

much of their precious time do many throw away in sloth, empty follies, and even in sin! How many go off the stage of this world without having done anything of all those great duties for which they were born! who have lived so as to have been mere blanks in the creation, if the divine justice would allow us to give that name to what he punishes with everlasting torments! We have a great work upon our hands to form our hearts upon that of our divine original, our Blessed Redeemer: to expel the subtle poison of pride, vanity, and all inordinate self-love out of our affections, and put on the perfect heavenly spirit of meekness, patience, humility, charity, holy zeal, and devotion. Without this we can never belong to Christ. or to the company of the saints.

ST. JOHN FRANCIS REGIS, C.

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TRUE virtue or Christian perfection consists not in great or shining actions, but resides in the heart, and appears to great edification, though in the usual train of common and religious duties constantly performed with fidelity and fervour. Such a life has its trials, and often a severer martyrdom than that which stands the test of the flames. This we find in the life of the holy servant of God, John Francis Regis. He was born on the 31st of January, in 1597, at Foncouverte, a village in the diocese of Narbonne, in Languedoc. His parents, John Regis, who was descended from a younger branch of the noble house of Deplas in Rovergue, and Magdalen Darcis, daughter to the lord of Segur, were distinguished amongst the nobility of Lower Languedoc by their virtue. Their eldest son was killed in the siege of Villemur, in a sally made by the Huguenot garrison. Francis was one of the youngest brothers. At five years of age he fainted away hearing his mother speak of the horrible misfortune of being eternally damned; which discourse made a lasting impression on his tender heart. In his childhood he never discovered any inclination to the amusements of that age. The same disposition made him refuse at his school to join his companions in the innocent diversions of an age generally too eager for play. His first master was one of a morose, hasty temper, under whom this modest and

bashful child had much to suffer; all which he bore without the least complaint. The Jesuits having opened a public school at Beziers, he was one of the first whom the reputation of its professors drew to the new college. His gravity increased with his years, nor was he to be seen in the beautiful walks which were chiefly crowded by his school-fellows. Avaricious of his time, he scarcely allowed himself any for necessary relaxation. Sundays and holydays were a most precious time to him, and he divided them entirely between pious reading and devotions at home and in the church. He was often seen on those days retired in a chapel and bathed in tears in the presence of Jesus Christ, the tender object of his affections. His conduct made him for some time the subject of his young companions' scorn and railleries; which his constancy changed at last into veneration. He performed many exercises in honour of the Blessed Virgin, with a particular confidence in her patronage, especially after he was enrolled in a confraternity under her name erected in the Jesuit's College. He had a singular devotion to his good angel, and improved every escape from any danger into a motive of redoubling his fervour and gratitude towards God. By the influence of his holy example, and by his religious discourses, which were animated with a peculiar unction and divine fire, he inflamed many of his companions with the love of virtue, and reclaimed several from dangerous courses. Six of the most fervent associated themselves with him in the same lodgings, and formed a kind of regular seminary, looking upon him as their living rule, and honouring him as a saint and their master in a spiritual life.

In the eighteenth year of his age he was visited with a dangerous sickness, under which his patience and piety moved exceedingly all who came to see him. Soon after his recovery he made a spiritual retreat to deliberate on the choice of a state of life; and finding in his heart a strong impulse to devote himself to labour in procuring the salvation of souls in the Society of Jesus, and being confirmed by the advice of his confessor that this desire was a call of God, he earnestly begged to be admitted, and was readily received by F. Francis Suarez, provincial of the Jesuits, then at Beziers, upon his visitation of that college. The postulant entered his noviceship with great joy at

Toulouse, in the nineteenth year of his age, on the 8th of December, 1616. Here being no longer divided between study and prayer, he gave himself to so close a union with God as to seem to be never without attention to his presence. His punctual exactness and fervour in the minutest actions and duties, raised them all to a great value; and by the excellence and purity of his motives, they became steps to an eminent interior perfection. Here he laid the deep foundation of those virtues which formed his distinguishing character during his whole life, humility, contempt of the world, holy hatred of himself, charity to the poor, and love of God, and zeal for his glory. The meanest employs were his delight, such as the most humbling duties of a religious state, to wait at table, and cleanse the house: also to make the beds and dress the sores of the poorest and most loathsome patients in the hospital, where he considered Jesus Christ in his most afflicted members. He was as austere to himself as he was tender to others, which made his companions say, that he was his own eternal persecutor. He seemed never to do anything to indulge his senses, which he studied to curb and mortify. The spirit of prayer accompanied all his actions. The interior fire of his breast appeared in his looks. He was often seen at the foot of the altar without motion as in a kind of rapture; and he spoke of God with such a feeling unction, that he inspired all who heard him with his holy love, and excited the most tepid to fervour.

