmuch as I have now made mention of an *Easter-day*, I cannot refrain, Sir, from giving you some account of a pleasant, but yet *truly detestable* and abominable custom, which

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takes place on *Easter-day*, throughout all *Italy* in reference to preaching. They tell us, that *Easter-day*, is a day of merriment and rejoicing for Christians, applying to this purpose that text of the Psalmist; *Hæc est dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus & lætemur in ea; This is a day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein.* And indeed it is at such a day; but in another sense than they take it. Wherefore, to make the people merry, all the preachers on that day (how grave or serious soever they be) must play the *merry andrew* in their pulpits, and act a kind of comedy, that the people may hear the preacher with the greater pleasure and satisfaction. The sermon that is used to be preached, during *Lent* time, in the morning, is on *Easter-day* made in the afternoon; because (as the Latin Proverb hath it) *Venter jejunus non delectatur musica; an hungry belly takes no pleasure in music.* The word *Hallelujah* is a common text to all the preachers on that day, which word in in its proper signification is as much as to say, *Praise the Lord:* but on *Easter-day*, in *Italy*, it signifies, *Gentlemen and ladies, prepare yourselves for a loud laughter.* After they had named their text, they enter upon matter, and vent all the most ridiculous stuff they can think of. These sermons afterward serve all the *Easter*-time for mirth and pastime in companies, where every one hath delight in relating to others what he hath heard.

Being once on an *Easter-day*, in *Bononia*, I went to hear the sermon at S. *Peter's* Church, being the cathedral of that city, the archbishop himself being then present. The preacher was one of the Fathers *Soecolanti*. After that he had turned several texts of scripture into ridicule, he quoted the 2d verse of the 16th chapter of S. *Mark*, where it is said that the Maries came to

the sepulchre, Orto jam sole, after sun-rising, as it is in the vulgar Latin; and opposed this to the 1st verse of the 10th chapter of the gospel of S. *John,* where it is said, that they *arrived very early, before it was yet day light:* and then put the question, how it were possible to reconcile these two places, which seemed to contradict one another, *For his part* (he said) *he believed that the* Maries *did not rise till long after the sun was risen, and indeed till it was near noon: for we see* (said he) *that this goes for very early rising with our* Italian *ladies, who do not come to mass on Sundays till it be half an hour after eleven or twelve.* And hereupon he began in a comical manner, to represent a woman's awaking out of her sleep; the time she takes to rub her eyes, to stretch her arms, and an hundred other impertinent follies, which put all the church into a loud laughter. After (for this father was very fertile of his curious thought) he recalls himself, and said, *That indeed the* Maries *were risen very early in the morning, but that they needed so much time to dress and trick up themselves, that it was very late before they could get out of the doors, which was the reason they could not reach the sepulchre till after the sun was risen; Orto jam sole.* Here he represented women dressing themselves; how much time they spend in dressing their head, and laying on of paint, fixing their patches, and making an hundred faces before their looking glasses; and expressed all these particulars admirably well, with his mimical gestures. This curious thought he immediately backed with another: *I cry mercy!* (said he) *the* Maries *were not such vain women, as I have been just now a describing: but they were gossiping housewives,* they rose, *and went abroad indeed,* betimes in the morning *but before they could take* their leaves of the

their neighbours, much time was spent, so that they did not come to the sepulchre till it was late; Orto jam sole. Here he enlarged himself on the tatling and gossiping discourse of women, and mentioned such ridiculous stuff amongst it, that the cardinal archbishop, who was there, burst into a loud laughter. He continued his *Easter-sermon* at the same rate, to the end of it, prophaning (after a most henious and unworthy manner) so holy a day, and the venerable history of these holy women, who were judged worthy to be the first witnesses of the greatest mystery of our faith, *viz.* the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another year, being at *Venice* on *Easter-day*, I heard a *Benedictine*, that was a *Genouese* by birth, who (amongst a great many foolish and impertinent stories) told this that follows, by which you may judge of the rest: *A young lady* (said he) *being newly married, did extremely afflict herself, because her husband often told her, that he could not love her so well as otherwise he would, because she had not black eyes. Whereupon she went and communicated her grief to her confessor; the good father, whom she had chosen to be the director of her conscience, bid her not to afflict herself, and that if she would but bring him all the jewels and great pieces of gold which her husband kept very snug in his closet, he would, by his prayers, obtain for her of God, the favour of having black eyes. The lady, in the earnest desire she had of becoming more beautiful and pleasing to her husband, followed her confessor's direction, and brought him the jewels and gold, according to his desire: but her husband missing them soon after, and perceiving by the ambiguous and uncertain answers of his wife, that she must be guilty of the theft,* beat her most outrageously

and to make her confess, how she had disposed of them, made her black and blue all over with the strokes he had given her. The poor lady in this pitiful condition, with tears in her eyes, returned to her confessor, to acquaint him how ill she had sped with his advice, and to re-demand her jewels; but the confessor absolutely refused to restore them to her, maintaining, that now they were his own, according to the bargain and contract made between them; forasmuch as she could not deny, but she had obtained her desire, and got black eyes with a vengeance, as indeed they were with the strokes and bruises her husband had given her.

What think you, Sir, was not this a pretty story to be told from a pulpit on *Easter-day?* It being moreover very probable, that this was only an invented tale. Thus these wretched monks, instead of dispensing the word of truth to the people, ordinarily feed them with nothing but lies.

I suppose, Sir, you will not take it ill, if I venture upon another strict digression, referring to another pleasant custom observed in *Italy, viz.* that of blessing eggs at *Easter*, which are of great virtue to sanctify both soul and body. On *Easter-eve* and *Easter-day*, all the heads of families send great chargers full of hard eggs to the church, to get them blest, which the priests perform by saying several appointed prayers, and making great signs of the cross over them and sprinkling them with holy-water. The priest having finished the ceremony, demands, how many dozen eggs there be in every bason? to the end he may know, how many of them come to his share; and sometimes are so honest as to take three or four out of every dozen, especially when they know the persons that send them

to be wealthy. There be some of the poorer sort who are apt to cry, when they see the priest take more than his due, or pick out the fairest or greatest of them. These blest eggs have the virtue of sanctifying the entrails of the body, and are to be the first fat or fleshy nourishment they take after the abstinence of *Lent*. The *Italians* do not only abstain from flesh during *Lent*, but also from eggs, cheese, butter, and all white meats. As soon as the eggs are blest, every one carries his portion home, and causeth a large table to be set in the best room they have in the house, which they cover with their best linen, all bestrewed with flowers; and placed round about a dozen dishes of meat, and the great charger of eggs in the midst. It is a very pleasant sight to see these tables set forth in the houses of great persons, where they expose on side-board tables (round about the chamber) all the plate they have in the house, and whatsoever else they have that is rich and curious, in honour to their *Easter* eggs; which of themselves yield a very fair shew; for the shells of them are all painted with divers colours and gilt. Sometimes there are no less than twenty dozen in the same charger, neatly laid together in form of a pyramid. The table continues in the same posture covered all the *Easter* week, and all that come to visit them within that time, are invited to eat an *Easter* egg with them, which they must not refuse.

I return now again to my sermons, upon which subject I have this only further to add, that there is yet another sort of preachers, who only preach before the nuns grates. These are finical preachers, of a sweet countenance, and commonly all of them handsome young monks: for except beauty and sweetness do meet in a preacher, the nuns who have the choice of them, will have

none of him. All the study of these men is, to find out pretty words, and the most tender and affectionate expressions, and frequently to enlarge themselves in praise of the nuns, to whom they preach. I have heard many of these sort of preachers, and amongst the rest a young monk at *Milan*, preacher to the *Benedictine* nuns of the monastery called the *Magiore*. Scarcely could this monk speak three words together without some expression of the high value and love he had for them: *My most dear and lovely sisters, whom I love from the deepest bottom of my heart*, said he, which was almost the constant appendix of every sentence he uttered: so that having recollected all his sermon with myself, I found that the upshot (in a manner) of all that he had said, was, *That he loved them the most tenderly and affectionately that could be.* When once a monk has the good hap to become a preacher to the nuns, and that he is liked by them, he may promise himself an happy time of it ever after, and that he shall spend the rest of his days in a voluptuous delicacy and tenderness; for the nuns have nothing so much upon their hearts, as to procure all manner of ease to their directors and preachers, to the end, to make them the more indulgent towards them. They allow them great pensions every year; they provide them with linen, and furnish them with dry and wet sweetmeats, and send them every day a dish of what they judge most pleasing and delicate, which they call the *Preacher's Dish*. So that indeed, it is no difficult thing for these handsome monks to declare from their pulpits the extraordinary love they have for their tender nurses, and to be so lavish in their praising of them.

This way of praising others from the pulpit, *puts me in mind* of another custom the monks

have introduced, to praise one another publicly on certain days of the year, which is commonly the feast of their blessed founders. Thus, for example, on the feast of S. *Ignatus de Loyola*, founder of the order of the *Jesuits*, they make the panegiric of that saint in all their churches, and after having enlarged themselves in the praise of their patriarchs, they proceed to that of his children and disciples, that is, all those that follow his rule, and more particularly of the fathers of that convent where the sermon is preached. But forasmuch as according to the common proverb, *Proprio laus sordet in ore; That it is a base thing to praise one's self*: they employ a religious of some other order to preach in their churches on that day. It is a thing but too notorious, that the monks do mortally hate one another; however, the desire of being praised themselves in their turn, prevailing beyond their hatred, makes them to undertake these otherwise unpleasing panegyrics. The *Dominicans* do publicly praise the *Jesuits*, and the *Jesuits* the *Dominicans*; and so for the rest. They all agree, that these are the most difficult sermons of all others, and that rarely one comes off with credit and applause, partly by reason of the too insatiable desire of the one party, to be praised beyond measure; and partly because it goes against the grain with the other, to praise them, which makes one in the midst of their encomiums, to discover something of force and constraint, that evidenceth the falseness of them. Indeed, how is it possible to praise those heartily whose hearts one wisheth out of their bodies.

A *Cordelier* preaching the day of S. *Francis Xavier*, in the church of S. *Lucia*, belonging to the Father *Jesuits* of *Bononia*, praised them very pleasantly, attributing elogies to them, diametrically opposite to their own qualities and practice.

Do you see (said he) *the reverend fathers the* Jesuits *of this house, they are the best men that live on the earth: they are as modest as angels. They never open their eyes, to cast a look upon the ladies at church; they are such extraordinary lovers of retirement, that one never sees them in the streets; they are so in love with poverty, that they dispise and trample on all the riches of the world; they never come near dying persons or widows, to importune them to be remembered in their last wills; they never concern themselves in making up of marriages; they never go to compliment the cardinal legate, or the cardinal archbishop.* And in this manner he ran over every particular of their behaviour and conduct. All that were in the church laughed at this pretty way of commending them the *Cordelier* had lighted on; but the *Jesuits* were galled to the heart, and put to the utmost confusion. The *Cordelier* having ended his sermon, came down from the pulpit, and instead of going to the *Jesuit's* convent, there to be entertained, (according to the custom of preachers in the like case) he went directly to the gate; it seems, he feared their giving of him the lash, and (I suppose) that to avoid their revenge, he never afterwards would appear in the city of *Bononia.*

This, Sir, is the substance of what I had to write to you concerning the manner of preaching, and the behaviour of the preachers in *Italy;* it remains now, that I should oppose to them the way of preaching used by our *Protestant ministers,* and their profound and solid sermons; but lest you should accuse me of being too lavish in praising my own party, I shall at present content myself with telling you, *That they declare to the people the word of God, with a great deal of modesty and reference;* and what is the *chiefest of all, they always keep close to the truth*

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and purity of the gospel, in which I desire to live and die. I wish you the same grace, and am, Sir, with all my heart,

Your most humble Servant, &c.

LETTER VII.

OF THE PROCESSIONS OF ITALY, &c.

SIR,

HAVING passed the *Lent* time at *Rome*, I departed thence some weeks after *Easter*, with an intent of returning to *France*. I took my journey through that part of the Great Duke of *Tuscany's* country, which borders upon the patrimony of S. *Peter*, or the Pope's dominions. The entrance into the Duke's territories, is by *Il re di Caphani*, which is a very high mountain, surrounded with many great woods, and is a very proper place for hunting; where I saw several cardinals, who diverted themselves at that sport. From hence it is two days journey to *Sienna*: in my way thither, I met nothing but processions all along the road. It is an ancient custom established in the *Roman Church*, to celebrate frequent processions after *Easter*, which they call *Rogations*, in order to implore the blessing of God upon the fruits of the earth. The year wherein I took this journey, there was a more pressing need of it than ordinary, because of the great draught which threatened a scarcity.

A procession, according to the definition of the Papists, is, *A walking*, or marching of peo-

ple from one church to another, under the conduct of the priests, assisting with the cross and banner, there to invoke by the intercession of some he *or* she *saint, the extraordinary assistance of God.* These processions are sometimes two or three days a marching before they come to the place designed; and when they have once dispatched the singing of their *Litanies*, they play the fools as much as the pilgrims in their *pilgrimaging* do, according to the account I have already given you in a former LETTER: so that I wanted no divertisement all the way from *Re de Caphani*, till I came to *Sienna*, whither all these processions were going. Only I found great inconvenience when I came to my inn; because, whenever these *processions* pass, they cause great scarcity, by reason of the great numbers that compose them. Being come to *Sienna*, I enquired what church it was to which all these devotions were designed; and was told, that they all went to a church of our Lady, where they had lately uncovered a miraculous image of the Virgin; which was only done at the end of every forty years. My curiosity invited me to take a view of it; but the throng of people was so great, that I had much ado to crowd into the church. They told me, *That this thronging concourse had already continued for eight days* (for so long the image had been unveiled) *and that after eight days more, it was to be veiled again with a great deal of solemnity.* I took an exact view of this image, which was about a foot broad, and a foot and an half high, the countenance of it representing that of a very young girl; neither could I find any thing extraordinary in it, for which it might seem to deserve the adorations they gave it. I *enquired of the* priests that served this church *what might be* the reason that this image wa

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only unveiled once in forty years? but they could give no better than this, *That it had been a custom observed time out of mind; and that they believed the first rise of it was, an order given by the Virgin herself for so doing.*

I have in *Italy* seen a vast number of these sorts of veiled images, not only of the Virgin, but also of the crucifix, and all other saints; and I can say with truth, that there is scarcely a church to be met with, which hath not two or three of them. Sometimes we met with great pictures in their churches, where several saints are represented, and amongst them one only having his or her face veiled, that being the mysterious saint. The secret of which intrigue, as far as I could pierce into, by the use the priests and monks make of it, is plainly this: they find this way admirably well suited to advance their temporal profit. The things we see every day become too common with us, and make little or no impression, by reason of the customariness of them on our imagination. There be some parts of the world, where they have six months of night, and six months of day; so that their whole years consists but of a day and a night. Now, we are told, that the inhabitants of these countries, assemble themselves in crowds, to see the sun rise; whereas, in these lands, where the sun riseth every day, we do not find people concern themselves to be present at his rising; and by a parity of reason we may conclude, that the images and statues of the Church of *Rome*, would make no great impression on the minds of the people, or be powerful enough to induce the opening of their purse-strings, if the priests had not *found* out this ingenious invention of making *them* more rare, and therefore the more desired. Yea, it seems also, that the long time of

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veiling, begets something of a greater veneration for them, and that the Roman Catholics imagine, that when after so long a time they are uncovered, they meet with in those pictures, images, and statues, something more august and divine than ordinary.

In a word, they all believe and take it for granted, that when these are unveiled here on earth, the saints whom they represent, become more liberal in heaven, and more favourably inclined to grant their vows and prayers. Thus you see whither superstition, or rather folly will run, when those who ought to be the most zealous to overthrow it; I mean the clergy, are the chief contrivers of ways and methods to foster and encourage it. The profit which from hence accrues to the priests is very great, as you will be able to conceive from what I shall tell you of this our Lady of *Sienna*.

