youth and others, &c., gain! what a treasure of virtue might they procure, by a ready and voluntary obedience and conformity of their will to that of those whom Providence This they would find the effectual hath placed over them! means to crush pride, and subdue their passions. But obedience is of little advantage unless it bend the will itself, and repress all wilful interior murmuring and repugnance. When Paul had been sufficiently exercised and instructed in the duties of a monastic life, St. Antony placed him in a cell three miles from his own, where he visited him from time to time. He usually preferred his virtue to that of all his other diciples, and proposed him to them as a model. He frequently sent Paul to sick persons, or those possessed by the devil, whom he was not able to cure, as not having received the gift, and by the disciple's prayers they never failed of a cure. St. Paul died some time after the year 330. He is commemorated both by the Greeks and Latins, on the 7th of March. See Palladius, Rufinus and Sozomen, abridged by Tillemont, t. 7. p. 144. Also by Henschenius, p. 645.

MARCH VIII.

ST. JOHN OF GOD, C.

FOUNDER OF THE ORDER OF CHARITY.

From his life, written by Francis de Castro, twenty-five years after his death; abridged by Baillet, p. 92. and F. Helyot, Hist. des Ordres Relig. t. 4. p. 131.

A.D. 1550.

ST. John, surnamed of God, was born in Portugal, in 1495. His parents were of the lowest rank in the country, but devout and charitable. John spent a considerable part of his youth in service, under the mayoral or chief shepherd of the count of Oropeusa in Castile, and in great innocence and virtue. In 1522 he listed himself in a company of foot raised by the count, and served in the wars between the French and Spaniards; as he did afterwards in Hungary against the Turks whilst the emperor Charles V. was king of Spain. By the licentiousness of his companions he, by degrees, lost his fear of offending God, and laid aside the greater part of his practices of devotion. The troop which he belonged to being disbanded, he went into Andalusia in 1536, where he entered the service of a rich

lady near Seville, in quality of shepherd. Being now about forty years of age, stung with remorse for his past misconduct. he began to entertain very serious thoughts of a change of life, and doing penance for his sins. He accordingly employed the greater part of his time, both by day and night, in the exercises of prayer and mortification; bewailing almost continually his ingratitude towards God, and deliberating how he could dedicate himself in the most perfect manner to his service. His compassion for the distressed moved him to take a resolution of leaving his place, and passing into Africa, that he might comfort and succour the poor slaves there, not without hopes of meeting with the crown of martyrdom. At Gibralter he met with a Portuguese gentleman condemned to banishment, and whose estate had also been confiscated by King John III. He was then in the hands of the king's officers, together with his wife and children, and on his way to Ceuta in Barbary, the place of his exile. John, out of charity and compassion, served him without any wages. At Ceuta, the gentleman falling sick with grief and the change of air, was soon reduced to such straits as to be obliged to dispose of the small remains of his shattered fortune for the family's support. John, not content to sell what little stock he was master of to relieve them, went to day-labour at the public works, to earn all he could for their subsistence. The apostasy of one of his companions alarmed him; and his confessor telling him that his going in quest of martyrdom was an illusion, he determined to return to Spain. Coming back to Gibralter, his piety suggested to him to turn pedler, and sell little pictures and books of devotion, which might furnish him with opportunities of exhorting his customers to virtue. His stock increasing considerably, he settled in Granada, where he opened a shop in 1538, being then forty-three years of age.

The great preacher and servant of God, John D'Avila,*

The venerable John of Avila, or Avilla, who may be called the father of the most eminent saints that flourished in Spain in the sixteenth century, was a native of the diocess of Toledo. At fourteen years of age he was sent to Salamanca, and trained up to the law. From his infancy he applied himself with great earnestness to prayer, and all the exercises of piety and religion; and he was yet very young when he found his inclinations strongly bent towards an ecclesiastical state, in order to endeavour by his tears and labours to kindle the fire of divine love in the hearts of men. From the university his parents called him home, but were surprised and edified to see

surnamed the Apostle of Andalusia, preached that year at Granada, on St. Sebastian's day, which is there kept as a