After two years of probation, he made his religious vows in 1618, and was then sent to Cahors to finish his rhetoric, and the following year to Tournon to perform his course of philosophy; but to preserve the fire of devotion in his heart under the dissipation of those studies he joined to them frequent visits of the blessed sacrament, pious reading, and set times of holy recollection, though he made even his studies a continuation of his commerce with God in a continual recourse to him by devout aspirations. Such was his fidelity in every action, that his superiors attested they never observed in him the least breach of any college duty; which procured him the name of the angel of the college. Desiring to form himself principally to the sacred function of teaching the poor the ways of salvation, he undertook, by his superior's consent, the charge of

instructing the menial servants, and the poor of the town of Tournon, to whom he distributed the alms of the college. On Sundays and holidays he preached in the adjacent villages, and summoned the children to catechism with a little bell. The little township of Andance having the happiness to fall under his particular care, it quite changed its face: the saint's zeal soon banished out of it drunkenness, licentiousness, and swearing, restored the frequent use of the sacraments, and established there first the confraternity of the blessed sacrament, the rules of which this holy man, then only two-and-twenty years old, but full of the spirit of devotion, drew up, and which were afterwards propagated to other places. He regulated families, composed differences, and reformed all manner of irregularities: such was the authority which his sanctity and holy prudence procured him.

Having finished his course of philosophy in 1621, he was sent to teach the schools of humanity at Billom, Auch, and Puy; in which employ he spared no application for the assistance of his scholars both in their studies, and in exciting them to virtue, loving them as a tender mother does her children, and being beloved and revered by them as a saint. He was particularly diligent in procuring them all relief in sickness, and by his prayers obtained the sudden recovery of one whose life was despaired of; but he was most sensible to their spiritual infirmities. Being informed of a grievous sin committed by one of them, he burst into a torrent of tears, and after a short recollection, he made, in the transport that had seized him, so pathetic a discourse to his scholars on the severity of God's judgments, that the terrors with which it struck their minds never forsook them their whole lives after, as several of them used to say. The edifying example, simplicity, humility, modesty, and penitential air of the master, was a most moving and continual sermon to them; and such was the powerful influence it had, that they were visibly distinguished from others by the regularity of their lives. To solicit the blessings of heaven for them he always spent some time at the foot of the altar before he entered the school, and implored the assistance of their angel guardians in their behalf. His union with God was perpetual; and from hence flowed his other virtues, particularly

his saintly exterior comportment. To animate himself in spirit, notwithstanding the fatigues of his employment, he added many other devotions to the daily hour's meditation and other prayers enjoined by the rules of the society. He often begged leave of the superior to make extraordinary communions, besides those that were regular in the house; and having obtained it, broke out in transports of joy, which testified his insatiable desire of, and the great comfort he received from that divine food. He prepared himself to receive it by private austerities and public humiliations, and by spending a great part of the night before in the church. On Sundays and holidays he continued to instruct the poor people with wonderful unction and fruit, and even in his familiar conversation turned all to some spiritual advantage. After he had taught the lower classes seven years, two at Billom, one at Auch, and four at Puy, he began the study of divinity at Toulouse, in 1628, in which, by his assiduity and the pregnancy of his wit, he made an uncommon progress; yet out of a fear of applause, he sought to make himself contemptible by an affected simplicity and pretended ignorance. In the vacation, at the time which the students spent in their country-house for the necessary relaxation of their mind, Regis withdrew into private places to converse with God almost the whole day; and in the night, after a short sleep, he arose and stole secretly into the domestic chapel, which a companion having discovered, and informed the superior thereof, he received this answer: "Interrupt not the sweet communications of that angel with God."

Notice being given him by his superiors in the beginning of the year 1630 to prepare himself for holy orders, he felt in his breast the struggle of the strongest sentiments of an humble terror, and a glowing zeal; but as he saw the will of God intimated in the order of his superiors, his fears were calmed, and he disposed himself for that sacrament, by retirement, austerities, prayer, and fervorous desires. He then longed for the happiness of approaching the altars, so that he promised his superior to say thirty masses for him, because he had hastened the time of his ordination. When ordained, he took time to prepare, by prayer and penance, to offer the divine sacrifice, and celebrated his first mass with the most tender devotion, and