I spent nine or ten days in this city, and so had the leisure frequently to visit this church of the Virgin; I confess, I cannot give you an exact account of the presents I saw there offered; and therefore shall content myself to tell you, that I do not believe any single person entered the church without giving something considerable. And to encourage the people the more in their liberality, to exceed and outstrip one another, the priests had the cunning to prepare a place railed in with balustrades, near to the altar of the Virgin; where they exposed to view, part of the presents the people had offered. Here were to be seen a vast quantity of whole pieces of cloths and fine linen, handkerchiefs, shifts, many rich jewels, and in particular, a prodigious number of great tapers of white virgin-wax, whereof some of them could weigh no less than 50 pounds a piece, the least of them being about four or five pound each, with th

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names of the donors upon them. As for the money that was given, I suppose the priests put it into their own pockets, parting it amongst themselves; for though the people were continually pouring in money into the basins, yet some hours after they were seen all empty. Some *Spanish* priests, that were travelling homewards, having presented themselves to say mass in the raid church, whilst they were in the sextry, had rings presented to them by some of the country gentry, who supposed them to be priests, belonging to that church, and had desired them to get them fastened to some particular picture; but they conceived it more convenient, to put them into their own pockets, and being got out of the church, prosecuted their journey with a great deal of cheerfulness for the booty they had so happily light on: one of them said merrily, *That he found no scruple in himself at all, for having committed this lawful piece of robbery, as being in much more want than the image of the Virgin, who had no need either to eat or drink as he had.*

The following Sunday, all the inhabitants of *Sienna*, and neighbouring places met together in different bodies, according as they were distinguished by their trade and callings; and all of them together made a great procession to the church of *Our Lady*, every company marching under its own cross and banner, different from the rest, as under their proper standard. The *coblers*, as being inferior to the rest, went first of all; the arms pourtrayed on their banner, were two *awls* placed salter-wise: these were followed by the *shoe-makers*, and so all the rest in their order. After every banner followed a man, carrying a great wax taper, which was that of the company, being all gilt, and adorned with ribbands and flowers, with a great escutcheon

upon it. Besides which, every member of each society or company (which the *Italians* call *Scuole*) had their own tapers of about three or four pounds apiece. After the cross, banner, and a taper, came a man in a surplice, carrying a great purse, fastened to the end of a fine great staff, curiously gilt and painted, which contained the sum of money that each company were to present to the image of the *Virgin*, Some of these had about ten crowns apiece in them, and others twenty, more or less, according to the ability of each profession. In the purse belonging to the company of *merchants*, there were at least two hundred crowns, as I was informed by one of the merchants themselves.

All these companies do not assist at these *processions* only in their ordinary clothes, as having over them great vests of fine linen, dyed of different colours, to distinguish the companies one from another; these they have girt about them with curious girdles, and upon the breast or arms, the device or escutcheon of their society; and have besides, a great cowl, hanging down on their backs. After the company of *merchants*, followed all the *religious orders* that are in the city or neighbouring places, which are very numerous: they marched according to their antiquity, or standing in the city.

It is on such occasions as these, one may be diverted with the most pleasant variety of extravagant dresses that can be imagined: some are dressed in grey, others in brown, and others again in black, &c. and all with their frocks and cowls shaped in different fashions, the pattern of most of which they pretend to have received from no meaner a hand than that of the *Virgin*, or even God himself. Every one of these religious orders went under their own cross and banner, the *difference only* was, that their banners were not

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followed by either taper or purse, they leaving that ceremony to the seculars; as being very well pleased to see them bring plentifully to their churches, and are not wanting to encourage them thereto by all the devices and ways imaginable; but as for them, they take special care the seculars shall never be a farthing the better for them.

It would be an easy matter one would think, for the *Italians* to reflect a little on these practices, if once they were willing; but that it is which puts out their eyes, that they are unwilling to discover the cheat. For to speak the truth, Sir, what does hinder these monks, that are so rich, and most of which have great revenues belonging to them, which they so prodigally spend at taverns and bawdy-houses, what hinders them, say I, from making up a purse amongst themselves, as well as the seculars, and to be at the charge of a great taper to present to the *Virgin*, as well as they; but that they do not find themselves in the humour, to furnish other priests with money, as knowing but too well, how they used to spend it? And yet, if the poor seculars should entertain the same thoughts of them, they would at the tribunal of their confession, condemn such reflections as a great impiety and sacrilege.

After the monks, or regular clergy, followed the secular clergy, *viz.* the priests, curates, and canons, who all appeared likewise with empty hands. The cardinal-archbishop, was somewhat indisposed, who, if he had been there, I am sure he would, like all the rest, have assisted all the ceremony, without either purse or taper. Both these orders of the clergy were followed by the magistrates of the city, and the officers of justice, all in their robes of ceremony, with their tapers and purses. And last of all, the whole

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procession was concluded with a company of young gentlemen and swords-men.

This procession marched on towards the Church of our Lady in very good order, at the sound of trumpets and drums, and the air resounding with continual *ora pro nobis.* All their wax-tapers and purses were left in the church in the hands of the priests, by which you may guess the great advantage they make of these pageantries. *For* (as the *Spaniard* said very well) *the image does not stand in need either of meat or drink, and none but men can make use of the money, and other presents offered to it.*

Two or three days after, as children please themselves in imitating the practices of their elders, the boys and girls of the town assembled themselves in companies. The school-boys and young girls got their masters and mistresses to conduct them to *our Lady's Church.* They made purses of about two or three crowns apiece; so that bou[illegible] days after the great procession, one ou[illegible]ly walk through the streets of *Si-*[illegible] boys had got great cords, which they [illegible]h ends, stretched out, to make all [illegible]ad a mind to pass, to give somewhat [illegible] their purses. Afterwards they pro-[illegible]nselves with [illegible]pers, little crosses [illegible]ers, and so [illegible] way of procession [illegible]urch, whe[illegible]ests gave them a [illegible] reception [illegible] for joy, to see so [illegible]inning in [illegible]er and young years. [illegible]ixth day t[illegible]d the image with a [illegible]nd magni[illegible]together extraordina-[illegible] which ti[illegible]was a great concourse [illegible] nobility [illegible]y of the city and coun-[illegible] The co[illegible] so extraordinary, that [illegible] were f[illegible] guard at the doors of [illegible] church [illegible]d none to enter, but per-

sons of appearance and quality. I heard an old gentleman, who with a great sense of devotion blessed God with a loud voice, *That he had vouchsafed him the happiness of having seen the same miraculous image two and twenty times uncovered during his life time.* I was somewhat surprized at this expression of his; for had it been true, that the image (as was said) had not been uncovered more than once in forty years, it must have followed, that at that rate, this gentleman must be more aged than *Methusalem.* But I was informed afterwards, that there seldom passed a year, wherein (upon some emergency or other, requiring it) the said image was not uncovered. This gave me a full notion of the cunning of the priests, who to procure the vogue and devotion of the people for some of their images, do veil them, withal, declaring them to be miraculous, and so transcendantly holy, that it is not lawful to expose them to public and common view, more than once in several years time, except it be upon some extraordinary emergent necessity: and yet, as soon as they see that their device has taken, that the devotion of the people is kindled, and that their profit is sure, they have not the patience themselves to stay out the time of their own prefixing, before they discover these their Lucriferous mysteries; but they lay hold of the opportunity of the first drought, or wet season, and declare, that necessity having no law; and the fruits of the earth being in great danger, they are forced to uncover the image sooner than they had designed.

And thus an image or statue, which according to the first institution, was not to be exposed more than once in forty years, is set forth almost every year. Which proceeding of theirs, is so far from being

being suspected by the deluded laity, that it gains them a great deal of reputation, and the esteem of very good and honest men, full of compassion, and extremely desirous to obviate and prevent (as far as in them lies) all public calamities. The monks and priests do both of them perfectly well agree and harmonize in this point; for they have all of them some hidden idol or other in their churches, which they uncover at certain intervals of time, each in their due order, without interfering or clashing one with another, playing *hodie mihi, cras tibi.*

In those monasteries where the abbots, priors, and guardians are *triennial*, they have taken up the custom of vouchsafing this favour to the public, at their first arrival in the monastery, and this commonly either by exposing the Holy Sacrament for three days together, or by uncovering same miraculous image or other. Neither doth the idol lose a whit of credit or repute for all this, because it is looked upon as an extraordinary occasion, and ceased not to pass in the minds of the people for a mystery not to be exposed, but once in such an interval of years. This was the rareeshow I was entertained with at *Sienna*, which at present is one of the most superstitious cities in all *Italy*, and is commonly called, by way of prerogative and excellence, *Sienna the Devout.* This city also is very famous for the purity of language, the best *Italian*, without contradiction being spoken here.

After I had visited all the places of devotion that are in it, I prosecuted my journey, and passing a second time through *Tuscany* and *Florence*, after two great days journey, I came to *Bononia*, which is a very fine city. Formerly this place was a common-wealth; but at present the Popes have reduced it to their obedience, and have a legate there, who commands

in their name. On the great gate of the legate's palace, which is a very ancient structure, is a statue of stone, representing a woman with a *tiara*, or triple papal crown upon her head. They of *Bononia* say, this figure represents *religion;* but it seems with more probability to be a statue of Pope *Joan:* for that it is not the former appears from hence, because the principal marks with which the Papists set forth religion, are wanting in this statue, *viz.* a *cross* in the one hand, and a *chalice* with the *host* in the other. Two days after my arrival at *Bononia*, I went to take a view of the fair and renowned abbey of S. *Michael* in *Boso*, situate on a pleasant hill, about two musquet shot from the city. It seems to have been placed on that eminence, to be seen and admired by all *Italy*. Above all other places this is peculiarly famous for the curious paintings that embellish it, *Carache*, *Guido*, *Rhenus*, and many other famous painters, seeming to have deposited in this building, the whole curiosity and perfection of their art, to make it more recommendable to posterity. The religious that dwell here, are *Olivetan Monks:* they profess the rule of S. *Bennet*, and are habited in white.

As I was taking a view of the painting of the grottos, or of the first cloister, which is built with right angles, the abbot taking a walk after dinner with some of his religious, by an extraordinary piece of civility drew near to me and took the pains himself to explain to me the pictures, which represent some very considerable particularities of the life of their legislator S. *Bennet*. After which he conducted me to their library, which is all curiously painted, and furnished with very good and fairly bound books, and certainly is, one of the neatest I have seen in *Italy*. Where being entered into discourse concerning some of those books, the abbot made

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a proffer to me of staying in the said abbey, and teaching *humanity* and *rhetoric* to his religious, telling me, *That if I thought good to accept of it, I should be entertained at his own table, and enjoy a very competent allowance.* Though at this time I had no design of staying in *Italy*, and that I was now actually engaged in my journey for *France;* yet this occasion so favourably presenting itself, and meeting with a strong inclination in me, to acquire a further perfection in the *Italian* tongue, after two or three days respite, I had desired of the abbot, to consider of it, I accepted of his offer. He appointed me a very good salary, and assigned me twelve of his young monks for my pupils. They were almost all of them either earls or marquisses; for these fathers receive none into their society, but persons of the highest quality. I continued two whole years in this employment, during which time I received a thousand marks of kindness and civility from my young religious scholars, besides the continual experience I had of the bounty and generosity of the noble prelate.

You cannot doubt, Sir, but that by this means I had the fairest opportunity I could wish for, to penetrate all the secrets of *monkery;* for they kept nothing from me; and though I was not one of them, yet I lived and continually conversed with them, neither was any thing hid from me. Wherefore, I may say, without boasting, that I can speak of the monastic way of living upon good grounds, which I intend to do in my next LETTER to you. As for this I have now in hand, as I have already begun is, with giving you some account of the manner of their *processions*, so I intend to prosecute the same subject, and the rather, because I find here in this city, *matter enough* to stuff it out, and such as is very *curious too;* and therefore hope, that the recit-

tal I shall make of it, will not prove unacceptable or tedious to you. I shall begin with the *processions* which are celebrated during the *Octave*, or week of the Holy Sacrament in the city of *Bononia:* the feast of the *Holy Sacrament* having been instituted on purpose *to make the host to triumph*, as the Papists say, they omit nothing that may render that day, and week following, the most pompous and solemn that may be. They make many fine *processions*, and carry the consecrated *host*, which, they say, is the living body of our Saviour Jesus Christ, through their streets, with very magnificent shews and ceremonies.

In *France*, it is a custom on this occasion, to adorn, the fronts of houses with curious tapestries, and to strew the streets with flowers and sweet smelling herbs. They erect oratories, or repositories, as they call them, at certain distances, there to repose the *Holy Sacraments*, as if it were very weary with the march it had taken. They dress up abundance of little children like angels, to strew flowers in the way before it, and to incense it: and in a word, they make a thousand idolatrous prostrations and adorations to it. In *Germany* they adorn all their streets with the branches of trees on both sides of them, by this means, turning their cities into parks, or forests, or rather into fine gardens, whereof every street represents a long walk, as far as one could see, all set with trees and verdure. But *Italy* being the most ingenious of them all, as well as the most superstitious, does by many degrees excel all other nations that profess the *Roman Catholic religion;* and the city of *Bononia* exceeds the rest of *Italy*, in her famous celebration of the *Octave* of the *Holy Sacrament.*

Besides the great general procession, which is made

made throughout that city, the *Thursday* after *Trinity day*, (which is the day appointed for their feast) at which all the clergy, both regular and secular, with all the magistrates of the city do assist; there are every year three parishes appointed to furnish and make the preparative for the *Octave;* and having discharged their turn, they are quit of that expence for twelve or fourteen years after, until all the rest have had theirs; this being a very chargeable office. About a fortnight or three weeks before the feast, they barricado all the entries of the streets of those parishes, to hinder horses and carts from passing that way, that the workmen may apply themselves to their work without disturbance. The chief work, and that which is most painful, and takes up most time, is to cover all the streets and walls with veils of silk, which are the manufactory of that city, and to form them into figures and histories. The several parishes, when their turn comes, strive to outvy one another in some new invention or other. Some with these little veils represent all manner of birds, others all four-footed beasts, insomuch that a man cannot so much as imagine any whole figure that is not to be found there. Others endeavoured to represent in the said silken figures, huntings, battles, triumphs, and in a word, an infinite variety of things extremely pleasing to the eye. Moreover, they expose to public view in the streets, all the most curious pictures which the inhabitants of those parishes are masters of, not excepting the profane ones themselves; amongst which are to be seen many infamous naked *pictures* and *grotesques* to cause laughter.

The *Bononians* are extremely curious in pictures; all their closets, halls, and chambers, are *full hung with them*; and forasmuch as they expose *them to public* view at this time, travellers

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meet with the satisfaction of seeing very rare and curious pieces of art. Over and above all this, altars are erected almost in every corner of the streets, set forth and adorned with statues, images, and vessels of gold and silver, and upon every altar, there is always a representation to the life of some mystery of our religion, or of some saint. The houses of the lords of those parishes, that furnish the ornament of the feast, are open to all: as long as this feast lasts, they take care to adorn their chambers the most sumptuously they can, and to expose all their riches to view. There be some of them so splendid and liberal, to bestow cooling liquors, called *Sorbett*, and upon all comers, or at least upon all persons who appear never so little considerable; and in their courts or gardens, they have fountains running with wine in great abundance for the common people.

All things being thus prepared, the *procession* begins: this is a work on which the priests exhaust their invention, and rack their brains to bring forth somethiug new and unlooked for, that may please spectators. They dress up a great many little children like angels, with wings at their backs; they make very lively representations of all the figures and types mentioned in the Old Testament, which they conceive did prefigure their *Holy Sacraments*, as *Abraham's* sacrificing his son *Isaac*, the offering of *Melchisedec*, the *Shew-bread*, the *Paschal Lamb*, *&c.* They represent all the prophets and *sibyls*, that have prophesied of Our Saviour: and last of all, they make a shew of the *Blessed Virgin*, the *Twelve Apostles*, and *Our Saviour*, who follows them with a loaf in his hand, as if he were about to break it as he did at the celebration of his Holy Supper. Besides these, they also give us the representations of many of their he and she saints, whi

which were most devoted to the Holy Sacrament, as S. *Thomas Aquinas;* S. *Anthony*, of *Padua;* S. *Rose*, of *Viterbo, &c.* All these they represent not in figures to the life, but living figures, that is young boys and girls, chusing the prettiest and handsomest they can meet with. Above all, I took notice of many little S. *John Baptists*, amongst them. To represent these S. *John Baptists*, they take *little children* of four or five years of age, strip them stark naked, and put nothing upon them besides a coloured ribband, which like a belt reached from their right shoulder to their left thigh, so as it doth not hinder their nakedness from being exposed to public view. It is not now only, that the *Italians* are accused of equally loving both sexes, so that no body needs to be surprized at their having so great a devotion to these little S. *Johns*, of whom I very well remember, I counted no less than twenty in one *procession*, following one another. In one hand they hold a *great cross*, made of reed, and very light; and with the other, they lead a little lamb in a string. After all this pageantry, follow the *priests* in magnificent habits, and next to them, follows the *Holy Sacrament*, which is carried under a *rich canopy*, surrounded with an infinite number of young boys and girls, attired like angels, who all the way strew flowers before it. Near to the *canopy*, there is always an excellent company of musicians, who sing hymns and songs of the Holy Sacrament, being those the *Church of Rome* has composed since the *Council of Trent*, in honour of it. The *canopy* is followed by the principal men of the parish, and after them, to shut up all, a vast crowd of people of all sorts. In this manner they *walk our Lord*, (to use their own expression) throughout all the streets of the parish: but yet so, as to *give him leave to* expose himself at the end of

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every street, on the altars erected for that purpose.