the ardour with which he pursued the most heroic practices of Christian perfection; which, as they both feared God, they were afraid in the least to check, or damp his fervour. His diet was sparing, and as coarse as he could choose without an appearance of singularity or affectation; he contrived to sleep on twigs, which he secretly laid on his bed, wore a hair shirt, and used severe disciplines. What was most admirable in his conduct was the universal denial of his will, by which be laboured to die to himself, added to his perfect humility, patience, obedience, and meekness, by which he subjected his spirit to the holy law of Christ. All his spare time was devoted to prayer, and he approached very frequently the holy sacraments. In that of the Blessed Eucharist he began to find a wonderful relish and devotion, and he spent some hours in preparing himself to receive it with the utmost purity of heart and fervour of love he was able to bring to that divine banquet. In the commerce of the world he appeared so much out of his element, that he was sent to the university of Alcala, where he finished his studies in the same manner he had begun them, and bore the first prize in philosophy and his other classes. F. Dominic Soto, the learned Dominican professor, who was his master, conceived for him the warmest affection and the highest esteem, and often declared how great a man he doubted not this scholar would one day become. Peter Guerrera, who was afterwards archbishop of Toledo, was also from that time his great admirer and constant friend. Both his parents dying about that time, John entered into holy orders. On the same day on which he said his first mass, instead of giving an entertainment according to the custom, he provided a dinner for twelve poor persons, on whom he waited at table, and whom he clothed at his own expense, and with his own hands. When he returned into his own country, he sold his whole estate, for he was the only child and heir of his parents: the entire price he gave to the poor, reserving nothing for himself besides an old suit of mean apparel, desiring to imitate the apostles, whom Christ forhade to carry either purse or scrip. Taking St. Paul for his patron and model, he entered upon the ministry of preaching, for which sublime function his preparation consisted not merely in the study and exercise of oratory, and in a consummate knowledge of faith, and of the rules of Christian virtue, but much more in a perfect victory over himself and his passions, the entire disengagement of his heart and affections from the world and all earthly things, an eminent spirit of humility, tender charity, and inflamed zeal for the glory of God, and the sanctification of souls. He once said to a young clergyman, who consulted him by what method he could learn the art of preaching with fruit, that it was no other than that of the most ardent love of God. Of this he was himself a most illustrious example. Prayer and an indefatigable application to the duties of his ministry divided his whole time, and such was his thirst of the salvation of souls, that the greatest labours and dangers were equally his greatest gain and pleasure: he seemed even to gather strength from the former, and confidence and courage from the latter. His inflamed sermons, supported by the admirable example of his heroic virtue, and the most pure maxims of the gospel, delivered with an eloquence and an unction altogether divine, from the overflowings of a heart burning with the most ardent love of God, and penetrated with the deepest sentiments of humility and compunction, had a force which the most hardened hearts seemed not able to withstand. Many sacred orators preach themselves rather than the word of God, and speak with so much art and care, that their hearers consider more how they speak than what they say. minister of the gospel never preached or instructed others without having VOL. III.

great festival. John, having heard his sermon, was so affected with it, that, melting into tears, he filled the whole church