in one continued torrent of tears; so that those who were present could not contain theirs, and, by the divine fire which sparkled in his countenance, thought him more like an angel than a man at the altar. The same year Toulouse being afflicted with a violent plague, Francis made pressing instances to obtain leave to serve the sick. In 1631, after the course of his studies was over, he made the third year of his novitiate, during which he was obliged to go to Foncouverte to settle some family affairs, where he spent his time in visiting the poor and sick, catechising the children every morning, and preaching to the people twice a day. His begging for the poor, going through the streets followed by crowds of them and children, and carrying upon his shoulders a fagot, a straw bed, or such like things for the necessitous, drew on him many insults, once from the very soldiers, and bitter remonstrances from his brothers and other friends; but he rejoiced in the humiliations of the cross, and answered that they became a minister of the gospel which had been established by them. Their contempt of him was at last converted into admiration, and every one discerned in his actions a divine wisdom and zeal which differs from worldly prudence, and rejoices with David, if its simplicity appear contemptible to men. He lived amongst his kindred as one truly dead to the world: not like those religious persons, who, wanting the spirit of their vocation, seek earthly comforts among them. Having composed the differences of his relations, and edified them by his humility and heavenly life, he was ordered to go to the college of Pamiers, to supply the place of a master who had fallen sick. In the meantime his superiors, from the experience they had of his vocation and talents for an apostolic life, resolved to apply him solely to the missions; in which he accordingly spent the last ten years of his life, beginning them in Languedoc, continuing them through the Vivarez, and ending them with his life in the Velay, of which Le Puy is the capital. The summer he employed in cities and towns, as the husbandmen then were taken up with their tillage; but the winter seasons he consecrated to the villages and the country.

F. Regis entered upon his apostolical course at Montpellier in 1631, arriving there in the beginning of summer; and immediately opening his mission by instructing the children and

preaching to the people upon Sundays and holidays in the church of the college. His discourses were plain and familiar; after a clear exposition of the Christian truth, which he had taken for his subject, he closed them with moral and pathetic exhortations; he delivered them with such vehemency that sometimes his voice and strength failed him; and with such unction that both preacher and audience often were dissolved in tears, and the most hardened left the church with hearts full of compunction. He was always resorted to by a numberless audience of all ranks, though principally of the poor. A famous preacher was astonished to see how his catechisms were admired, and the great conversions they effected, whilst elegant sermons had so few to hear them, and produced so little fruit. The reason was, the word of God became a two-edged sword in the mouth of Regis, who spoke it from a heart full of the spirit of God, whereas it was lost under the pomp of an affected rhetoric. The saint never refused himself to the rich, but he used to say they would never want confessors, and that the poor destitute part of Christ's flock were his share and his delight. He thought that he ought to live only for them. He spent usually the whole morning in the confessional, at the altar, or in the pulpit, the afternoon he devoted to the hospitals and prisons, sometimes forgetting his meals; having, as he once said, no leisure to think of them. He begged from door to door for the poor; procured them physicians and all necessities when sick, and dressed himself their most loathsome sores. He was seen loaded with bundles of straw for them; and when laughed at by the children, and told that this made him ridiculous, he answered: "With all my heart: we receive a double advantage when we purchase a brother's relief with our own disgrace." He established an association of thirty gentlewomen to procure assistance for the prisoners. He converted several Huguenots, and many lewd women; and when told the repentance of these latter is seldom sincere, he answered: "If my labours hinder one sin they will be well bestowed."

Towards winter he went to Sommiers, the capital of Languedoc, twelve miles from Montpellier, and with incredible labour declaring war against vice and extreme ignorance, saw his

endeavours crowned with the most surprising success over all that country, penetrating into the most inaccessible places, and deterred by no rigours of weather, living chiefly on bread and water, taking sometimes a little milk ; always abstaining from fish, flesh, eggs, and wine ; allowing himself very little rest at night on some hard bench or floor, and wearing a hair shirt. With a crucifix in his hand, he boldly stopped a troop of enraged soldiers from plundering a church ; and another time demanded and obtained of a Calvinist officer the restitution of a poor man's goods which had been plundered, without mentioning the high indignities and ill treatment he had received from the soldiers, to the commander's great astonishment. The Vivarez had been for fifty years the centre of Calvinism in France, and the seat of horrible wars and desolation. The pious bishop of Viviers, in 1633, by earnest entreaties drew Regis into his diocess, received him with great veneration, and took him with him in his visitation, during which the father made a most successful mission over that whole diocess. The Count de la Mothe Brion, who had lived as a wise man of the world, was so moved with the unction of the holy man's sermons, as entirely to devote himself to fasting, prayer, and alms. This nobleman, by his zeal and charities, very much contributed to assist the saint in his holy enterprises ; in which he was seconded by another gentleman, named De la Suchere, who had formerly been the saint's scholar. At Puy, Regis undertook the reformation of many negligent pastors, brought many lewd women, and some the most obstinate and abandoned, to become patterns of fervour among the penitents, and converted a Calvinist lady of great reputation at Usez. About that time God permitted a storm to be raised against his servant for his trial ; for amidst these glorious successes he was accused loudly as a disturber of the peace of families by his indiscreet zeal, and as a violent man, who spared no one in his invectives and satires. The bishop defended him, till wearied out with repeated complaints, he wrote to his superior to recal him, and sending for the saint, gave him a severe reprimand ; adding that he found himself under the necessity of dismissing him. Regis, who had all along neglected to take any measures for his own justification, answered him with such humility, and with

such an unfeigned love of humiliations and the cross, that the prelate was charmed with his virtue; and being undeceived by others in regard to him, he praised him in public, and continued him in his employ, till the beginning of the year 1634; when the missionary was ordered by his superiors to repair to Puy, but went loaded with letters full of the highest commendations of his virtue and prudence from the good bishop.