When the *procession* is ended, they do not for all that take away the adorning of their streets, but leave them whole and entire for many days; to give the citizens leave to view them at their leisure, and to walk the same round the procession took, for in so doing, they believe they shall merit much, and obtain great indulgences. All the *Sbirries* of the legate and archbishop, do guard all these pageants all night, to prevent the stealing of them. And it is chiefly at night, that the gentlemen and ladies of the town walk abroad to take a view of them, because then they make the finest shew, all the streets being illuminated with a vast number of white wax-tapers, set thick in every corner which very much exalt the splendour of those rich and pompous ornaments. Here it is they court their mistresses and make assignations, and dispatch notes to one another, and in the end, always some miserable wretch or other, is left a cold victim on the ground, to the revenge of his enemies, or the jealousy of his rivals. All the ladies of pleasure, in a particular manner, never fail of coming thither towards evening, where they continue till they have got their prey. In a word, it appears that the most innocent are those who repair thither only to satisfy their eyes, or please their curiosity; for as for devotion, there is not so much as the least shadow of it to be discerned amongst them. Thus are these fine gaudy feasts, instituted on purpose to confound the Protestants, which in a short time, by a just judgment of God, become the shame and confusion of Papists themselves; and I have reason to fear that our Lord Jesus will tell them to their faces, at the great day in which he will come to judge both the quick and the dead, that his soul has

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abhorred the feast, and that their incense has been an abomination unto him, because, instead of advancing his glory by them, as they seem to pretend, they have only endeavoured to satisfy their own curiosity, vanity, and infamous lusts.

I have been a spectator of many other *processions*, made in honour of the Holy Sacrament, at *Venice*, *Milan*, and other parts of *Italy*; but I will not take up time to give the particulars of them, because they generally are the same thing over again; except only, that their adornings of the streets are not so curious, neither continue so long a time as those at *Bononia*. I cannot find that the *priests* reap any great benefit from these *processions*, but on the contrary are at the charges of adorning their churches and altars: but however, they hereby gain much credit and repute to their *priesthood* and *masses*; and they appear at them with so much majesty, and dressed with such pompous ornaments and habiliments, that it makes the people conceive a greater veneration for their persons. However, they know well how to repay themselves this charge they are at upon other occasions. It is but unveiling one of their miraculous images, when they have a mind to reimburse themselves double and treble. And probably it is for this very reason, that at *Bononia*, (a short time after the *Octave* of the Holy Sacrament) they make that great ceremony and procession of our Lady of S. *Luke*. To give you some idea of it, I shall tell you that about five miles from *Bononia*, upon an high hill called the *Mount de la Guardia*, stands a church, wherein is kept an image of the Virgin, which the Papists tell us was painted by S. *Luke* himself. The priests have so bestirred themselves, as to persuade the magistrates to put the city under her protection, giving her the title of their Patroness *and Conservatrix*; *Patrona* & Conservatrix Bononiæ

nonia. They have caused a coin to be stamped in honour of her, which on the one side bears the representation of the image pretendedly painted by S. *Luke*, and on the reverse, the arms of the city, which piece of money they call a *Madonnin*. The magistrates have made a vow, to go and fetch this image every year, and carry it in procession: they bring it from *Mount de la Guardia* to the town, to the end she may bless its inhabitants.

Many days before this solemnity, great preparations are made to fetch her off in triumph. Having got her into the city, they make her stay there three days, during which time they remove her to two or three churches. Where the people flock in throngs to visit her, and offer great presents, all which accrue to the profit of the priests of those churches. After that they have sufficiently idolized this image, or picture, they oblige her to give her blessing to all the people. To this purpose, they fasten the picture to great staves or poles, supported by men; and lifting it up on high, they make it bow and incline towards the people, as if she saluted them. This done, they lift her up a little higher, and incline her downwards again; and then stoop her down towards the right and left, that she may make the sign of the *cross* over all the people that are present; and this, forsooth, is her blessing of the people. To receive this benediction with the greater reverence, all the people are down upon their knees, with their faces bowed down to the ground. All this while the trumpets and drums do wonders. And after this ceremony is over, she is conducted back again, in the same processional way, to the place of her abode, where she continues all the year after, excepting some public calamity oblige the magistrates to permit the bringing of her extraordinar

ordinarily to the city in procession, for in that case they believe she will not fail of redressing all the evils they can lie under. Every *Saturday* there is a vast concourse of people comes to this image from the city of *Bononia*, and adjoining places.

To make the way more commodious, for those devout pilgrims, the *Bononians*, have undertaken to make a covered way, which begins at the gate of the city, and is intended to be carried on to that of the *church*, where the image resides. Above half of this way was already finished, when I was there. The whole is composed of great portico's of brick, very large and high roofed, the roofs being all curiously painted, and the bottom is paved very neatly with great square bricks. When this portal is finished it will be one of the most curious pieces of workmanship that is in *Italy*. Many particular noblemen have signalized their zeal for carrying on this work, having each of them made several arches of it at their own *charges*, on which they have caused their arms to be painted. But in the mean time, though this work be already so far advanced, yet some are afraid they shall never see it brought to perfection; because the remaining part is the most difficult to compass, and will cost much more than what is already done; for this portal is now to be carried on up the mountain, till it reach the *Church of our Lady*, on the top of it; and to this end they must be obliged to dig very deep, to find firm ground, whereon to lay a solid foundation. A good *curate* perceiving the devotion of contributing to this vast expence, began to grow cold, found out a very ingenious way to excite the drowzy and lethargic *charities* of the people, making use of the following device:—

He acquainted his parishioners, *That he felt himself inspired by the* Virgin, *to make a procession to the* Miraculous Image, *with twelve waggons loaden with materials, for carrying on this structure; he desired them to shew their zeal in contributing to so good a work: and that for his part, he would take care to range the procession in order, according to the model the* Virgin *had been pleased to give him in a dream* His parishioners very punctually executed the orders he had given them, loading four waggons with bricks, four with lime, and four with sand. The *curate* seeing their forwardness, sent every where for flower and sweet herbs to cover the waggons, and to make garlands for the oxen that drew them; he got their horns and hoofs to be gilt, and set himself at the head of this *convoy*, with a *cross* and banner, having procured several young girls with timbrels in their hands to play upon them, and dance about the waggons, as *David* did before the ark. In this equipage he passed through all the streets of the *city*. He had the approbation of the *Italians*, who are much delighted with new and well-contrived inventions, and especially wherein women or girls come to play their parts. The good success this *curate* met with, besides the general approbation, put all his brethren upon doing something in imitation of him, and, if possible, to go beyond him. So that about a fortnight after, there was to be seen a general procession of all the parishes with above 200 waggons loaden with bricks, lime, and sand, drawn by oxen with gilded horns. I never saw a more extravagant procession than this was, nor a more pleasant one. The march advanced in very good order, with *crosses*, and *banners*, priests, and the girls that danced, towards our Lady of S. Luke, and helped to build

a great

a great part of that portal. As soon as it is finished, they will be able to go (at all seasons, and in all weathers) from *Bononia*, to the place of devotion, without wetting or dirting themselves, any more than if they were in their own houses.

But that I may not wander too far from my subject of *processions*, I shall further acquaint you, that the *Monks* do far excel the *Priests* in their invention on these occasions. There is scarce an holiday or Sunday passeth over their heads, without some procession or other made in their monasteries. The *Dominicans* make a procession of the *Rosary* every first Sunday of the month, and the second Sundays the *Carmelites* make one in honour of the *Scapulary;* the third Sundays, the *Soccolanti* celebrate a procession in honour of S. *Anthony* of *Padua*. It is in these monkish processions that all is put in practice, wherewith lewdness and vanity are capable of inspiring the most loose and effeminate souls; so far are they from being religious, and fitted for devotion, as they pretend them to be. By the small taste I shall here give you of them, you may be able to judge of all the rest. I shall begin with a procession of the *Rosary*, which I saw at *Venice*, made by the *Dominicans* of *Castello*, which was ordered in this manner:

Next after the *cross* and *banner*, went about two or three hundred little *children*, dressed like angels, and others like little *he* or *she* saints, amongst which they did not forget to place a good number of little S. *John Baptists*. These were followed by thirty or forty young women, representing so many saints of their sex. One of them represented S. *Apollina;* and to distinguish her from the rest, she carried in her hand a basin gilt and enamelled, in which there

were teeth; another represented S. *Lucia*, and carried in a basin two eyes; a third, S. *Agnès*, who carried in her arms a living lamb; and so of the rest, every one of them being characterized by their marks of distinction. There were some of them that were prepared on purpose to make people laugh, and above all the rest, saint *Genevieve*, who had a lighted wax-taper in one hand, and in the other a book wherein she read, or at least made shew of doing so; and round about her, there were seven or eight young boys dressed like devils, all over black as a coal, with great long tails, and very extravagant and ridiculous countenances, and great horns on their heads; these skipped about the saint, and made a thousand ridiculous postures, apish tricks and faces, to endeavour to distract and divert her from reading of her *breviary*, by making of her laugh. The maiden who acted the personage of this saint, had been chosen by them on purpose of a melancholy temperament, who accordingly acted her part very well; she always kept her eyes fixed on her *hours*, without giving the least shew of a smile, though all the spectators that were present, could not contain themselves from bursting out into loud laughter, to see the ridiculous posture those little devils put themselves into, and who were certainly most impudent and pickelled youths; forasmuch as many times they make a shew of taking up their coats. This saint was followed by another, as if to make the people laugh as the former; this was a S. *Catherine* of *Sienna*, who had by her side a pretty little boy, with a broom in one hand, and a pair of bellows in the other; for they hold, that this saint (who was a religious of the *Dominican* order) had so great a familiarity with the child Jesus, that that divine infan-

infant, to ease when she was weary, frequently came and swept her chamber, and kindled her fire. After these good *she* saints, came all those whom they call *Figures*, comprehending all those holy women, who according to them did represent the *Blessed Virgin* in the Old Testament; they were carried upon frames on men's shoulders. Amongst the rest, there was *Jael*, to be seen in her tent, with *Sisera* lying at her feet, who was a beautiful youth, dressed in the garb of a warrior, and she with a great nail and hammer, making shew as if she had been ready to pierce his temples; after this figure came a *Dalilah*, sitting in an elbow-chair, with a comely youth between her knees; she had a pair of scissars in her hand, as if she had been about to cut off his locks. After these appeareth *Judith;* this was a fine figure indeed; for on the frame where she was, there were above twenty persons, it being the representation of *Judith's* return to *Bethuliah* in triumph with *Holofernes's* head, when the priests and people came out to meet, and sung a song in praise of her. This *Judith*, was one of the most beautiful young women of *Italy*, and very lasciviously dressed; round about her, (upon the same frame and pageant) they had placed several excellent musicians, who sung most ravishing stanza's in honour of her. The following pageant, as if they had a mind to oppose *deformity* or *beauty*, supporting a good old woman, without any teeth in her head, and very deformed; who muttered something within her gums, and represented *Hannah*, the mother of *Samuel*. I was astonished to see a woman of her age would trust herself on a pageant. She was followed by many more pageants, which were in all eighteen in number, with their different figures: but I shall not insist upon a particular description of any mor

more of them, that I may not tire you out; and shall only tell you, that the last of them all was the truth of all these figures, and the person typified, *viz.* the *Blessed Virgin*, who was represented by a very comely and beautiful maid, very richly dressed, with a great royal robe; she held a great *rosary* or *bead-row* in her left hand, and in her right hand, a sceptre. She had a rich *crown* upon her head, set thick with *pearls* and diamonds.

People of quality in *Italy* take it to be a meritorious piece of service to accommodate the saints of both sexes with their richest jewels, at these processions; which is the reason, that very frequently on these occasions, great riches are exposed to view.

I observed, that when this young woman, who represented the *Blessed Virgin* passed by, carried on a pageant, no body stirred their hats, no body bowed themselves, or fell down to worship her, or call upon her; but a little while after, when the wooden image of the *Virgin* came to pass by them, (which is the same that stands on the altar of the chapel of the *Rosary* of the *Dominicans* of *Castello)* all the people fell down on their knees, and beating their breasts, called her the *Mother of God*, and prayed to her. They made her, at certain distances, to bestow her salutations and benedictions upon the people, in the same manner I related to you speaking of the Lady of S. *Luke* of *Bononia*, and which were received by them with a great deal of acknowlegement, as a very great favour. Having applied my mind to find out the reason, why the Papists do not pay their adorations to living figures, though they indeed represent the *Virgin* more naturally, than a piece of stone or wood can do; and yet are so exact in bestowing them on their inanimate statues: after having spent

some

some thoughts upon it, I could not light upon any other reason but this, *That human nature having a kind of horror imprest upon it, of rendering to the* Creature *a worship, that is due to* God *only, all living figures, and especially those of men and women, do more fully discover to the sense their weak dependant creatural being, than inanimate things do, in which they suppose there is some secret adherent divine virtue. Though to speak the truth, this is no other than the highest pitch of folly, and the root and rise of all idolatry.* But I return to our procession.

This image of wood was carried in the midst of the Fathers *Dominicans*, who were the number of about an hundred; for they having many convents in *Venice*, they are ready to assist one another upon the like occasions. Nothing can be imagined more loose and lascivious than they appeared in all their deportment; they had great *rosaries* on their arms, and there was none of them that troubled himself to say them, except it were some old father amongst them, that was going out of the world, and was no more fit to make any figure in it; but all the rest of them strutted and marched in the most wanton manner in their fine white habits. All the way they went, they talked and laughed together, casting their eyes this way and that way on the ladies that looked out at the windows, or stood in the streets, to see the procession march along.

I do not think, Sir, it will be necessary for me to desire you to make some reflection on these kind of proceedings; because you cannot but take notice from the recital I give you, what all these *processions* aim at. Certainly, they are at the best no better than entertainments for *children, or rather* ridiculous farces to please *fools, but which* at the same time expose the

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Christian Religion to the reproach and derision of atheists and infidels. Some persons reported to me of a truth, that they had overheard some Turkish merchants, who were spectators at this procession, saying to one another, *Have you ever seen the like extravagaut fooleries? And, must not a man be bereft of his senses, before he can ever be persuaded to embrace such a religion?* The Papists boast themselves in this, as an infallible mark of the truth of their religion, *That there is no one Christian society in the world, that take more pains for the conversion of infidels, and who are blest with greater success in that undertaking, than themselves.* But supposing all they say be true, yet I am sure it may be said, with much more truth, *That there is no Christian Church in the world, is a greater obstacle to the conversion of infidels, than theirs is. aud that for one whom they convert, they hinder a million from being converted, who probably might come to the light of the gospel, had they not been eye witnesses of the gross folly and idolatry of their pretended religious practices. Yea, they are even found in the use of these things which make their own* Roman Catholics *of foreign countries to blush for them, when they are told of it.* The *English Papists* look upon such relations barely, as exaggerations and calumnies devised by their enemies, to blacken them. All that I can say to this sort of people is, that if they please to go to *Italy*, their own eyes will be able to convince them of more and greater extravagances, than those I have related to you in any of my LETTERS: the very same follies were formerly in vogue and practice in *France;* but the sight only of the *Protestants that* were mingled amongst them, have made *them* drop a good number of them. Thus, by a special effect of the goodness of God, the pre-

sence only of *Protestants*, carries a kind of blessing with it, which secretly reproves and corrects vice, confounds error, and inspires truth.