first, for a considerable time, begged of God with great earnestness to move both his tongue and the hearts of his hearers: he mounted the pulpit full of the most sincere distrust in his own abilities and endeavours, and contempt of himself, and with the most ardent thirst for the salvation of the souls of all his hearers. He cast his nets, or rather sowed the seed, of eternal life. The Holy Ghost, who inspired and animated his soul, seemed to speak by the organ of his voice; and gave so fruitful a blessing to his words, that wonderful were the conversions which he every where wrought. Whole assemblies came from his sermons quite changed, and their change appeared immediately in their countenances and behaviour. He never ceased to exhort those who were with him by his inflamed discourses, and the absent by his letters. ▲ collection of these, extant in several languages, is a proof of his eloquence, experimental science of virtue, and tender and affecting charity. The ease with which he wrote them without study, shows how richly his mind was stored with an inexhausted fund of excellent motives and reflections on every subject-matter of piety, with what readiness he disposed those motives in an agreeable methodical manner, and with what unction he expressed them, insomuch that his style appears to be no other than the pure language of his heart, always bleeding for his own sins and those of the world. So various are the instructions contained in these letters, that any one may find such as are excellently suited to his particular circumstances, whatever virtue he desires to obtain, or vice to shun, and under whatever affliction he seeks for holy advice and comfort. It was from the school of an interior experienced virtue that he was qualified to be so excellent a master. This spirit of all virtues he cultivated in his soul by their continual exercise. Under the greatest importunity of business, besides his office and mass, with a long preparation and thanksgiving, he never failed to give to private holy meditation two hours, when he first rose in the morning, from three till five o'clock, and again two hours in the evening before he took his rest, for which he never allowed himself more than four hours of the night, from eleven till three o'clock. During the time of his sickness, towards the latter end of his life, almost his whole time was devoted to prayer, he being no longer able to sustain the fatigue of his functions. His clothes were always very mean, and usually old; his food was such as he bought in the streets, which wanted no dressing, as herbs, fruit, or milk; for he would never have a servant. At the tables of others he ate sparingly of whatever was given him, or what was next at hand. He exceedingly extolled, and was a true lover of holy poverty, not only as it is an exercise of penance, and cuts off the root of many passions, but also as a state dear to those who love our Divine Redeemer, who was born, lived, and died in extreme poverty. Few persons ever appeared to be more perfectly dead to the world than this holy man. A certain nobleman, who was showing him his curious gardens, canals, and buildings, expressed his surprise to see that no beauties and wonders of art and nature could fix his attention or raise his curiosity. The holy man replied, "I must confess that nothing of this kind gives me any satisfaction, because my heart takes no pleasure in them." This holy man was so entirely possessed with God, and filled with the love of invisible things, as to loathe all earthly things which seemed not to have a direct and immediate tendency to them. He preached at Seville, Cordova, Granada, Bæza, and over the whole country of Andalusia. By his discourses and instructions, St. John of God, St. Francis of Borgia, St. Teresa, Lewis of Granada, and many others were moved, and assisted to lay the deep foundation of perfect virtue to which the divine grace raised them. Many

with his cries and lamentations; detesting his past life, beating his breast, and calling aloud for mercy. Not content

noblemen and ladies were directed by him in the paths of Christian perfection, particularly the Countess of Feria and the Marchioness of Pliego, whose conduct first in a married state, and afterwards in holy widowhood, affords most edifying instances of heroic practices and sentiments of all virtues. This great servant of God taught souls to renounce and cast away that false liberty by which they are the worst of slaves under the tyranny of their passions, and to take up the sweet chains of the divine love which gives men a true sovereignty, not only over all other created things, but also over themselves. He lays down in his works the rules by which he conducted so many to perfect virtue, teaching us that we must learn to know both God and ourselves, not by the lying glass of self-love, but by the clear beam of truth: ourselves, that we may see the depth of our miseries, and fly with all our might from the cause thereof, which is our pride, and other sins: God. that we may always tremble before his infinite majesty, may believe his unerring truth, may hope for a share in his inexhausted mercy, and may vehemently love that incomprehensible abyss of goodness and charity. These lessons he lays down with particular advice how to subside our passions, in his treatise on the Audi Filia, or on those words of the Holy Ghost, Ps. xliv. Hear me, daughter, bend thine ear, forget thy house, &c. The occasion upon which he composed this book was as follows: Donna Sancha Carilla. daughter of Don Lewis Fernandez of Corduba, lord of Guadalcazar, a young lady of great beauty and accomplishments, was called to court to serve in quality of lady of honour to the queen. Her father furnished her with an equipage, and every thing suitable; but before her journey she went to cast herself at the feet of Avila, and make her confession. She afterwards said he reproved her sharply for coming to the sacred tribunal of penance too richly attired, and in a manner not becoming a penitent whose heart was broken with compunction. What else passed in their conference is unknown; but coming from the church, she begged to be excused from going to court, laid aside all her sumptuous attire, and gave herself up entirely to recollection and penance. Thus she led a most retired holy life in her father's house till she died, most happily, about ten years after. Her pious director wrote this book for her instruction in the practice of an interior life, teaching her how she ought to subdue her passions, and vanquish temptations, especially that of pride: also by what means she was to labour to obtain the love of God, and all virtues. He dwells at length on assiduous meditation, on the passion of Christ, especially on the excess of love with which he suffered so much for us. His other works, and all the writers who speak of this holy man, bear testimony to his extraordinary devotion towards the passion of Christ. From this divine book he learned the perfect spirit of all virtues, especially a desire of suffering with him and for him. Upon this motive he exhorts us to give God many thanks when he sends us an opportunity of enduring some little, that by our good use of this little trial our Lord may be moved to give strength to suffer more, and may send us more to undergo. Envy raising him enemies, he was accused of shutting heaven to the rich, and upon that renseless slander thrown into the prison of the Inquisition at Seville. This sensible disgrace and persecution he bore with incredible sweetness and patience, and after he was acquitted returned only kindnesses to his calumniators. In the fiftieth year of his age he began to be afflicted with the stone, frequent fevers, and a complication of other painful disorders; under the sharpest pains he used often to repeat this prayer: "Lord, increase my sufferings, but give me also patience." Once in a fit of exquisite pain, he begged our Redeemer to assuage it; and that instant he found it totally