The saint wrote earnestly to the general of the society, desiring to be employed on a mission to the barbarous Hurons and Iroquois in Canada, and received a favourable answer; but at the request of Count de la Mothe, he returned early the next year to the diocese of Viviers, to labour in the conversion of Calvinists, and in the instruction of the ignorant at Cheylard, and on the other estates of that gentleman. It is incredible how much the apostolic man underwent in this rough country, in the highest mountains, in which he was once locked up three weeks by the snows, lying on the bare ground, eating only black bread, and drinking water, with the addition of astonishing voluntary mortifications, fasts, disciplines to blood, and hair shirts. The count was so edified, and so moved with the inexpressible fruits of his labours, that he founded a perpetual mission for two Jesuits at Cheylard, giving to it a principal of sixteen thousand livres, and his fine house there for their residence. Regis made his next mission at Privas with equal fruit, and thence was called by the bishop of Valence to St. Aggreve, a mountainous savage place, the nest of heresy in his diocese. Amongst his heroic actions and virtues here, it is recorded, that one Sunday going into an inn to stop the excesses committed by lewd company assembled in it, he received from one a box on the ear, without any other reply than this: "I thank you; if you knew me you would judge that I deserve much more." Which meekness overcame their obstinacy. After three months' labours in this neighbourhood, by the same bishop's orders he repaired to Saint André des Fangas, and was from thence recalled to Marlihes in the Vivarez, about the end of the year 1635. In the first of these two places, a boy falling from the top of a high pair of stairs to the bottom near the holy man, then at his prayer in a corner, was found without hurt; in the latter, a woman who would take his tattered cloak to mend, keeping two rags as re-

licas, by applying them to two of her children, cured one of a fever, the other of a formed dropsy. The curate of Marlhes, in a deposition upon oath, for the process of the canonization of the servant of God, gave this testimony of him: "He was indefatigable, and employed both night and day in his sacred functions. He was under the bitterest affliction whenever he was informed that God had been offended. Then he forgot his natural meekness, and appearing transported with holy anger, he with a voice of thunder deterred the most resolute libertines. He would have sacrificed a thousand lives to prevent one sin. A word from him sufficed to inflame the coldest hearts, and to soften the hardest. After the mission, I knew not my own parishioners, so much did I find them reformed. No violence of colds, no snows blocking up all passages, no mountains, or torrents swelled by rains, could be an obstacle to his zeal. His ardour communicated an intrepidity to others; for when he went to any place, innumerable troops followed, and met him through all sorts of difficulties and dangers. I have seen him in the most rigorous season stop in the middle of a forest, to content the crowds, desirous to hear him speak concerning salvation. I have seen him at the top of a mountain, raised on a heap of snow, hardened by the frost, preach and instruct the whole day, and after that spend the whole night in hearing confessions." Winter being over he returned to Puy about the end of April, in 1636, testifying that he found his strength and courage not abated, but increased by his labours. He met at the college here his general's refusal of the mission of Canada, which frustrated his hopes of martyrdom. This refusal he imputed to his sins.

The four remaining years of his life were taken up in missions in the Velay, a mountainous country, the winters in the villages, the summers in Puy, the bishop of which city made use of his counsels and ministry to reform his flock. He preached and catechised at Puy, first in the Jesuits' church; but this being too little he removed to that of St. Peter Le Monstiers, belonging to the Benedictines. His discourses were without art, but clear to the meanest capacities, and delivered with that emotion of heart, and so moving a tone of voice, that he seemed transported by a divine fire above himself; and all who heard

him declared, that " Francis preached the word of God as it is in itself ; whereas others seemed, in comparison of him, to preach themselves." His audience usually consisted of four or five thousand. His provincial in his visitation, hearing him, wept during the whole sermon. He formed an association of virtuous ladies to relieve the poor, and another in favour of the prisoners ; for both which incredible funds were raised, and in times of need God miraculously multiplied the corn he had stored up, three several times ; of which verbal processes were drawn up, and juridical informations taken before ecclesiastical and secular judges ; and these miracles were confirmed by fourteen credible witnesses in the acts of his canonization.