I will add to this procession I saw at *Venice*, another I have seen at *Milan*: this was celebrated by the *Carmelites*, in honour of the *Little Scapulary*, wherewith I have entertained you in a former LETTER; and that I may not trouble you with repetitions of the *angels* and *figures*, which were of the same kind as those I have already given you a description of, I shall only take notice to you of such particulars as were singular and different in this *procession* from those before related. One thing very remarkable in this procession was, that most of the young gentlewomen of the town, assisted at it in their richest *clothes*, and adorned with all their jewels. They marched four in a rank, with great white wax-tapers in their hands, and all the way they went, sung the psalms and hymns to the *Blessed Virgin*, that are used in the *Roman Church*. The women in *Italy* are not wont to sing in their *churches*, it being forbidden them, except those only who are of some religious order. However, the *Carmelites* made bold to introduce this piece of novelty, either to give themselves the satisfaction of being charmed with so many sweet voices, or at least to flatter and please the humour of the *Milan* gentlemen, who were extremely pleased with the device. They were ranged on both sides of the street, to see the young ladies pass by, who went with naked breasts, and with an air of wantonness, proper to inspire their lovers with a devotion indeed, but very different from what was pretended.

It was about an hour and half in the night when the *procession* began to set forth, and the *light of the wax-candles* and torches, much advanced the lustre of the beauty and ornament

of this *choice band.* All the way they passed, the streets rung with nothing but, *Ay, this is a fine shew indeed! O, the lovely Procession! see, how gracefully the Lady of* N. *carries her taper! What a majectic and becoming gate that lady has? O, the charming voice of this sweet one here!* Others again more impertinent than the former, cast out words to them (as they passed by) of a double meaning, which in the midst of so holy an exercise, as (forsooth) they will needs have it to be, were pregnant instances of the profaneness and filth of their hearts. After the ladies, came the Fathers *Carmelites,* two and two together; so that this whole procession was only composed of women and monks, with a wooden image representing the *Virgin,* which brought up the rear, and to which all the spectators paid their adoration, kneeling down in the streets when it passed by, to receive salutations and benedictions, which the good Fathers *Carmelites,* that bore the statue, made her bestow on the people.

The monks and priests please themselves extremely in making such like processions in their several churches; because it is upon these occasions that they appear with a pomp and lustre, that dazzles the eyes of the people, and makes the simple imagine they discern something in their persons that is more than human; though indeed, all this be at the bottom no more than a foolish vanity, and a pure illusion of the spirit of this world. We do not find them so zealous for, and ready to assist at those processions, that have any thing that is painful annexed to them; and at which the *ladies* cannot conveniently assist. This is what I observed at *Milan,* at the time of the rogations that are kept in *Ascension Week.* It is a custom observed in all countries that are of the Romish communion, to

make processions the three days before *Holy-Thursday*; that is to say, to go with the cross and banner from one church to another, to say their prayers.

Now at *Milan* this procession begins not till an hour after midnight, and doth not end till the next day at two of the clock in the afternoon. All the priests of the city, and adjoining places, are bound to assist at them, not excepting the stranger priests that are in the city. They must precisely meet at the hour appointed, at the sound of the great bell of the cathedral, in order to range themselves under the cross and banner. But because the great allurement is wanting in these kind of processions, the priests had rather sleep far in the day, than to take the pains to assist at them: but the cardinal-archbishop, though he does not care for going himself, has at last found out a way to make them go, though sore against their wills; for by his order all the *Sbirries* of the archbishopric being joined with those of the town, to the number of an hundred and fifty, armed with blunderbusses, pistols, and bayonets, divide themselves into several small parties of five or six together, and go the round through all the streets of the city, to look for the priests that are absent from the procession; they go and search for them in their very houses, and in case they find any, they tie their hands together on their backs, and in this infamous manner drag them to the archbishops' prisons. When they are come to the prison gates, then the *Sbirries* search their clothes and pockets, and after having very abusively treated them, they take from them all they find about them, and thrust them down into a dungeon, where they remain till they be summoned to appear in the archbishop's court, where at last they are ac-

 quitted,

quitted, after a small reproof, and a mulct of twenty crowns to the archbishop. The *priests* seeing that there was no way of exempting themselves from assisting at the *procession*, found out the secret however, of making it somewhat more sweet and easy to them.

The *procession* goes in one morning only to ten or twelve churches, where they enter, and stay for some considerable time, to sing their *litanies;* but forasmuch as the *priests*, by reason of their great numbers, cannot all enter into the same church, the far greater part of them being obliged to stand abroad in the street, about the church; but they not liking this waiting abroad, found a means to take up all the adjoining taverns and victualing-houses, and there make much of themselves, whilst their brethren were singing in the church; and after they had well solaced themselves, went and relieved their brethren giving them an occasion to do as they had done; and by this means the office was dispatched with much more courage and vigour. But the thing in itself being so base and scandalous in the eyes of the seculars, and some complaiuts having been made of their disorderly carriage to the archbishop, he ordered some thirty of his *Sbirries* should always coast about the *procession*, and search all the taverns for *priests*, and if they find any, to drive them thence; so that the poor *priests* being so nearly watched, are debarred of the opportunity of refreshing themselves with a glass of good wine. However, this doth not hinder, but that some of them take care to have a bottle of wine in their pockets, or some other convenience under their surplices; and when they have a mind to a supper, they pray some of their brethren to stand round them, and stooping a little, that they

may not be perceived by the *Sbirries*, they very dexterously refresh themselves in spite of the machinations of their enemies.

When the *procession* enters into any churches belonging to *monks*, the *priests* get themselves into the *convent* which joins to it, where the *monks* (that any of them are acquainted with) treat them with meat and drink, as much as they desire; and here they are secured from the search of the *Sbirries*, who have no power to look for them there; and should they attempt such a thing, would find but a very bad welcome. As soon as the *procession* is arrived at a certain *church*, specified by the archbishop, the twelve ecclesiastical *prefects* of the twelve gates of *Milan*, which are all *arch-priests*, and who have the inspection of all the *clergy* divided amongst them, assemble themselves in some great place, and every one of them having a list of all the *priests* that are under his jurisdiction, they read their names aloud one after another, being all of them obliged to answer to their names, and present themselves. If any one be found wanting, the same day a note is sent to his house, to pay the twenty crowns mulct for his absence. The whole *ceremony* being finished, the *procession* returns to the *cathedral*. It is commonly three of the clock in the afternoon, before the *procession* enters the *cathedral;* and then upon ringing of the great bell, every one of them has leave to return home, the *Sbirries* have no further power to meddle with them; but they scuffle home with that precipitation, as makes the spectators laugh heartily, to see hungry priests post away to their looked-for dinners.

Now it is apparent that these *rogation processions* are so very displeasing to them; because, *first of all*, there is nothing to be gained by them

In the second place, there are no ladies to assist at them: and thirdly, there are neither *angels* nor *figures*, to give them the least sport or diversion. The fourth place, they are not permitted to solemnize these processions in their pompous habits, but simply with their surplices and square bonnets, which is the cause why the seculars will not so much as step out of their way to see them pass. Fifthly, the procession being enjoined them, under rigourous mulcts and punishments, this is that which makes it go most of all against their stomach to assist at it; for as much pleasure as they take in imperiously commanding others, so much regret they have to obey, and be subject to the command of their superiors. And last of all, in these kind of processions, there are some inconveniences to be endured; they must leave their beds long before day; they must take many large turns and wearisome steps, and sing long without either eating or drinking; which does not very well sort with their humour.

The jolly processions of the *Holy Sacrament*, have much more *charms* for them; or the unveiling of some *miraculous image;* or the pompous procession of the *Holy Nail*, which is celebrated every summer in *Milan*, and to which not only the inhabitants of *that city*, but all the nobility and gentry of the neighbouring towns and provinces do flock in crowds, to be the spectators of that ambulatory pomp and magnificence. In this case there is no need of the *Sbirries*, to oblige the ecclesiastics to assist at it: the *cardinal-archbishop* himself assists in person at it, and carries the relic of the *Holy Nail*. And according to their tradition, this is one of those nails *that* pierced the adorable body of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, when he was nailed to the *cross;* which *Constantine* the Great having met with

with, in honour to it, made it part of his horse's bridle. It is now exposed to view, enclosed in a very fair *chrystal*, fixed upon a large pedestal of pure gold, of incomparable workmanship, and embellished with precious stones; and is certainly one of the richest and finest pieces that can be seen, and so heavy, that the *cardinal* had much ado to carry it. The nail is crooked, as having been made a part of a bridle.

The reflection I have made upon this *nail* is, that according to the history itself, which the *Papists* give us of it, it appears, that the relics, and especially the instruments of the passion of our Saviour, to which they at present pretend, we are obliged to render *Letria*, that is, *divine worship*, did not in ancient times receive any such honour, since *Constantine* (as they own themselves) made that nail a part of his horse's bridle; which no body will be so impertinent as to own for a piece of divine honour. He did not cause it to be set upon the altar, as it is at present; neither did men kneel before it, as the practice of the Papists is at this day; for otherwise, it would have followed, that wherever *Constantine's* horse passed, all persons must have prostrated themselves before it; which is very absurd, and is not in any part of the History of that great emperor.

And since I am sensibly fallen upon the *processions* that are in vogue at *Milan*, I think myself bound to give you the description of one of the most famous that *city* can boast of, being the same which is put in practice the eve of *Holy Friday*. This procession is celebrated by torch-light, and proceeds in order, as follows:—

Immediately after the *cross* and banner, follow the *cross bearers:* these are men that carry great *crosses* on their shoulders, fifteen or twenty foot *long; they* are very great and heavy in appearance.

ance, but hollow within, and indeed are nothing but four thin boards glued together: yet I am apt to believe, that by reason of their great bulk, they are a reasonable good burthen for a single man, and troublesome enough to those that bear them; and accordingly they tell us, that these *cross bearers* perform this piece of devotion from a spirit of repentance and penance, and to imitate our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, when he carried his *cross* up to Mount *Calvary*. There are no less commonly than two or three hundred of them, and the most of them have ropes about their necks, and great *chains* on their legs, which trail on the ground after them, and make a hideous noise. Their faces are covered with great *cowls*.

The *cross bearers* put me in mind of certain heretics, mentioned by *Baronius* in his ecclesiastical annals, who were called *Cruciferi*. It seems they took that place of the gospel according to the letter, *He that doth not take up his cross and follow me, cannot be my disciple:* and accordingly they had got great *crosses*, which they bore on their shoulders, and running like madmen over mountains and through desarts, they never quitted them, till hunger, thirst, and weariness, thrust their souls out of their bodies. I must confess, that those who assist at these *processions*, do not strain their devotion to this pitch; but still there is somewhat of resemblance in their actions.

In the midst of these *cross bearers*, was carried on a pageant, a figure of Our Saviour going up to Mount *Calvary*. After these *cross bearers* followed the *disciplinarians*, as they call them; these also had their faces covered with great cowls, and having their backs stark naked, with great *discipline*s or whips they had in their hands, they cruel[illegible] themselves, making the blood to run down their

their shoulders, in a manner, that caused horror to nature. In the midst of these flagellators, was carried a representation of the scourging of Our Saviour, tied to a pillar. After these followed several companies of soldiers, with their musquets and pikes, the points downward, and their colours in like manner. All the drums were covered with black cloth, and beating upon it, made the sound very doleful. After the soldiers followed a living figure of Our Saviour, which was a young man dressed in a large purple robe, with a crown of thorns on his head, and bearing a great cross on his shoulders: he had round about him, near a score of youths, habited like *Jews*, who put themselves into an hundred ridiculous postures, and made faces at him after such a manner, as forced the spectators to laugh at a sight, which ought to have melted their hearts into sorrow and compunction; neither was this a strange thing amongst them, their holy representations being very surely not exempt from some notorious profanation: there was no kneeling to this figure, because it was a live one. This figure was followed by all the confraternities of the City of *Scuole*, which are very numerous. They march two and two, with wax-tapers lighted in their hands; and after them followed another figure of Our Saviour laid in his sepulchre. As soon as this came by, though it were only made of wood, all that stood in the streets, fell down on their knees and worshipped it. About this figure, there marched a company of women, all in mourning, who held their handkerchiefs before their eyes, as if they had wept. Next to these women followed the priests, and after them, a statue of the *Blessed Virgin*, having her heart pierced with seven great swords that stuck fast in it: they commonly call this, *our Lady of pity*; and wherever it passed, they

paid

paid to it the same prostrations and adorations, as to the statue of Our Saviour. A great throng of people last of all, concluded the *procession.*

I know well enough that the Papists will not only excuse these kind of *processions*, but will also exalt them far above their plain ones; alledging, that these are all of them holy representations, which renew in our minds the idea of what passed long ago on Mount *Calvary:* but, for my part, I believe that the time they take to dispose and regulate these kind of processions, and which the spectators spend in seeing them pass by, would be much better employed in reading and meditating of the History of Our Saviour's Passion in private, in order to the enkindling of holy affections, suitable to that great occasion. This, I say, would in all probability be a far-more efficacious means to obtain this holy end, than to dress up a man like Our Saviour, and turn all to a farce, to make the people laugh at so tremendous a mystery; for this indeed, however, they may otherwise disguise it, is the end of all.

Thus likewise it is, when five weeks after *Easter*, they represent the ascension of Our Saviour Jesus Christ into Heaven; they have a great statue of wood to represent him, which they tie with great cords about the head, and just at noontide of *Ascension-day*, at the ringing of all the bells in the town, and in the presence of all the people, certain persons placed on the roof of the church, draw it up by cords into the air; the priests in the mean time singing the anthem, *Viri* Galilæi *quid admiramini aspicientes in cœlum? &c.* When the statue is ready to enter into the hole, which they have made on purpose *in the* roof of it, there are men posted, who from *the* high galleries of the church, cast some *twenty* or thirty pails of water on the spectators;

so that many of them are made wet to the skin, which makes the rest break out into loud laughter. This is the devout end of this fine ceremony or holy representation, as they are pleased to term it. I have also seen a great number of *cross bearers* and *disciplinarians*, as in *Italy*. And indeed, to judge by outward appearance, one would believe these persons to be animated by a greater spirit of devotion and mortification; but having made it my business to search into the matter, I found that the most of them are engaged to do it for interest sake, being paid for lashing of themselves, because the ecclesiastics think it a shame, if in a *Lent procession* they should not have a good number of these men of discipline, and cross-bearers. Others, again, do it, because their confessors have enjoined it them as a piece of penance.

I know indeed, no reason why the priests should pride themselves with this; but sure I am, I have often heard them reproach one another, that they had none, or very few scourgers in their *processions*. It is possible, that by a sottish kind of vanity they may suppose, that the glory of these kind of public penances, reflects upon themselves, as being the imposers of them; in which case their vain-glory is no better founded, than the *crow* in the fable, who prided himself with what was none of his. They are very well pleased to see others lash themselves; but not so much as one of them will be an example of it to others: for never in my life, did I see either *priests* or *monks*, whip themselves in public. These *whippers* and *cross-bearers*, for the most part, to make this piece of penance more tolerable to them, drink themselves to a good pitch, before they set out on *processioning*.

Whilst I was at *Mentz* in Germany, I saw a great inconvenienc

inconvenience and disappointment happen upon this occasion; where many of these *cross-bearers* in the midst of the procession, threw down their crosses in the streets, and very fairly set themselves down upon them, saying. *That they had borne them long enough, and that it was but fitting the* crosses *should now bear them.* Besides, many of the *disciplinarians* fell a singing and dancing, and vomiting the surplus of the wine they had taken. Most of them were *Jesuit's* scholars, whom their regents had forced to this involuntary mortification.

By this, Sir, you may easily discern, that the Papists will make all things bend and stoop to their fancy and humour. They have almost framed to themselves a new gospel; and they interpret the mysteries of it so materially and grossly, that in the end they will probably persuade them, *That to bear their cross in this world, is nothing else, but to go a processioning, with great crosses of wood upon their shoulders;* and consequently maintain, that it is a mere heresy to believe with the Protestants, *That true mortification is that of an humble and contrite heart, and of a soul pierced with an holy sorrow and repentance for sin.* It is scarce possible to make the popish *Jesuits* and *Priests*, that come into *England*, acknowledge, that these sort of foolish exercises of devotion, are at this day, the most frequent employments of their *Roman Catholics*, in those places where that religion takes place. They are so ashamed to own these their follies, that at present none but travellers are able to convince them thereof, who can tell them, that they have seen with their own eyes, what they so impudently deny with *their* mouths. It was an effect of this shame, *that* made some *Italian* and German Jesuits, in my presence, treat a chapter of a certain book,

as containing nothing but mere calumnies, because it mentioned a *devotion* which is still every year practised in *Italy*, and *Germany*, at *Christmas*, which is the ceremony of rocking the *cradle* of the child *Jesus*. And yet there is nothing more true, than that this custom is much in vogue amongst them, myself have seen it done several times. Their way is this: they make on an altar, or in some chapel of their churches, a representation of the stable at *Bethlehem* with great figures representing the *Blessed Virgin*, S. *Joseph*, and the child *Jesus*, lying in his manger. The *Italians* do excel all others in making those kind of representations, and make them their pastime and divsrsion all the *Christmas-holidays;* and the women have leave at that time to go from church to church, to see these pageants, and under pretext of frequenting these devotions, many bargains are struck, little suiting with the pretended holiness of the places where they are made.

It cannot be denied, but that there is something in these representations, that does extremely take the eye: you have a pleasant prospect here of rocks, fountains, forests, and delightful green plains, expressed to the life, and shepherds feeding their flocks upon them: you see people from all parts coming through lanes and paths, to offer their presents to the child *Jesus*. All this is very naturally represented, and there is always some merry conceit or other joined with them, to make people laugh. But the principal point I aim at in this description is, that there are many great ribbands, or cords tied to the cradle of the child *Jesus*, which the spectators that are there present, and upon their knees, do pull towards them very devoutly to rock *the cradle*, in like manner as we see nurses do their

their children; and then sing what in *Italian* they call their *Na, Na*, which are songs commonly sung to rock children asleep; *Sleep my little Jesus, sleep my dear love. sleep; na, na, na, na.* But that which surprized me beyond measure was, to see sometimes old men and women rise up from their knees in a great anger, when they heard too much noise made in the church, and bidding them be hushed, for that else they would awake the child *Jesus;* which, notwithstanding, is no more than a piece of *wood* or *pasteboard* painted over: yea, there be some so fearful of offending this way, that they pull off their shoes as soon as they enter the church, for fear of troubling the child's rest; whilst (in the mean time) their *monks and priests*, standing behind in their *sextries*, laugh at all these their follies.

I can say, that I never saw any of them lay hold of the cords to rock the cradle, and would be sore ashamed to be found so sottishly employed. And probably they would be understood in this sense, when they say, that this is never practised amongst them, because they do not do it themselves; but they are very glad to see the seculars so well employed for their diversion. Neither is this child's play altogether without profit to them; for there be many of the visitants, who bring some of them fresh eggs, and others pullets and capons, to make caudles and broths for the *Virgin;* all which they lay in the stable, near to the image: others bring cheeses, and great bottles of wine, which they lay near to the image of S. *Joseph;* and others cast large pieces of money into a great basin, which the priests hold out to them, and which (as they tell them) is to be laid out, to buy necessaries for the child *Jesus*.

I happened once to be at Mentz in Germany, in the

the sextry of the fathers *Jesuits*, with five or six of them. It was a diversion to us, to see the presents they made to the *manger*. A poor country-fellow, amongst the rest, brought with great simpicity and devotion, a great truss of hay, and laid it down in the *holy stable*, between the *Ox* and the *ass;* but the *Jesuits* perceiving it, said one to another, *Fie, fie, this must be taken away immediately, it will prove a very bad precedent; at this rate they would bring nothing but grass and hay for the beasts. No, this must not be; they had much better bring good gammons of bacon and neat's-tongues for* S. Joseph. The *sexton* accordingly ran to take it away; but the countryman briskly opposed him, saying, *That he could not endure to see the* ox *and the* ass *die for hunger, whilst the rest were so well provided.* But they endeavoured to appease him, by telling him, *That the child* Jesus *would take care to sustain them by his divine virtue, rather than that should happen.* Thus for a miserable and base interest, they most outrageously abuse the poor, and keep them in ignorance, and afterwards, to advance their impiety to the highest degree, they make a virtue of it, giving it the name of *Simplicity* and *Innocence.* It is before these sort of *mangers*, that (according as I have told you, in a former LETTER) they set little children to preach.

I have made bold upon this occasion to make this short digression, which I hope will not prove unpleasing to you. I return now again to our *processions*, or rather I shall conclude this LETTER, in like manner as I have begun it, by giving you a relation of another unveiling of an image of the *Virgin* I have seen at *Milan*, and which, as I was told, was only done once in fifty-six years. *All the* corporations of the city, and of the *neighbouring* places, made the visits to it pr[illegible]onal

cessionally, with wax-tapers, purses, presents and ceremonies, not much unlike those I have already related to you. The only thing singular in this uncovering was, that all the while the image was unveiled, there was great concourse from all parts, of possessed persons, the *priests* being very busy in all the corners of the church, to exorcise them. The Papists maintain, *That their priests in their ordination, receive the power of casting out devils, and that the effect shews they are successful in it.* For my part, I have seen very many of these possessed persons, and I have diligently applied myself, to search into, and examine the matter, but never could discover any able to persuade me, that those effects or operations proceed rather from the devil, than from a strong imagination, or some violent distemper. Besides, I seldom met with any, but women that were possessed; and I would gladly be informed, why the devil should rather attack them than men. Indeed, the true reason of this is, that in *Italy*, the women are more than ordinary subject to fall into phrensies and strange imaginations. Their parents, or their husbands, keep them always shut up in their chambers or garrets, without permitting them to go abroad, except it be sometimes to church: and being naturally of an hot and amorous temper, a flattering and pleasing object they may by chance have espied from their windows, or at mass, does so far transport them, that they are wholly possessed with it, and with the devil, as is supposed. Their thoughts are strongly fixed on it day and night, and the force of the imagination, making a wonderful impression upon their vital spirits, does extremely agitate and confound them: and from thence proceed all those disorders and convulsions that appear in their bodies.

This church I speak of, was full of this sort of

possessed

possessed persons. Amongst the rest, I perceived in one of the chapels, a very beautiful young gentlewoman, who continually beat her breast with her hand, and cried out, as if she had felt something that would have choaked her. She had many priests about her, reading of exorcisms; but amongst the rest there was a very handsome priest, who did wonders, and indeed out did them all. The possessed party seemed to have no consideration for any of the rest, but for him only, and whenever he touched her, the devil, to appearance, being overcome by the force of his exorcisms, left off to torment her. I was astonished to see the liberty this young gentleman took with his possessed; for sometimes he would embrace her body, he handled her hands and arms, and almost continually gave her little slaps on the cheek. They tell us, *That the devil being a proud haughty spirit, cannot endure to be humbled; which is the reason of their boxing and affronting the possessed.* The other priests that were about her, sometimes stretched forth their hands to box her, as he did; but she shewed herself enraged against them, and would not suffer them to touch her; so that they were fain to content themselves with abusing the devil in words, whilst the young priest alone was admitted to flap her on the cheek. This proceeding at last stirred up some jealousy amongst themselves, and one of the old priests said to this young blade in a smart way of raillery, *Dom* Pietro, *I see well, that the devil likes none so well as yourself; and if I be not much mistaken, you well enough agree together.*

But whatever the priests of *Rome* may pretend, certain it is, that the absolute power they claim over the devils, is not so evidently verified in them, as they would make the people believe it.

is. I have seen possessed persons, and exorcisms, pronounced over them in quantity, but I never saw any of them freed of their possession by this means. I know it is commonly said, there are many beggars, who counterfeit themselves possessed, that by this means they may procure a good maintenance all their lives after; and as for these, indeed, I question not, but the *priests* have power to deliver them of their counterfeit possessions. This cheat of the beggars procures vast credit to their mysterious images, which are but once unveiled in fifty years time.

But I will leave these possessed, to come to a conclusion of what I have said concerning *Popish processions*, which they define, as I hinted at the beginning of this LETTER, *a marching, or walking of the people from one church to another, under the conduct of their priests, with the* cross *and* banner, *there to invoke the extraordinary assistance of God.* But indeed, and in truth, according to the account now given you of them, does it not appear to you, Sir, that they may with much more right be defined, *Pompous and magnificent walks, invented on purpose to enhance the credit and repute of the* monks *and* priests, *and to abuse and gull the people for their own advantage?* We have not the least footsteps of these kind of *processions* in the primitive centuries of the church, as being only an invention of the Pope's brain; and if I be not much mistaken, S. *Gregory* the Great, was the first that instituted them at a time of the plague. In his time they were celebrated with abundance of modesty; but the luxury and ambition of the clergy have in process of time so much amplified them, that it is as clear as the sun at noonday, they serve for no other use at present, but to give them the advantage, and make them triumph over the seculars. Besides, they serve for

for public marks of honour, whereby they are distinguished amongst themselves. There is nothing they are more jealous of, than their precedency in processions, the *priests* and *monks*, often quarrel with one another on this occasion; and sometimes their contests break out into great disorders, as it happened not long since at *Dijon*, a parliament city in *France*, where the monks of S. *Bennet*, having undertaken to go a *processioning*, with great *canes* in their hands, as an ensign of their authority over the rest of the clergy; the canons of the *holy chapel* rose up against them, which occasioned a furious skirmish between them, with their *crosses* and *banners*.

The order observed in all *processions*, is, that the meanest march first, and those of the highest rank and quality last of all, so that the bishop is always the last man that shuts up the *procession*. The *Jesuits* being of so late standing in the Church of *Rome*, and not having been able to obtain the *precedency* they affected of their senior orders, at *processions*, have wholly renounced them, and never assist at them. Only at *Venice*, the senate obliged them to go in procession with the rest; and to avoid mingling themselves amongst the *priests* or *monks*, they rather choose to march amongst tradesmen. The *coblers*, *shoemakers*, and *taylors*, march first of all, and after them come the *Jesuits*, who are followed by the other trades.

I shall here conclude this LETTER, and without detaining you with an ample moral application of all this, shall only tell you, that forasmuch as it is apparent and visible, that these kinds of *processions* in the Church of *Rome*, are only made to serve the ends of ambition and temporal interest of the clergy; that the best processions we can make are not to march from one church to another

other; but to advance from one church to another, until we arrive at the holy mount of God, *viz.* blessed eternity. *Optima processio sit procedere de virtute in virtutem, usque ad montem domini.* I remain, Sir,

Your.

LETTER VIII.

OF THE CORRUPTION OF THE ITALIAN *PRIESTS AND MONKS IN THEIR DEVOTION AND MORALS, &c.*

SIR,

I HAVE already acquainted you in my last, that my abode for two years together in the city of *Bononia*, at the abbey of S. *Michael* in the *Wood*, afforded me a very favourable opportunity of penetrating into the lives, and manners of monasticks, and I might have staid there much longer, if the persuasions of a noble *Venetian* had not prevailed with me, to go with him to *Venice*. It seems, as if a divine providence had conducted me thither, to put me in a station where I might take a nearer view of the conduct and conversation of other ecclesiastics commonly called *Secular Priests;* not so much, because I was ignorant before of their way of life, having been always brought up amongst them, and one of them; but because I found a considerable deal of difference between the secular clergy of *Italy*, and those of France, amongst whom I had my education. The former of these thout any restraint, and without being

much observed or taken notice of by their own countrymen, whom they have corrupted as well in their practice, as in their principles, as I shall more particularly make out to you in the sequel hereof; whereas the latter, (that is to say, the *ecclesiastics* of *France*) have studied the art of *dissimulation*, and are more upon their guard, to avoid their being exposed to the censure of *Protestants* whom they regard as so many spies upon them.

I was to sooner arrived at *Venice*, but I had the good luck to procure myself the protection of some of the most considerable persons in that republic; so that in less than a month's time I was provided with three small benefices, in three different churches, which gave me an occasion of conversing with a vast number of clergymen of all nations, who resort to that city of liberty, there to enjoy the pleasures of this life. After I had staid three years here, I undertook another journey to *Rome*, having been drawn thither by the promises of a cardinal, who died eight days after my arrival there. This unlooked for accident, having defeated the hopes I had formerly of making a longer stay in that city, I departed thence some months after. Having visited before the city of *Naples*, I took my journey towards *Milan*, without any design of making any stay there; but the persuasion of some noblemen of that country made me change my resolution. The abbot of Great S. *Victor*, amongst others, made me very considerable offers, to oblige me to stay in his abbey, and to take upon me the care of instructing his religious, according as he knew I had done in the abbey of S. *Michael*, in *Bononia*, that was the same order as his, which at length induced me to yield to his desire. By this means I found myself anew engaged with *Monks*.

I have here on this occasion, Sir, *hinted* to you several parts of *Italy*, where I have made my abode for some time, and the employments I have had *there;* but without the least *intent* of boasting myself on *that* account, but only to inform you, that what I take upon me to speak here concerning the *priests* and *monks*, is from a thorough knowledge and experience, as having had *abundant opportunities* to make these observations, which many (who have handled the same subject) have been wholly deprived of. I have had several *other employments* both in *Italy* and *Germany*, which I might with more reason boast of, if I was so minded; but they having no reference to the subject in hand, I pass them by in silence. Though indeed it be not *altogether* out of the way, for one in my circumstances, to make mention of the employments he has had beyond the seas, and the honourable way of subsistence he has been in, if it were only to confute the calumnies the Papists are wont to cast upon the *priests* of their religion, who leave their communion, to satisfy their consciences by joining themselves to that of the reformed churches: their common cry is, that such are either mere vagabonds, or persons that had nothing to live on at home in their own country, and who were weary of the condition they were in, for want of some good benefice wherewith plentifully to maintain themselves; or else, that it is nothing but a spirit of *libertanism*, that prompts to make this change. This last aspersion being the most odious and reflecting of all, made me very careful (when I was in *Italy*) to obviate it, by taking attestations of my good-behaviour and manners from all the places where I had made any stay, that I might have them in readiness to clear myself from any such reproach, in case any should be found malicious enough to rank me

in that number, so that indeed (by the grace and goodness of God) I may now speak boldly and openly, without the least danger or apprehension from the most envenomed tongues; yet for all this, I must profess, that the subject of this last LETTER, is very averse to my natural humour and inclination, *viz.* to expose the vices and defects of others: but yet, when I consider on the other hand, that *Jesus Christ* often declaimed very severely against the hypocrisy of the *scribes* and *pharisees* of his time, and this to inform the people, and deter them from following their ways, I conclude, it cannot be unlawful (upon good ground and occasions) to publish the sins of those who are not only the main corrupters of the morality, but also of the principles and doctrines of the gospel, to the end we may oblige others, to be warned and take heed of them, as of *Wolves in sheep's clothing, cavete a fermento pharisæorum; take heed of the leaven of the pharisees.* By this means, also, it will appear, what use is made of all those vast sums of money which accrue to the priests of the Church of *Rome*, by those subtile inventions and religious artifices wherewith I have entertained you in my foregoing LETTERS; for it is evident, that *gold* and *silver* can serve only for the use of men; and by the use they make of it, we may easily judge of the end they propounded to themselves, in searching for the means to obtain it.

Having therefore more especially applied myself, during my abode in *Italy*, to find out the ways the *priests* and *monks* had, to dispose of and spend their vast revenues, I found, that it was only to satisfy and glut the domineering appetites, lusts, and passions. Some of them are such idolaters of *Mammon*, that the more they heap up, the less they think themselves possessed of; and thus, die (like little *crœsus's*, or rather like bad rich

men)

men) in the midst of their riches, from which nothing but death could separate them. It is the common cry of the poor in that country, that nothing can be more inexorable, more insensible, or more pitiless than the clergy. It is mere labour lost, to address one's self to them for an alms; for at the best one meets with a denial, and very often with scornful and taunting words, so that their *covetousness* is like an unsatiable gulf, which swallows all, and gives up nothing again. I have known several priests, who had their coffers full of *gold*, and notwithstanding grudged themselves a piece of dry bread; and some of these were so dextrous as to make their sordid *avarice* pass for a love of *abstinence* and *mortification;* but in th mean time were so far from bestowing the least alms on the poor, that they could not endure that any one should ask them a *charity;* whence it was obvious to make this discovery, that so fair a virtue as *abstinence* is, could not be the inmate of such sordidly covetous breasts; for according to that saying, *Sublevamen pauperis sit abstinentia jejunantis; The abstinence of him that fasts, ought to be a relief for the poor.*

Others bestow their money in building palaces for themselves; I say *palaces;* for though, indeed, it would much better become their profession to provide for themselves houses in which some marks of that Christian humility might be discerned, which is so indispensable a qualification of ministers of the altar; yet so far are they from this temper, that they spare no cost to erect for themselves most stately and sumptuous fabricks, beyond the magnificence of the palaces of the greatest princes. For proof of what I here alledge, we need only cast an eye upon all the monasteries of Italy; and those who have travelled those countries know, that the fairest palace which is found near the church, is al-

way

ways the curate's house. Others consume their revenues in making much of themselves, and contriving ways for their pleasure and diversion; for seeing they have no families to provide for, *It would be a profanation*, say they, *of the gifts of God*, (so they call the immense riches they have got by their masses) *in case they should not make use of them, to make much of themselves in this world, who do so much good to the souls of purgatory in the other.* For this reason it is, we see their tables so deliciously and profusely covered, and that they entertain one another by turns, with such exqusitness, splendour, and magnificence; insomuch that their inclination this way, has authorized that proverbal expression, so common in *Italy*, by which they call any extraordinary dainty, *Boccone di petri o di cardinali; a bit for a priest or cardinal.* What I have here said concerning those objects that please the pallate, is to be understood proportionally concerning all other things that do any way contribute to a delicious and luxurious life, which they take care to procure for themselves with a superfluous profuseness altogether inexcusable. Should any man be tempted with a desire to see the very utmost height of vanity or wantonness, and of effeminacy, he need only to take a view of the court of *Rome*, which, as it is composed only of *priests* and *monks*, so it boasts itself, of surpassing in gallantry, pomp, and magnificence, those of the greatest and most potent monarchs of the earth.