His constant readiness and extreme diligence to run to the sick, and his happy success in assisting them in spirituals, were recompensed by several cures effected on the spot by his prayers, the unexceptionable relation of which may be read at length in F. Daubenton's History of his life.(1) Nor were the conversions of many sinners less miraculous. Amongst these, a certain voluptuous rich merchant had long endeavoured to blacken the saint's reputation by his slanders ; who in return bought of him all he wanted for his poor. Having softened him to a more tractable temper by these and other good offices, he laid hold of a favourable opportunity of representing to him what could be the end of his pains, and the fruit of all his riches which death must soon bereave him of ; the man was struck, and having revolved in his mind all night the reflections the words of the man of God raised in him, came the next day to lay open the agitation of his soul to him. The saint having for some time continued to excite in him still livelier apprehensions of the divine judgments, and conducted him through sentiments of hope and divine love to the dispositions of a perfect penitent, he heard his general confession, which the other made with such a flood of tears that the confessor judged the greatness of his contrition might require a smaller penance. The penitent asked him why he had so much spared his weakness. The zealous pastor answered that he took upon himself to discharge the rest of his debt ; which mildness added still more to the fervour of this repenting sinner. His meekness and patience made a conquest

of those souls which were so hardened as to be able to resist his zeal. A young man enraged that the saint had converted, and drawn from him the object of his impure passion, resolved to kill him. The man of God discovered by a divine sight his wicked intention, and said to him: "Dear brother, why do you bear this ill-will to one that would hazard his life to procure you the greatest of blessings, eternal salvation?" The sinner overcome by his sweetness, fell at his feet, begged his pardon, and became a sincere convert. Three other young noblemen, on a like occasion, resolved revenge. Regis met them with courage, saying to them: "You come with a design upon my life. What concerns me is not death, which is the object of my wishes: but the state of damnation that you are in, and regard so little." The libertines stood as if stunned: Regis embracing them with the tenderness of a parent, induced them to repent; and they made their confessions to him, and led regular lives till their deaths. Addressing drunkards and other sinners, with his eyes all on fire with zeal, he often by one moving sentence reclaimed them from their disorders. When he had received a blow on the cheek, the magistrates could not prevail upon him to denounce the delinquent; but the offender moved by his charity, became of his own accord his sincere penitent.

The servant of God was extremely solicitous in removing all occasions of sin, and preventing the promiscuous company of young men and women. He converted many prostitutes with the help of charitable contributions, founded a retreat to secure the virtue of such penitents, till his rector fearing that house could not be maintained, forbid him to intermeddle in it; he moreover gave him many severe reprimands even in public, accused his zeal as too forward, and forbid him to hear confessions, instruct the poor, or visit the sick, only on certain days and at appointed times. Regis suffered many humiliations and mortifications under this superior, without even allowing any one to speak in his justification; till the succeeding rector, convinced of his innocence and prudence, restored to him the care of the refuge, and the whole field of his former labours. His zeal exposed him often to occasions of martyrdom, and to open insults; and once he was cruelly beaten. He was also censured bitterly by many, and even by several of his own brethren; but

his rector undertook his defence, and God crowned his labours with incredible success; in which he was seconded by the great vicar Peter le Blanc, his constant friend, without whose council he undertook nothing. This is the summary of his transactions at Puy during the four last summers of his missions: the winters he employed in labouring in the country, the most abandoned part of which was his first care and chief delight.

The country inhabitants of the Velay in some parts, especially in the mountains were very rustic, and perfectly savage: Calvinism had insinuated itself, and ignorance and the grossest vices prevailed in many of the wilder places. The boroughs and villages are situated in the diocese of Puy, Vienne, Valence, and Viviers. The saint's first mission amongst them was in the beginning of the year 1636, to Fay and the neighbouring places. Hugh Sourdon, LL.D. engaged him to lodge in his house. The man of God finding his kind host's son Claudius Sourdon, aged fourteen years, entirely deprived of all sight for the six months past, from a defluxion upon his eyes, with excessive pain, he exhorted him to confidence in God, and retired into a neighbouring room to prayer with some of the family, which he had not ended when the child recovered his sight, and distinguished every body in the assembly which then met to hear the first catechistical instruction; and from that time never felt any more either of that pain or defluxion, as he attested before the bishops of Puy and Valence, being then fourscore years old. Upon this, another man forty years of age, who had been blind eight years, was brought to the saint, who making the sign of the cross over him, immediately restored his sight. By the fame of these two miracles, this mission was opened with wonderful concourse and fruit. His conduct in it is thus described by Claudius Sourdon with whom he lodged, in a juridical deposition that grave person gave before two bishops: "His whole behaviour breathed sanctity. Men could neither see nor hear him without being inflamed with the love of God. He celebrated the divine mysteries with such devotion that he seemed like an angel at the altar. I have observed him in familiar conversation become silent and recollected, and all on fire: then speaking of God with a fervour and rapidity that proved his heart to be carried away with an impulse from heaven. He