Here you will find bishops that have two or three bishoprics, and abbots that have five or six abbies apiece. It is a kind of disgrace for an ecclesiastic, to have no more than one benefice; *for, indeed,* without a great revenue, one can *make no figure* in this court of priests. Yea, the vani

vanity of this court is mounted to that excess, that the members of it are so far from blushing at it, that they make it the principal matter of their glory and boasting. A *cardinal* or *bishop* does not make an hunting match, does not feast his consorts, but the whole world, forsooth, must ring of it. All the gazettes we have from *Rome*, are stuffed full of such vanities are these, *That my lord the cardinal* N. *has given a visit to one of his colleagues:* that *another was at the* opera; *or caused a rich livery to be made for his retinues, and appeared in public with a train of so many coaches.* I have often made it my diversion, whilst I was at *Rome*, to see the *cardinals* (on Sunday morning) ride to the *Vetican*, when the Pope held chapel there. They are tricked up like so many scarlet puppets in their coaches, and all their creatures are about them, with an air that proclaims them extremely effeminate and wanton. After all, I confess, a man must needs have a very strong faith to believe, that this sort of people are no sooner met together in a chamber, but the *Holy Ghost* is instantly in the midst of them, to give law to the consciences of all men. If to meet together with such excess of ambition and vanity, be to meet in the name of the Lord, it is certain our Saviour Jesus Christ, who appeared in so mean and humble a condition, did not come into the world in the same name. Every cardinal has his nephew or nearest kinsman with him, who holds his scarlet hat in the boot of the coach; which is a signal honour to him, and a mark of his being the most beloved creature of the cardinal.

It is this *nepotism*, that made such a noise in the time of the late Pope *Innocent* the XIth, and which he (who, to give him his due, was a man severe enough in his morals) resolved wholly to *extirpate*, having begun the reformation in his

own

own house; but we see now, that things are quietly, and without noise, returned to their old channel, All the endeavours of Pope *Innocent* the XIth, were only like the sprinkling of a little cold water upon red hot iron, which serves only to make it more fiery and glowing; and for my part, I must own, that I cannot conceive how a church (where flesh and blood ride so gloriously triumphant, and prevail to that excessive degree) can ever have the face to boast, *That the gates of hell shall never prevail against her.* This *nepotism*, or exaltation of their nephews, does not only take place at the Court of *Rome*, but (whether from imitation, or by natural inclination of promoting those who are nearly related to us) we find it obtain amongst all the rest of the clergy, who are not perfect slaves to avarice, or the love of pleasure. They think of nothing else, but how they may enrich those of their family, whose humour pleaseth them best. I confess, indeed, that this is the most commendable and most innocent way of employing their treasure, as carrying some appearance of charity in it; though, (to speak the truth) we can never make Christian virtue of it, as being common to us with the heathens themselves: the *Turks* do good to those of their kindred and friends, as well as the *priests* of the Church of *Rome*, and probably also do it during their lives, which these latter are very seldom found guilty of, because they commonly do not dispose of the riches to those of their family, till they see death ready to snatch them away. This *nepotism*, therefore, is a vast gulf, which swallows great part of the ecclesiastical revenues; but there is another abyss that devours incomparably much more, and in a way that is not only a scandal and reproach to their *profession, but* even to nature itself; and is, in a *word, the abominable* commerce they drive with *both sexes.*

All the world knows, that it is not lawful for the *priests* and *monks* of the Church of *Rome*, to marry, as having protested against *a thing*, (to use their own terms) *which defiles and pollutes a man, and makes him incapable of duly and purely serving at the altar.* It is upon this principle they refuse to marry, and the priest that can be convicted of violating this law, must be burnt alive. But for all this their huffing, they perceive well enough, that all this while they reckon without their host, and this great undertaking of theirs, proves quite another thing in effect, than it was in speculation. Take but a little leisure to read their lives, and you will find they have no sooner made their vow of *chastity*, but they study and invent (with all the application imaginable) how to break it. They have voluntarily debarred themselves from honest and lawful wedlock, and must now betake themselves to fornication, adultery, incest, and sacrilege, to satisfy their concupiscence, and glut their infamous lusts. Now, to do this, there must be money, because the debauched sex is doubly concerned for having to do with them, and therefore do not afford them so good quarters as they do to others; and their wenches have the boldness to tell them, *That since it is a greater sin to have to do with them, than with others, it is but just they should pay accordingly.* The clergy, therefore, finding that the world carries it somewhat uncivil towards them in this regard, and groaning to see themselves in a condition to stand in need of them, resolve on their side, (as far as possible) to be even with them; accordingly, they will not say a mass or prayer, or go a step upon any score whatsoever, without being well paid for it. If they be sent for to baptize an infant, to exhort a sick body, or to bury a corps, they first de-

mand

mand what they will give them for their pains, and budge not till the bargains be made. They solicit for money towards their confraternities, their festivals, processions, benedictions, and devotions of the souls in *purgatory*, with incredible importunity and earnestness, as being a prompt and effectual expedient, to fill their purses. There is nothing disquiets them more, than the persuasion which possesseth the sex they love, *That to have to do with men consecrated to God,* (as they are) *is a kind of sacrilege, and the worst of all crimes.* This, indeed, is a consequence which very plainly follows from their principles; but which they notwithstanding, endeavour to veil as much as ever they can. You seldom hear them preaching against wantonness, incontinence, adultery, &c.; and if at any time they do, it is without being invective, and so as to diminish the horror any one might have conceived of these crimes. Yea, some of them are arrived to that degree of impudence to publish, *That these are the most innocent of all other vices, and that God, considering that they are born and grown up with us, and have their rise from the blood and body that surround us, is very ready to forgive and pardon them.* They say, *That such sins as these are instances of human frailty, and provided a person be only convinced of his weakness therein, confess them, and be humble for them, it is enough; and one* Ave Mary, *or the sign of the* cross, *with a sprinkling of* holy-water, *is all the penance that is ordinarily for such* peccadillo's *as these.*

They are wont also, to treat seculars very smoothly in this point, at their confession, and in particular the female sex; *Lest* (they say) *by treating them too harshly,* they might be discouraged *another time* to confess them with a

their circumstances. But the true reason is, that in so doing, they may oblige the seculars, to be as favourable towards them in their censures on the like occasion, and that they may not be too strictly observed themselves when they fall into the same crimes. Indeed, auricular and secret confession, is the most commodious way the priests have to lodge their game; it is there they put women to the question, and by this means accustoming them (by little and little) from their youth up to speak with confidence of their secret sins, they make them at length lose that natural shamefacedness, which otherwise they would be sensible of, in making the least mention of such filthiness. Being therefore by this means informed of their inclinations and weak side, if they find them to be of an amorous complexion, it is an easy thing for them to speak for themselves, and to insinuate their own passions. It is notoriously evident, that commonly none but women go to confession; for, as for men, they seldom use it more than once a year, and that towards *Easter.* The reason whereof having been once asked in my presence, a person of very good sense returned this answer, *That the reason why none but women were seen to confess, was, because men were confessors; but, that if women were once possessed of the chair of confession, we should soon find the contrary, and that none but men would appear before them.* The reason is, because women for the most part, take pleasure in their confessing, being well assured, that their confessors will put such question to them, as cannot much displease them; and knowing, that how openly soever they may declare their sins, the seal of confession will always put them out of danger of running any risque thereby: yet, there are not wanting a vast number of those, who by relying upon the secrecy of this tribunal,

bunal, and encouraged by the exhortations of their priests, of hiding nothing from them, no not so much as their impure thoughts, make no difficulty ingenuously to declare, that they love them; that they can neither day nor night rid their spirit from running but after them; and their amorous temptations are so violent, that except God be pleased to restrain them, or to take some compassion on them, it will make them infallibly go mad and distracted.

The men (especially in *Italy*) go but seldom to confession because they do not love to be questioned or examined about their amours, a *Capuchin* friar (who was very ugly, and the very picture of a satyr, with his great beard) told me once smiling, *That his confession seat was a scare-crow to women; but that, to make amends for that, he was the great confessor of jealous lovers.* His meaning was, that women did not care to confess to him, because he was ugly; but that on the other hand, men did choose to confess to him the rather, because he was so, as judging him incapable of injuring them by becoming their rival. A confessor, who has a design to make a bad use of his ministerial function, may easily find means, by the questions he can put, and to which his penitent is obliged to answer, to discover the person he speaks of, accordingly may afterwards find means of attempting her.

A young noble *Venetian*, having been upon a time too indiscreetly questioned by a monk in his confession, where his mistress dwelt, swore he would never confess upon that point any more, except it were at the point of death, or at least, when he should be weary of his mistress, and no more apprehend, to have a competitor in his love.

I have been told by several gentlewomen, that confessors have come to visit them in their houses, *being led thither* only by the light they have go

from the confession of their penitents. This *confession* is one of the new sacraments of the Church of *Rome*, and we see to what goodly ends it is made use of, and the interest the *priests* and *monks* have to preserve it. This is that which makes them so boldly to protest against marriage, which they care so little for; the corruption of man's nature being so great, that it represents sin more sweet and pleasant to him, than that which is honest and lawful.

I remember a saying of a regular abbot of a monastery in *Italy*, who talking with me about women, said, *Melius est habere mullam quam aliquam; That it was better to have none than any;* and having demanded of him what he meant by those words; *Because* (said he) *when a person is not tied to one, he may make use of many.* This you will say was a fine piece of morality; and to give this prelate his due, his practice was very conformable to his doctrine. He entertained above a score of women with the revenues of his abbey; he had many country houses, which he returned into as many brothel-houses for himself and his friends, where he splendidly entertained them; and the excessive expence he was at in these places of pleasure, procured him the surname of *Liberal.* But he was not of the same humour towards his poor farmers, who laboured hard to make the best of his incomes, and to till his ground: for he was to them an insatiable exactor and oppressor, insomuch as they could scarcely get out of him some part of the money, which was of right due to them. These poor men finding themselves so ill-treated by him, resolved on a time to have their full revenge of him, and to play their master such a malicious trick, as he might have reason to remember ever after. They knew very well the archbishop was a sworn enemy to *monks* and *abbots*, and therefore questioned

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not, but they would find him in a disposition of favouring their enterprize. They went therefore, and complained to him of the scandalous life their abbot led, who was at that time three leagues distant from *Bononia*, at one of his country-houses, with three young women, who lie in the same bed with him every night. The archbishop having taken their information, lost no time, but the same evening, sent away all his marshalsea, composed of the *barigel* or provost, and threescore *sbirries* or serjeants, well armed, with order to seize the abbot, and the women that were with him. They arrived at the abbot's country-house but a moment after he was gone to bed. The farmers, who had got the word and the keys of all the doors, made the provost, with the *sbirries*, enter direct into the prelate's chamber; who, (you may easily imagine) was extremely surprized with this unwelcome and unlooked for visit. He desired to compound with the provost, and the *sbirries*, as he had often done before; and to persuade them the better, opened to them a purse full of gold; but their orders were too express to be so eluded, and the farmers, who out of pure revenge had solicited the seizing of their landlord, were in presence, and would not have failed to give in their full information concerning all that had passed, to the archbishop: so the *barigel* and *sbirries* (though people otherwise of base and covetous minds) upon this occasion shewed a forced resolution, not to be corrupted by the prelate's gold. Accordingly they took the abbot stark naked, as he was, without suffering him to put any thing upon him, besides a morning-gown; and in this equipage, having mounted him with his concubines, upon an old cart they found in a back-yard of the house, they tied them all together *back to back*, and thus led them in triumph in the most ignominious and reproachful manner in

to the city of *Bononia*, before the archbishop. It was midnight when they arrived, and the thick darkness of the night, favoured the poor abbot very much, sparing him a great deal of confusion, he would otherwise have been put to. The archbishop seeing him in this condition, fell a laughing, and by way of raillery, told him, *That since it was not lawful for him to take any cognizance of the affairs of monks, he was willing so far to honour them, as to make themselves the judges of their brethren;* and so ordered him with his wenches, at that very instant, to be carried in the same posture to S. *Michael in the Wood*, a monastery of the same order, about a cannon-shot distance from the city. It was about one of the clock in the morning, when all this goodly train arrived there. The *sbirries* knocked with that violence at the gates of the monastery, and made such a hollowing and shouting, that the abbot himself was fain to rise, and to go (accompanied by all his monks) to the great gate, where he met with a sight he had little dreamed of. He at first would not acknowledge the old abbot for his brother, upon pretext, forsooth, he was in his night-gown, without the habit of his order, and refused to receive him into the monastery; but the *sbirries* told him, *That if he was so resolved, they had no more to do, but to carry him back again to the archbishop, who would not fail to send for his habit, and send him back the next day at high-noon, in his prelates habit, and accompanied with his doxies, as now he was.* The abbot, perceiving that nothing could be gained this way, but a double reproach and confusion, commanded his friars, to go and unloose him, and so admitted him into the monastery, and let the women go. The penance imposed upon this abbot, for the affront and scandal he had given, was this; to abide fifteen days in

in the monastery without stirring abroad, which was the more easy for him to submit to, because the noise of his gallant story being spread through the whole city, he could not well any sooner, (without great shame and confusion) have appeared in the streets. The general, who might easily have deposed him from his charge of abbot, was of opinion, that for so light a fault as this, it was not worth the pains to proceed to so rigid a censure; and thus by a spirit of *charity*, which will not permit us to do that to another, which we would not have others do to us, especially when we find ourselves in the same circumstances, contented himself to make him exchange his abbey for some time, and entertained him at his own monastery of Mount *Olivet*.

I have given you a true and faithful relation of this history, as having been an eye-witness of part of it myself, because it happened during the time that I was in the monastery of S. *Michael in the Wood*. This accident gave me occasion of making a very pleasant discovery: for upon the *sbirries* entering into the monastery, a young religious being extremely affrighted, and apprehending lest they might make a narrow search into his chambers, where for three weeks time he had kept a young lass, came directly to me, and without much considering to whom he addressed himself, desired me, for the love of God, to hide his mistress in one of the most private chambers of my apartment, until the storm was over. But notwithstanding the extreme earnestness wherewith he solicited my consent, I did not think it fit to expose my own credit, to save his; and knowing withal how dangerous it is, to give a downright refusal to an *Italian*, and more especially to a monk; I in the mildest way I could, wished him to address himself to the apothecary of the abbey, who was a young

man of his own country, and was not so scrupulous in that point, as I was: the religious following my council, found the apothecary very ready to comply with his desire, and without making any difficulty, took her from him, and shut her up in one of the large presses of his shop, where she continued the rest of that night and the day following, in deadly fears. The young monk came to me the next morning, to excuse himself, and, (as it is likely) being troubled that he had given me the occasion, (by the discovery he had made to me) to believe, that the rest of his brethren were better than he; he took the freedom to discover to me several things, which till then, I was ignorant of, though I had now already continued six months amongst them: he told me, *That most of his brethren had their wenches, whom they kept in their chambers; and that they got them in from abroad from time to time, where they kept them, some a week, others a fortnight, or a month, according to the bargain they had made with them, and the ability of their purse: the abbot himself, was not ignorant of it; but prevaleut custom had reduced things to that pass amongst them, that he was fain to wink at all, and content himself with the presents they made him from time to time, for so doing: the most convenient time they had to get their wenches into the abbey, was about the beginning of the night; who, being come to a place, (according to the appointment) and precisely at such an hour: the monks, who had sent for them, brought the cowl and froeks, and [illegible] dressed them in their own habit; which, [illegible] these good friars entered all, without [illegible] into the monastery, in greater num[illegible] were gone out.*

I had, indeed, formerly often be[illegible] see [illegible] new figures of [illegible]

dormitories, which I had never seen before; and upon my enquiry, they had always made me believe, that they were some stranger-monks, that were come to lodge with them. Most of the religious have double rooms, whereby they have a great convenience of entertaining their women unperceived. The abbots make their profit of it, for a religious cannot have one of these double-chambers, without paying about an hundred *crowns* for it; and they are very well acquainted what it is designed for; but provided their religious only take care, to manage the matter so, that it may not come to the knowledge of seculars, they do not trouble themselves about it; neither doth this hinder them from being advanced to religious charges and employments, as much as if they were the holiest persons of the world.

I was acquainted at *Venice* with a regular *canon* of the abbey of S. *Saviour*, who was a young man of considerable learning, and who publicly taught philosophy. This man entertained the most infamous woman that was in the whole *city*, and who commonly served for a model to the limners of the academy. It was above a year that he had commerce with her, and his abbot gave him leave (every evening) during *Shrovetide*, to dress himself in masquerade, and to go to her lodging, and lead her thence to the *opera* or *comedy;* after which, he either brought her along with him to his *chamber*, in the monastery, or else passed the rest of the night with her at her own lodging. Now, as long as the matter was carried secretly, and without making any noise abroad, the abbot let the young monk take his swing, without giving him the least check or reproof for it: and having a particular kindness for him, he had already disposed all things in order to his being chosen abbot; when, by (ill luck for the young friar) a great number of artizans, who

ed in the same street with this courtizan, and who, probably, were displeased with his frequent visits to her, came and made their complaints to the monastery. The abbot having heard what they had to say, endeavoured what he could to sweeten them, and to excuse the monk; but all this did but incense them the more; and the next Sunday they gathered together in the *church*, near to the *chapel* where this young religious was wont to say mass, being resolved publicly to affront him, and to stop him from going to the altar; but the abbot having notice of it, sent them a piece of money, to make them desist from prosecuting their design; whereupon they retired without more ado: but the abbot perceiving the thing had taken wind, and was become the public talk of the *city*, thought it now high time to declare himself against the monks; and notwithstanding he had never before given him the least reproof for his high misdemeanour, he then wrote a letter to the father-general of the order, to deprive him of his salary; and about a fortnight after, there came an order, by which he was put out of his place of philosophy-lecturer, and sent away to a small monastery in the country. His *crime*, as far as I could search into the matter, was not for having entertained an infamous familiarity with a common prostitute, for this his superior had been well acquainted with a year ago; but his fault was, that he had been so unhappy, not to use that caution, so as to prevent its coming to public knowledge.

Italy, without contradiction, is accounted by all for a very corrupt and debauched country; and it is as sure, that the *priests* and *monks* (a sort of people, who have vowed *eternal chastity*) are the main occasion of being branded with this just reproach. The immense treasures they possess, are a stumbling stone unto them, and lou[illegible]

women, who are not ignorant of this, account themselves happy to be taken into their favour; it being a proverb in *Italy*, That *the wench of a priest or monk, can never want any thing.* The monks, besides the vow of *chastity*, have also taken upon them that of *poverty*, and accordingly ought never to possess any money of their own, but the avarice of the Popes have made them, in opposition to their vow, *proprietors.* To what purpose is it, to cover the institution of monastic orders, under the fair pretext of leading a more Christian life, than secular men do; when it is so apparent that the principal motive of their institution was the filling of the Pope's coffers, and the enriching of the prelates of the court of *Rome?* Let any one go and search as long as they please in cloisters for that spirit of *chastity*, *poverty*, and *obedience*, which in them is expressly professed, and after all, it is certain he will find there less of these, than in many secular families: but, sure it is, the Pope always find them ready to furnish him with what sum of money he stands in need of. The reason why the Popes institute so many new orders, is, because they are morally certain, they will not stand long, without falling, and departing from the rules and strictness of their institution, and that this will make way for their suppression, which cannot but be of vast advantage to them. It is not long since that the Pope suppressed three of them all at once, *viz.*, the Order of S. *Jerom*, that of the *Jesuits*, and that of the *Waters*, who likewise professed the rule of S. *Jerom.* The institution of this last Order was, a very pleasant one, and their *exit* was as ridiculous.

The first fathers of this Order being *inspired* (as they said) by the *Holy Ghost*, set themselves to distil waters and spirits, for the relief and service of poor sick people; and this their *distilling* of

 waters,

waters, was their character of distinction from others, and made them to be called *Fathers of the Waters*. A short time after, all this spirituality was reduced to a distilling of *beautifying waters* for the ladies, to make their hands white, and to preserve or augment their beauty. All these three Orders were become extremely rich and scandalous, when the Pope thought fit to suppress them, and to unite to the patrimony of the church all their possessions, giving their *churches* to other monks, who, at the bottom, were never a whit better than those they were taken from. This was, indeed, a very rude treatment from them, thus at once to divest them of all their revenues and incomes, and to force them, though sore against their will, to the practice of their vow of *poverty*, by reducing them to beggary, and the charitable benevolence of their friends and acquaintance. This is, that which makes the monks so much dread these suppressions; and the Popes, who are not ignorant of it, have nothing to do, but to threaten them therewith, whenever they have a mind to squeeze a considerable sum of money from them, which method, the late Pope *Innocent* the XIth. several times put in practice, as well against the Order of the canons regular, as several other congregations of the Order of S. *Bennett*.

The Order of *Mount Olivet* alone, at one time, made him a present of an hundred thousand crowns, to appease his anger; though it was not long before this, that another Pope had squeezed out of them, by the same artifice, the sum of 400,000 crowns; and, because for this reason it was impossible for them to raise that sum in ready money, within a short term was allotted them for it, he gave them leave to engage their funds, and mortgage the land belonging to their monastery; which they did accordingly, and making

making a dexterous use of this conjuncture, by striking whilst the iron was hot, they desired the Pope, whom they found at that time in a good humour, to give them leave to receive pensions from their kindred and relations, and of possessing land in propriety; which was in effect, to request, that notwithstanding their vow of *perpetual poverty;* it might be lawful for them, to be rich as any other seculars; and yet, as contradictory to their vow, as their request was, the Pope had the conscience to grant it, not only to them, but all other religious houses from whence he drew vast sums of money.

This is that which at this day makes the monks of *Italy* so full of money, and so well lined; for, besides the competent allowance they have for their subsistance from the monastery, they enjoy besides, considerable annual pensions from their families, which they spend at their pleasure, and to satisfy their lusts. I have known some of them, myself, that had no less than 1000*l.* sterling annual pension. The cardinals, perceiving that the Popes draw so considerable advantage from religious orders, are not wanting on their side, to make them as profitable to themselves, as they can; and, to this end, have found out the way of selling them their protection, to whom they allow an annual pension of three or 4,000 crowns; and this, for to obtain their favour and protection at the Court of *Rome,* upon occasion. The abbots of the congregation of *Mount Olivet,* finding that *Innocent* XIth. was resolved to suppress them, or, at least, made a shew to be so, they immediately had recourse to their protector, the Cardinal *Faschenetti;* they wrote a letter to him, wherein they declared, the great danger in which their congregation was, and earnestly entreated him to make use of all his credit with

the Pope, to stave off his fatal blow from them, and that in consideration of this seasonable service, they would augment his pension with the additional supplement of 1,000 crowns a year. I was present at that very time, when the cardinal opened this letter, and having read the promise they made him of 1,000 crowns augmentation, he cried out in a most tender and affectionate tone, *Ah, my dear congregation of Mount* Olivet, *I will never suffer it to be said, That so great an affront should happen unto thee, whilst I am thy protector:* and immediately thereupon, sent his secretary to the *Vatican;* to desire audience of the Pope, upon a matter that was extremely pressing, and of great importance. He had the good luck to be admitted to audience, at the very time when the act for suppressing the Order, was actually drawing up. His eminence cast himself at the Pope's feet, and told him weeping, *That if he did proceed in his resolution, it would certainly be his death.* The Pope, seeing him in this posture, lifted him up with a great deal of kindness, and the cardinal being his old friend, he promised, *That, for his sake, he would not suppress the order as he did intend;* and accordingly, we see it subsist until this day, though the monks of it be never a whit better than others, who have been suppressed.

It would be matter of astonishment, to see so many monasteries and convents suffered in *Italy*, full of a sort of people, who being under a vow of *obedience*, take a full swing of their own wills and inclinations, who, professing *poverty*, are more proprietors than men of the world, and who having consecrated their virginity to God, live more scandalous and debauched lives, than can be imagined; I say, this would be matter of astonishment, but that it is notorious, *That gold is more*

powerful

powerful at Rome, *than God himself.* Can any thing be conceived more infamous and licentious, than the lives of *monks.* He that doubts of it, needs only to go to *Rome, Venice,* or other principal cities of *Italy,* at *Shrovetide,* where he shall meet with nothing in the streets, but *monks* in masquerade, with their whores; all the theatres of *comedies* and *operas,* and all places of public shews and pastime, are thronged with them; yea, and they glory in these their excesses, which ought to be the greatest matter of shame and confusion to them.

I have been acquainted with a vast number of *monks,* who at *Shrovetide* seeing me, would draw near to me, and take off their vizards on purpose that I might take notice of them; they had each of them a wench by the hand, and the next morning in the sextry, before they went to the altar to say mass, all their discourse was about the debaucheries and licentious pranks they had played the day before, and also what they intended to play the same day, after their drudgery of saying mass was over. I call to mind a story one of these *monks* on a time told me, which, because it contains some rare extraordinary circumstance, I think worthy of my communicating to you. The history I am about to tell you, happened at *Venice.* This *monk* told me, that it was about three weeks since, that he had met with a very happy adventure, which was, that as he was going one evening to the play-house, he met with a lady of quality in masquerade, who, (as far as he could guess from all circumstances) was a noble *Venetian*; though at first, because she was alone, and because she rather addressed herself to him, than he to her, he took her to be a lady of pleasure; and in this persuasion, he desired her to go along with him to the play-house; the lady very readily accepted his offer, which being ended, he offered

her his service to lead her home; and she who desired nothing more, presently made a sign to the men (that waited for her coming at the water-side in her *gondola*, to come and take her in. The *monk* stepped in with her, and spied at the farther end of the boat, a gentleman in masquerade, who received him with a great deal of civility. The lady fearing lest the unlooked-for meeting with this gentleman, might affright or discompose her new gallant, bid him not to fear any harm; and commanded the boatmen to pull away. It was about one of the clock in the morning when they entered the *gondola*, and the moon being in the wane, and the heavens all covered with *clouds*, so that that nothing could be discerned by any light from thence; and the boatmen made so many turnings and windings through the *canals* of *Venice*, that it was impossible for him to discern in what part of the *city* he was. All that he could take notice of was, that the *gondola* stopped at a back gate of a stately palace, whence immediately many vizarded lackies came forth with flambeaus to light them in. He was conducted by a private pair of stairs into a spacious dining-room, where he met with several persons with vizards. The *mouk*, though he was a person of great *confidence* and *resolution*, confessed to me, that he was seized with an extreme terror, which received a considerable addition, after the lady was withdrawn, and he saw himself left all alone with the gentleman, and some domestics, all masked; for, as he assured me, he expected nothing less than death. But the gentleman, on the other had, used his utmost endeavours to assure and rid him of his fears. Soon after, the table was covered with a sumptuous *collation*, and he was served with several *sorts* of the choicest wines. After which, he was *shewed* to a rich bed, where he was bid to *lie down*. The *monk* seeing there would be danger for

for him, not to comply readily with every thing they would have him to do, gave a ready obedience to all their orders. He was no sooner got into bed, but the fire and all the tapers in the room were put out, and immediately after the lady entered, and came to bed to him, giving him a thousand assurances, that not the least hurt should happen to him, and therefore, wishing him to discard all fear. He was thus kept and served for a fortnight together, in the manner as I have just now related, without ever being able to discover where he was, or who any of the persons were that accompanied, or waited on him. All that he could guess from the lady's discourse was, *That because she could have no children by her husband, he had consented to avenge himself of some of his nearest relations, to whom he was unwilling to leave his estate after his death, that she might find out some expedient to have an heir; and that they had not judged any way more proper for their design, than to make use of a young and handsome* monk, *as he was, to obtain their desire.* Thus, after many civilities received, and a very kind and great entertainment (but withal, after having committed a great sin) he was sent away with the present of about fifty *guineas* value in gold; and having, in a dark night, put him into a *gondola*, after many turnings and windings, they landed him near the place, where they had taken him in; neither was it possible for him ever after, to make any further discovery about this matter. He himself, related to me this adventure, with such a transport of joy, (and this too, when he was upon the point of going up to the altar, to say mass) as made it evident, he would have been extremely satisfied, to find himself again in the same circumstances.

I have heard of another monk, who (in a much like

like case, met with a very different success; for having been brought by a lady of quality into her house, during her husband's absence, probably, with the same design of providing him with an heir, but, by mishap for him, her husband being unexpectedly returned, surprized the good friar, and took him napping; and having kept him close prisoner in a chamber for about a fortnight, till a certain holiday, on which a general procession was to be celebrated; which the gentleman knew was to pass by his door: as the *procession* was approaching, he caused his prisoner to be stripped stark naked, and after he had been soundly lashed by four of his lackies, just at the midst of the procession, as the Fathers *Carmelites* passed by, of whose Order this friar was, he turned him out of door, stark naked, with a written paper on his back, specifying his crime, and forced him thus to run through the *procession*. This gave a very great offence, and the Fathers *Carmelites*, who found themselves most outrageously affronted thereby, went and complained to the inquisition, pretending that the gentleman, who had thus horribly exposed one of their brotherhood, could be no other than an heretic, and a sworn enemy to all religious orders, whom he had so outrageously abused in the person of their brother; but, however, notwithstanding all their rage, the honest man made a shift to defend and justify his proceeding against the diabolical malice of these monks.

I could furnish you here with an infinite number of stories, concerning the amours and intrigues of *monks* and *priests*, if I were not persuaded, that it is the duty of every honest man, not to speak, but with great moderation of a vice, whereof the discovery is equally dangerous to him that makes it, and to those to whom it is made. And therefore, shall only tell you,

that

that I may cut short here, that I never, in my life, conversed with any one *monk* or *priest*, of the Church of *Rome*, for so long a time, as was sufficient to penetrate a little into their manner and course of life; but that I found at last, that they had secret commerce with women, or, which is worse, and what I would not willingly name, *viz.*, that they were addicted to the abominable sin of *S****y*. And yet, many of those were mere saints to outward appearance, all their discourse was of the *Blessed Virgin*, and of *purgatory;* and the only reason why I desired their friendship, was because, at first, I took them to be very good and honest men; but, some time after, I found, to my great regret, that I had been deceived by my too favourable opinion of them.