pronounced his popular instructions with an unction which penetrated his hearers. He spent not only the day, but also a considerable part of the night in hearing confessions, and violence was necessary to oblige him to take some nourishment. He never complained of fatigue, or of the disagreeable behaviour of any who thronged to him. After he had laboured to sanctify the inhabitants of Fay, he set out early every morning into the country amidst the forests and mountains. When storms, rains, snows, or floods made the roads seem impassable to others, nothing ever stopped or daunted him. He went the whole day from cottage to cottage, and fasting, unless my mother could prevail with him to take an apple in his pocket. We never saw him again till night, and then he resumed his ordinary functions, unwearying himself only by fresh labours. The Calvinists were as forward as the Catholics in following him every where. In the beginning of summer in 1637, he returned to his labours at Puy; and in November set out to pass his winter at Marlhes, being called on a second mission thither by the pressing instances of James André the zealous curate. His road was horrible, sometimes through briers and thorns, sometimes over vallies filled with snow, and rocks covered with ice. In climbing one of the highest, his hold by a bush failed him and he broke his leg by a fall; yet he cheerfully got over six miles further with the help of a stick, and the support of his companion. Arriving at Marlhes, instead of sending for a surgeon, he went directly to the church where multitudes were waiting for him, and heard confessions for several hours; till the curate, informed of his accident by his companion, drew him out to have his leg examined, when it was found perfectly sound. To his immense labours he added such astonishing austerities, that, upon remonstrances, his rector at Puy sent him a command to obey the curate of Marlhes in all that belonged to his refreshment and the care of his health. The saint from that time submitted most exactly to the good priest's rules in that regard, how troublesome soever he found his indulgence. This curate declared in his deposition, that narrowly observing the man of God at all times, he saw him in the night one while on his knees, bowed to the ground bathed in tears; then standing with his eyes lifted up to heaven, and absorpt in contemplation.

He often heard him fetch deep sighs, and cry out in transports of love:—"What in the world can engage my heart, besides thee, my God?"

He frequently beheld him in prayer all on fire, like a seraphim, motionless for many hours. The same gentleman adds, that he saw the holy man by his blessing restore a countryman's arm, put out of joint by a fall near his house as he was crowding to the saint, on a steep descent; and that by the sign of the cross he dispossessed an Energumen; who redoubled his contortions and howlings when brought to his presence, but was immediately calmed by the impression of that sign, and continued ever after unmolested. He had been possessed by the evil spirit eight years, and been often exorcised without success. In the village of St. Bonnet le Froid, the curate found the saint in the night praying at the church door on his knees and bare-headed; and not being able to draw him from his divine conferences, he gave him the key of the church, in which he observed that he afterwards passed whole nights, notwithstanding the intolerable cold. To the remonstrance of the curate of Vourcy concerning the care of his health, the saint said in confidence, that since God had visibly testified his goodness by healing his leg broken in his journey to Marlhes, he owed his health to him by a fresh title, and put it in his hands. In the year 1638 from Puy his winter mission was to Montregard; where upon his arrival he prayed at the church door till he was quite covered with snow, and was found by passengers in that condition. He no where reaped a greater harvest of souls than in this place; and converted, besides many other Calvinists, the lady Louisa de Romezino, a young widow of great reputation as well as quality. He gained her esteem in his visits; then cleared her difficulties, principally in regard of the blessed eucharist; and lastly removed the obstacles of her heart from the fear of shame for leaving her party. This lady gave the most ample deposition of the admirable sanctity of the servant of God, in a continual stream of tears during four hours, to the bishops of Puy, and Valence, published in his life. The summer in 1639 recalled the missionary to Puy, and the end of the next autumn he went out to his country harvest in the places near Montregard, as Issenjaux, Chambon, Monistrol. About the end of January in 1640 he

repaired to Montfaucon, a little town twenty-one miles from Puy. His successes were wonderful in the ample field which his zeal found here, till interrupted by the plague which broke out in that place. Regis devoted himself to the service of the infected, and was so fearless as to carry the abandoned sick on his back to the hospital, and to perform the most laborious offices to assist all corporally and spiritually. His charity excited that of the ecclesiastics of the place. The curate, however, fearing his death in the imminent dangers to which he exposed himself obliged him to leave the town, which the saint did with great reluctance and many tears. The contagion soon after ceasing, he returned to resume his mission there, but was recalled to Puy by the rector to supply the place of a master there. This interruption was so great a grief to him that he begged and obtained from the general of the Society leave to follow his missions, for which the bishop of Puy had conferred on him his full power. He moreover formed a design for the establishment of a perpetual mission for those provinces, to be settled in the college of Puy or Tournon, which project was highly approved by his superiors and by the general. But to give some idea of the life of this great servant of God, it is necessary to draw, if a full delineation is impossible, at least a faint sketch of his heroic virtues.