I was acquainted (during my stay at *Venice*) with one of them, that was the steward of a religious house. He was a man of the most promising physiognomy that could be; and I was much edified to see how modest and humble he was in his garb and behaviour. For, whereas, most of the *monks* of *Italy*, wear curious shining stuffs, fine hats, silk stockings, and neat shoes, he had nothing about him, but what was very plain and simple: he wore a great old hat, with a brim of a foot and an half broad, which flapped down over his ears, with a great *pater noster* of wood hanging down from his girdle; and, besides this, had an air and port, that breathed nothing but devotion; and his masses, which others have found a way to expedite in less than a quarter of an hour, always lasted an hour and an half. He was also a great lover of books, as being of some competent learning. These good qualities I observed in him, joined with some others that he professed, and the good report he had every where, though indeed acquired by his hypocrisy,

were

were the motives that engaged me, to endeavour an acquaintance with him; and I looked upon myself as very happy, in meeting with a great deal of facility in the executing of this my design. During a seven months conversation I had with him, I perceived nothing by him, but what was good and honest: yea, he seemed to have something of a spirit of *prophesy;* for, what he had publicly foretold of the raising of the siege of *Vienna*, and of the total defeat of the *Turkish* army, very particularly came to pass. It had been happy for him, could he as well have foreseen the ill-consequences, which the licentious and flagitious life he led in secret, would draw down upon him, in order to have prevented them. This good *monk* (for so he was as to all outward appearance, and whom I looked upon as a man come from heaven) was obliged, by a troublesome accident that happened to him, to discover to me all his wicked life; a lewd woman, whom he had kept for several years, was resolved at last to ruin his reputation; she being perfectly well acquainted, how great a lover this hypocritical monk was of vain-glory, she had already for some months threatened to expose him in his own colours to the world, in case he did not furnish her with the sum of money she demanded of him. She had already, by these menaces, drawn from him at twice an 100 crowns, and was now come for the third time, to demand the like sum, neither would he have mended himself a whit, by complying with her demand, because she would not have failed within a fortnight after to come with the same threats, *viz.*, *That she was resolved to declare, in presence of the prior of the convent, and all the religious, that he (through whose hands all the money of the convent passed) had not only ravished her daughter, but also abused one of her boys*, in the most abominable

manner

manner imaginable. The monk owned, that he had to do with the one and the other, and the mother too; but that he had not been the first; forasmuch as long before his acquaintance with them, they had been prostitutes, and that besides they had been well paid for it: that in the mean time, to put some stop to her impudence, he desired me to go and warn her seriously, *That if she would not be satisfied with the money he had already given her, he was resolved to get her murdered.* I was so far from offering him my service in this affair, that from that time forwards, I conceived the greatest horror and aversion for him, and took a firm resolution never to see him more. However, I had the curiosity before I took my last leave of him, to ask him, what was the reason why he went so strangely dressed, and such a slouching hat hanging over his ears; he who took such great pleasure in courting of women? He told me, that he had found the habit he wore, very advantageous and useful to him, that being an officer of the monastery, when he went to receive any rents, the persons concerned had the greater respect for him; and besides this, that it was also very beneficial to fill his own purse, which he shewed me how. *For as our* monasteries (said he) *are never without suits of law, every one knows what is the set price of an* assignation, *a* warrant, *a* contract, *an* acquittance, *and an hundred other formalities used in law. It is sufficient when I give in my accounts, that I have made use of so many* assignations, consultations, acquittances, &c. *which do amount to such a sum: all, or most of which, is my profit: for, sometimes, I have disbursed nothing at all for them. I go to the lawyers, the attorney, and notary, with my great slouching hat, and in a pitiful whining tone, I represent to the utmost of my power, the extreme poverty of our monastery,*

and

and that so effectually, as often to move them to compassion; and so they either take no money at all of me, or else content themselves with a very little; so that the money *of these formalities of law, comes into my own pocket, neither am I obliged to give an account thereof to my superiors, as being the fruit and product of my own industry. Whereas,* (said he) *should I present myself to these* men *of the law, with a little hat, and a neat habit, they would presently rally me with a* see here a company of good fat monks, who live at ease and pleasure, and have wherewith to pay well, and so they shall; *and accordingly would make me pay to the utmost rigour. And as for women,* (said he) *I am already assured, that though my person may not please them, yet my* money *will: and that as long as I am stored with that, I shall never fail of being welcome to them.*

This discourse made me conceive, that all those great flapping hats, those old and threadbare cowls, the long beards of the *capuchins*, and the high collars of the *Jesuits*, are no certain proof (as some suppose) that those who wear them are good and honest men. The knowledge also I have had of their disorders, has powerfully convinced me, that the sin of *uncleanness* is that which reigns most absolutely, and without controul amongst them; and that of all these vowers of *chastity*, there are but a very few, and may be, none at all, that observe it indeed, and in truth; for God will never afford his blessing to confidences, or rash vows.

For all that has been said, it will not be difficult to conceive, how the *Roman* clergy can make away with those vast revenues they are possessed of, this sin of the *flesh*, being one of those vices *that* requires great expences to maintain it. True *it is*, that *priests* and monks are not all of them

equally

equally rich; for, there be some of them, that have neither benefices nor pensions, and who, consequently, are not in a condition to spend as high as others, who yet spend proportionably to their incomes. I have known some of them who had nothing to live upon, but the money they received for their *masses*, who did almost starve themselves with hunger, to spare something to enable them to visit a w——e-house once a fortnight, or at least once a month. There are others of them who have such base and mean souls, that they learn handicrafts, and exercise them in private, to gain some money: yea, there be not wanting some of them who learn to make women's cloths, as *mantuas*, *stays*, and *petticoats*; that by this means they may have an occasion of freer access to them; some of them profess the art of *fortune-telling*, and some of them are downright *nicromancers*. Lastly, there be others who are not only base and mean, but also sacrilegious; for though (according to their principles) to celebrate more *masses* than one a day, be one of the greatest profanations a man can be guilty of, yet these *priests* and *monks*, who sacrifice all that is sacred and holy to their own interest, do easily get over this difficulty, and say sometimes three or four *masses* a day in several places.

Once on a holiday, I heard mass said very early in the morning in the Church of S. *Mark* at *Venice*, by a poor priest of my acquaintance; and having occasion the same morning to go to *Muran*, which is but a little league distant from *Venice*, as I passed through a church, I saw the same priest celebrating another *mass*. About two hours after, I was obliged to go to a place called *l' Judeka*, and there I again found the same priest saying *mass* in a convent of *nuns*. This *priest*, turning himself to the people at *dominus vobiscum*, perceived me, knowing he was disco-

vered, he became seized with such an excessive fear and restlessness, during the rest of the mass, that he scarcely knew or minded what he said, he left out some of the accustomed collects and benedictions, and after he had consecrated the cup, he forgot to lift it up on high for the people to worship it, according to custom. As soon as he had made an end of saying mass, he put off his habit with an extraordinary precipitance, and taking his hat and cloak, ran away without ever demanding his money for the mass he had said. I could easily have caused him to be seized; but knowing it to be a matter belonging to the inquisition, and having never had any liking for that tribunal, I would not concern myself with it. Besides, I knew that he was not the only man, that was guilty of this fault, but that many others committed the same every day. My Pen is weary of setting down all those infamous and scandalous actions; but yet, because there is no evil from whence some great good may not be drawn, I heartily wish, Sir, that from what I have here written, as well as in all my other LETTERS, you may, at least, derive this benefit, to be convinced, that the first argument which put me upon writing these LETTERS, and upon which you rely so much for your confirmation in the *Romish* religion, is a very poor, weak, and dangerous one, viz. *That it is impossible, that such a great number of* monks *and* priests, *who sit at the helm of your church, should be all of them in an error, and consequently, that they may be very safely relied upon.* This is one of those arguments we call *circulous vitiosus*, a *vicious* or *faulty circle.* The seculars repose themselves in matters of faith upon the *priests* and *monks;* and, if we divide the *priests* and *monks*, as they divide them at *Rome, viz.* into *priests* on this side, and on the other side the *alps;* we find that the latter rely on the

former who are *Italians*, and these again, repose themselves wholly on those at *Rome*, that it, upon that number of ecclesiastics that are abont the Pope, and who, in their opinion, pass for very great doctors. Now these again on the other hand, do not rely so much upon their own science or learning, which they know to be very mean, as upon the great number of *priests* and *seculars*, who believe them. This made one of their great preachers declare from the pulpit, *That it was an invincible argument to prove the truth of* transubstantiation, *because there was such a vast number of those who believed, in comparison of the inconsiderable number that denied it: that their* catholics *being twenty to one, were to be accounted as the strongest, so the truest.*

I shall not employ my time here to shew, how weak and frivolous those arguments are, that are drawn either from the number, or dignity of the persons that profess it. It shall suffice me, that I have exposed to your view the discovery I have made of the unfaithfulness and falseness of your pastors, and how much it is their outward interest to abuse you, and to deceive themselves whilst they impose upon you. For as they are well-pleased to be made use of by the *multitude*, as an argument to enforce their belief; so God suffers them to make the same *multitude*, an argument to confirm their own belief. If one blind man leads another, they must *both of them fall into the ditch;* and if one leads twenty, they must still undergo the same fate. It is a much surer way for us to rely upon something we know to be fixed and solid (as we know the Scripture to be, and to endeavour to penetrate the true sense thereof,) than to repose one's confidence upon men, who being blinded by their interests, or *passions*, may afterwards deceive us for company.

I shall conclude this account of my journey, or rather

rather the remarks I have made during my stay in *Italy*, with the recital of some small circumstances, which deserve to be taken notice of. From *Milan*, I took my journey, towards the Lake *de Como*, where I embarked to go to the *Valteline;* and from thence, I again passed over the Mountain *Splug*, where (in my way) I gave a visit to the curate of *Campodolcino*, my old acquaintance, who was a doctor of *Milan*. He was much surprized to see me there again, and especially when he undersood by me, that my intention was to take another journey through the country of the *Grisons* into *Switzerland*. He advised me very seriously to beware of the *heretics*, and to converse with them as little and as cautiously as might be. I told him, it would be a very difficult task to avoid their conversation in a country where they are every where mixed with the *Catholics*, or so much as to know and discern them. Whereupon he told me, that I might easily discern them by their manner of discourse; *For* (said he) *you shall not be a quarter of an hour in any of their company, but you shall hear these words coming from them;* the purity of the gospel; the liberty of the children of God; the written truth; the testimony of Jesus Christ, *and other like expressions, tending to exalt the Holy Scripture above the authority of the See of* Rome. But this notion the doctor gave me of *Protestants*, was so far from giving me an undervaluing conceit of them, that on the contrary, I took notice of something very pleasing and excellent in it, and which rendered them the more amiable in my eyes.

And as I was passing over the *Alps*, meditating on the description the doctor had given me of the *Protestants*, I conceived, that what was an objection to them as a crime, might very well be looked upon as an apology for them. Whilst my mind

was taken up with those thoughts, I perceived afar off, a company of little children, who came running towards me from a little hamlet, upon the mountain, to beg an alms of me. I observed that these children begged only in the name of *God*, and for the *love of Jesus Christ*, by which I knew them to be *Protestants*. And though I was not so well stored with money to be liberal to them, yet they were very thankful for the little I gave them, and returned peaceably to the village, having first bestowed a thousand blessings upon me. As I travelled forwards, and was coming down the mountain, I met with another small hamlet, from whence, also, came forth a company of children upon the same design as the former; but that form of begging was very different; for they entreated my charity for the *love of the Blessed Virgin*, of S. *Anthony* of *Padua*, and the *souls of purgatory*. Neither were they contented with the small gift I had bestowed upon the other children, but followed me with great importunity above a quarter of a league, repeating a great number of *ave maries*, and *prayers for the dead;* and after all, seeing they could get no more of me, they changed their prayers into a thousand curses, and took up stones which they flung at me. I perceived by this action, that these little Catholics were not so well taught and educated as the children of Protestants; and that the doctrine instilled into them, did not produce so good fruit, as the purity of the gospel did in others. In this manner I continued my journey through the country of the *Grisons*, and of the *Swizzers;* and without tying myself to observe the advice of the curate of *Campodolcino*, I indifferently conversed with the *Protestants* and *Catholics*.

I know it is a difficult thing for people of a different religion (though living under the same laws

laws and government, as the *Swizzes* are) perfectly to love one another. However, I observed, that the *Papists* speak with a great deal more of bitterness against the *Protestants*, than the Protestants did against them, though indeed these latter had much more reason so to do, for it was at the time when the persecution was carried on against the *Protestants*, with a great deal of fury. I was much edified with the example of several *French Protestants*, fled into *Switzerland*, who were so far from complaining of the miseries they had suffered, that they exhorted one another (with words of Holy Scriptures to bear patiently those further sufferings their exile might expose them to. Neither could they endure to hear, others speak ill of their persecutors, and testified themselves to desire nothing more, than that it would please God to *pardon* and *couvert* them. There was an old gentleman, who in my hearing, with a great deal of charity reproved a young *French* soldier for being transported into passion against the *French*; asking him, *Whether the reading of the Holy Bible, had taught him so to do?* The young man was dashed with this check, and desired him, to excuse a fault he had committed, by the regret he had, to see himself reduced to the condition of a soldier's life, for a poor subsistance, after having lost all his estate in *France*.

When I was in *Switzerland*, and so near to *Geneva*, I resolved to spend three or four days there. I was lodged at the house of a good widow, who was a very zealous Protestant, and by this occasion, found myself many times engaged, to dispute about matters of religion: and forasmuch as I was then maintaining a weak cause, I found the arguments put to me to be very strong, and though I did not immediately give up the *cudgels*, yet those I discoursed with, took notice of the moderation wherewith I gave my an-

swers

swers; which made one of the ministers who was then present, say, *That it were greatly to be wished, that all the priests of* Rome, *had the same command of their spirits; because, by this means,* truth *would have the better opportunity of discovering herself unto them; but that commonly, by their scornful and injurious expressions, they broke off all disputes as soon as they found themselves pinched with the evidence of truth.* The truth is, they behaved themselves towards me, with a great deal of kindness and civility, and after the dispute was over, a fine collation was dressed up, to which they invited me, desiring only of me (by a kind of secret reproach, which did not displease me, because I knew it to be just) that I would be pleased to make this reflection upon their carriage, that their spirit was not like that of the Papists: *For* (they say) Sir, *you know very well, that if we had disputed as much either in* France *or* Italy, *to maintain our faith, as you have done here to defend yours; we should have been abused, clapped up into prison, yea, and burnt alive; but as for us, we are so far from having any recourse to such barbarous and horrid means, that we do not so much as upon that account think the worse of you: neither shall you perceive any thing from us, but the kindest entertainment we are able to afford you.* I cannot but own, that I found in this their behaviour something of that spirit of *beneficence* and *sweetness*, wherewith *Jesus Christ*, and his first preachers of the faith, did convert such crouds of infidels and sinners. The idea whereof, has been ever since impressed on my mind, and put me upon applying myself to the reading of the writings of the *Protestants*, and to weigh their reasons with a more unbiassed temper, and having found them solid, and founded on the word of God, and the practice of the reformed churches, conform to those of the first

ages

ages of the church, God had been pleased to give me his grace, to dispose my will to embrace it, by adjuring all the errors of the Church of *Rome*, which I have, and utterly do renounce from my heart, and wish you, (in Christian charity) the same happiness, as being,

SIR,

Your most affectionate, &c.

FINIS.

George Pigott, Printer, 66, Old Street, London.

ERRATA.

12, l. 5, dele *of*
18, l. 23, dele *shall*
20, l. 4, there r. *their*
33. l. 1, Montsenis r. *Mont Cenis*
33, l. 11, this r. *their*
46, l. 7, state r. *sure*
53, l. 26, too r. *to*
55, l. 25, state r. *put*
58, l. 5, after the word *to* insert *the*
59, l. 22, ba r. *be*
60, l. 2, had r. *received*
62, l. 20, dele *of*
— l. 26, questinon r. *questi non*
65, l. 13, after the word *we* insert *do*
71, l. 29, its r. *his*
73, l. 13, expence r. *expences*
74, l. 36, or r. *at*
78, l. 26, pilgrimages r. *pilgrimage*
83, l. 19, become r. *came*
—, l. 35, spirits r. *spirit*
85, l. 37, them r. *him*
96, l. 4, to r. *in*
97, l. 1, hereat r. *here at*
98, l. 6, divertizing r. *amusing*
101, l. 21, to rights r. *direct*
103, l. 32, to r. *at*
104, l. 32, encompass r. *encompassed*
107, l. 24, betimes r. *early*
109, l. 20, after the word for r. *the*
122, l. 31, algier r. *algerine*
125, l. 3, on r. *a*
127, l. 5, theifish r. *thievish*
129, l. 9, after the word number r. *of*
130, l. 21, of r. *off*
131, l. 30, staves r. *slaves*
139, l. 36, dele *of*
141, l. 25, dele *for*
144, l. 27, divertize r. *divert*
160, l. 39, a made r. *made a*
167, l. 21, of r. *by*
175, l. 15, expenseful r. *expensive*
186, l. 9, joys r. *joy*
195, l. 19, dele *of*
196, l. 24, dele *in*
204, l. 31, hat r. *has*
210, l. 36, aggregate r. *aggregately*
213, l. 11 this r. *the following*
—, l. 34, ecleasiastic's r. *ecleasiastical*
230, l. 29, doleno r. *dolcino*
258, l. 15, dele *order*
260, l. 12, Il re de Caphani r. *Il ré de Caphani*
261, l. 13 ditto
280, l. 14, flower r. *flowers*
282, l. 31. their r. *her*
283, l. 1, after the word *ease* insert *her*
—, l. 30, or r. *to*
—, l. 31, supporting r. *supported*
330, l. 34, had r. *hand*