His true love of God appeared in the constant union of his soul with the Divine Spirit: often a pious word or song would throw him into a rapture: frequently he could not contain the transports of his heart in company or in the streets: his eyes and inflamed countenance often discovered the strong emotions of his soul. His most familiar aspiration was that of the royal prophet,—“What can I desire in heaven, or love on earth, besides thee my God?” which he repeated with seraphic ardours. He vehemently desired to procure God’s greatest honour in all things, saying,—“We are created by God, and for him alone; and must direct all things to his glory.” His love of the cross, and his thirst of sufferings and humiliations was insatiable, and he was accustomed to say, that to suffer for God deserved not the name of suffering, so light is it made by love, and the sweet unction of grace. When persecuted and beaten, he was heard to cry out: “O my God! that I could suffer still more for thy

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holy name!" He found true pleasure in hunger, cold, and all manner of hardships, saying once to his companions: "I own that life would be intolerable if I had nothing to suffer for Jesus Christ: it is my only comfort in this world." He never excused or justified himself if reprehended, and never answered any calumny, even though carried to his superiors. He seemed equally insensible to praises and insults, receiving cheerfully all ill-treatment in silence, as his due. Martyrdom was his perpetual desire, though he sincerely esteemed himself unworthy of such an honour. He called injuries and scorn his due, and was ingenious to court humiliations and disgraces, being accustomed to say, that if justice were done him, he ought to be trodden under foot by all men. When one presented a drawn sword threatening to kill him, he said: "I desire nothing more ardently than to die for Jesus Christ." He spared nothing to prevent sin, and once said with tears to an obstinate sinner: "Ah, I beg of you rather to despatch me with your sword than to offend the Divine Majesty." His confidence in the safeguard of providence made him fear no harm from men, and rendered him intrepid in the midst of dangers, the sight of which often shook his companion with horror. He would walk all night, and often on the edge of precipices, or over mountains covered with snow, and cross impetuous torrents, only not to disappoint some poor people a few hours. His devotion to the blessed eucharist made him spend much of his time in prayer before the blessed sacrament, saying mass whatever it cost him to find an opportunity. He called the holy eucharist his refuge, his comfort, and his delight. Under all censures and crosses he preserved the same evenness of mind, so effectually had the love of God destroyed in his heart all human earthly affections. He allowed himself only three hours a night for sleep; and often not above one. He never touched flesh, fish, eggs, or wine; and the bare ground or boards were his bed. His chamber was the most inconvenient room he could choose, and his habit all over patches; nor would he wear a new cassock. His obedience was so perfect, that with regard to it he looked upon himself as a dead body without any motion or feeling of his own, nor had he any other rule of his will than that of his superiors. He had the greatest respect for, and an entire dependence on the bishops

in whose diocesses he was employed and their vicars-general. His purity was so perfect, that his very presence inspired a love of that virtue; nor durst calumny itself charge him with the least reproach on that head. It is assured upon the testimonies of those who had the most perfect knowledge of his interior, that he seemed exempt from all sting of the flesh; so perfectly had he subdued his domestic enemy by assiduous mortification, a watchful humility, and dread of all occasions of temptations. The same vouchers assure us, they were persuaded that he never had offended God by any mortal sin in his whole life.

He resumed the mission of Montfaucon in the beginning of autumn in the year 1640. The ardour he found in the people to profit by his labours redoubled his fervour in serving them. After he had sanctified the whole district of Montfaucon, Rocoulles, and Veirnes, he gave notice for opening a mission at La Louvese about the end of Advent. But understanding by a divine light that his death was near at hand, he went back to Puy to make a retreat in order to prepare himself for it. After three days spent in the strictest solitude he made a general confession, and expressed in the warmest and tenderest sentiments, an impatient desire to possess God. Eternity was the sole object of his wishes. He confidently told some of his friends in open terms, and others by mysterious expressions which became clear by the event, that he should never return from that mission. The inclemency of the weather could not detain him; he left Puy on the 22nd of December to reach La Louvese the day following, to be ready there for Christmas-eve; he suffered much in crossing the mountains and the waters, and missed his way on the second day. Overtaken by night in the woods and quite spent, he was forced to lie in a ruinous house open on all sides, near the village of Veirines, on the ground exposed to a piercing wind. Here, after a sudden sweat succeeded by a cold fit, he was seized by a pleurisy, which increasing, his pain grew excessive. This decayed house represented to him the hardships our new-born Saviour suffered in the stable of Bethlehem, on which he made the most tender reflections. Next morning he crawled to La Louvese, went straight to the church, and opened the mission by a discourse in which his zeal recruited his strength and courage. He

preached thrice on Christmas day, and thrice on St. Stephen's spending the rest of these three days in the confessional. After the third sermon on St. Stephen's day, when he went to hear confessions, he swooned away twice. The physicians found his case past recovery. The holy man repeated the general confession he had made eight days before, then desired the holy viaticum and extreme unction, which he received like a person all on fire with the love of God. He refused broth, begging to be nourished like the poor with a little milk, and desired to be left alone. Under his violent pains his countenance was always serene, and he kissed incessantly a crucifix which he held in his hand. Nothing was heard from him but tender and warm aspirations, and longing desires of his heavenly country. He asked to be laid in a stable that he might resemble his new-born Saviour laid on straw; but was answered, that his weakness would not suffer it. He thanked God for the favour of suffering him to die in the midst of the poor. All the 31st day of December he continued in a perfect tranquillity with his eyes tenderly fixed on Jesus crucified, who alone took up his thoughts. At evening in a transport he said to his companion: "What a happiness! how contented I die! I see Jesus and Mary, who come to conduct me to the mansions of bliss." A moment after he joined his hands; then lifting up his eyes to heaven he said: "Jesus my Saviour, to thee I recommend, and into thy hands I commit my soul." With which words he calmly expired towards midnight, on the last day of the year 1640, being forty-three years of age, whereof he had lived twenty-six in the society. Twenty-two curates with incredible crowds of people assisted at his funeral. He was interred on the 2nd of January near the altar at La Louvese.

The universal grief for his loss was succeeded by the highest veneration; and innumerable flocks of pilgrims visited his tomb; and a poor private religious man, who only breathed abjection, who placed all his satisfaction in being despised, and lay dead on the top of a frightful mountain, was on a sudden crowned with glory, and his ashes on earth honoured by continual miracles. La Louvese, then only a chapel of ease under the curate of Veirines, is become the parish church, and much enriched. Twenty-two archbishops and bishops of Languedoc

wrote to Pope Clement XI. in these words: "We are witnesses, that before the tomb of F. John Francis Regis, the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak; and the fame of these surprising wonders is spread over all nations." Fourteen eye-witnesses attested upon oath the miraculous and sudden recovery of Magdalen Arnauld, a nun at Puy, sick of a dropsy and palsy, and in her agony, the physicians declaring that she could not live half an hour, a relic of the servant of God was put into her hands, and applying it to her stomach, she offered a fervent prayer to him, and that moment she found herself perfectly cured, and her monstrous swelling dispersed. This happened in 1656. A burgher of Puy was healed of a great rupture formed in three places; his cure was sudden and entire, as Physicians, surgeons, and many other witnesses attest. No less sudden were the cures of two blind women; of a young man of the king's evil; of many paralytic, crooked children, and others under all sorts of distempers; several of them being persons of rank, and of different provinces; and the facts being all attested by many witnesses, and by the persons themselves. The holy see requires incontestable proofs of miracles to which it gives a sanction; and so strict is this inquiry, that F. Daubenton informs us, that an English Protestant gentleman being at Rome, and seeing the process of several miracles, said they were incontestable, if the church of Rome approved of none but such; but was much surprised at the scrupulosity of this scrutiny when told, that not one of all those had been allowed by the Congregation of Rites to have been sufficiently proved. After the most severe juridical examination of the heroic virtues and evident miracles of St. John Francis Regis, he was beatified by Clement XI. in 1716, and canonized by Clement XII. in 1737,(1) at the request of the kings Lewis XV. of France, and Philip V. of Spain, and of the French clergy assembled at Paris in 1735. His festival was appointed to be kept on the 16th of this month.

The saints make it their constant and earnest endeavour to make every step they take an advance in the path of virtue; an addition to the number of their good actions, whose sum total will render their happiness the more exalted and complete.

(1) Bullar. Roman. t. 15. p. 127.

How happy is the life of that faithful servant of God, whose years, days, and moments, whether in public or private, are all filled with good works, so many fruitful seeds of a glorious eternity! whose desires, thoughts, and actions are all directed to the honour of God, and his own advancement in goodness! Viewed with such a life in whatever station, how mean and contemptible do the idle amusements of the great ones of the world appear! How trifling that uninterrupted succession of serious folly or empty pleasures which engages the greater part of mankind! How many weary themselves in restless toils of vanity, or often put their invention to the rack to find out amusements for passing the day! How many make their whole lives one barren circle, to which they seem enchanted, going round and round in a dull repetition of the same trifles! who forget they have every moment the affair of an eternity upon their hands, and neglect the only real concern of life. After all their turmoils they find their hands empty, and feel their hearts filled only with fears, remorse, and bitterness, instead of holy peace and joy, with the riches of eternity in store. See the life of St. John Francis Regis written in French by F. Daubenton, done into English by F. Corn, M—Y S—I. Also his life compiled by F. Croisset, t. 1, and an abstract of the same by F. Nieuville, with the relation of two new miracles.

SS. FERREOLUS, OR FARGEAU, A PRIEST, AND
FERRUTIUS, A DEACON, MM.

THEY were ordained by St. Irenæus, and sent by him to preach the gospel at Besançon, where after suffering many torments they were beheaded for the faith in the persecution of Severus in 211 or 212. St. Gregory of Tours says, (1) that their relics were glorified by miracles in his time, and that his brother-in-law was cured by them of a dangerous distemper. They are at this day esteemed the great treasure of the cathedral of Besançon. See their ancient acts cited by St. Gregory of Tours, with the notes of Henschenius, Junij, t. 3, p. 6.

(1) L. de Glor. Martyr. c. 76.