with this, he ran about the streets like a distracted person. tearing his hair, and behaving in such a manner that he was followed every where by a rabble with sticks and stones, and came home all besmeared with dirt and blood. He then gave away all he had in the world, and having thus reduced himself to absolute poverty, that he might die to himself and crucify all the sentiments of the old man, he began again to counterfeit the madman, running about the streets as before, till some had the charity to take him to the venerable John D'Avila, covered with dirt and blood. The holy man, full of the Spirit of God, soon discovered in John the motions of extraordinary graces, spoke to him in private, heard his general confession, and gave him proper advice, and promised his assistance ever after. John, out of a desire of the greatest humiliations, returned soon after to his apparent madness and extravagances. He was, thereupon, taken up and put into a madhouse, on supposition of his being disordered in his senses, where the severest methods were used to bring him to himself, all which he underwent in the spirit of penance, and by way of atonement for the sins of his past life. D'Avila, being informed of his conduct, came to visit him, and found him reduced almost to the grave by weakness, and his body covered with wounds and sores; but his soul was still vigorous, and thirsting with the greatest ardour after new sufferings and humiliations. D'Avila however told him, that having now been sufficiently exercised in that so singular a method of penance and humiliation, he advised him to employ himself for the time to come in something more conducive to his own and the public good. His exhortation

removed, and he fell into a gentle slumber. He afterwards reproached himself as guilty of pusillanimity. It is not to be expressed how much he suffered from sickness during the seventeen last years of his life. He died with great tranquillity and devotion on the 10th of May, 1569.—The venerable John of Avila was a man powerful in words and works, a prodigy of penance, the glory of the priesthood, the edification of the church by his virtues, its support by his zeal, its oracle by his doctrine. A profound and universal genius, a prudent and upright director, a celebrated preacher, the apostle of Andalusia; a man revered by all Spain, known to the whole Christian world. A man of such sanctity and authority, that princes adopted his decisions, the learned were improved by his enlightened knowledge, and St. Teresa regarded him as her patron and protector, consulted him as her master, and followed him as her guide and model. See the edifying life of the venerable John of Avila, written by F. Lewis of Granada; also by Lewis Munnoz; and the abstract prefixed by Arnau'ld d'Andilly to the French edition of his works in folio, at Paris, in 1673.

had its desired effect; and he grew instantly calm and sedate, to the great astonishment of his keepers. He continued, however, some time longer in the hospital, serving the sick, but left it entirely on St. Ursula's day, in 1539. This his extraordinary conduct is an object of our admiration, not of our imitation: in this saint it was the effect of the fervour of his conversion, his desire of humiliation, and a holy hatred of himself and his past criminal life. By it he learned in a short time perfectly to die to himself and the world; which prepared his soul for the graces which God afterwards bestowed on him. He then thought of executing his design of doing something for the relief of the poor; and, after a pilgrimage to our Lady's in Guadaloupa, to recommend himself and his undertaking to her intercession, in a place celebrated for devotion to her, he began by selling wood in the market place, to feed some poor by means of his labour. Soon after he hired a house to harbour poor sick persons in, whom he served and provided for with an ardour, prudence, economy and vigilance that surprised the whole city. This was the foundation of the order of charity, in 1540, which, by the benediction of heaven, has since been spread all over Christendom. John was occupied all day in serving his patients: in the night he went out to carry in new objects of charity, rather than to seek out provisions for them; for people, of their own accord, brought him in all necessaries for his little hospital.

The archbishop of Granada, taking notice of so excellent an establishment, and admiring the incomparable order observed in it, both for the spiritual and temporal care of the poor, furnished considerable sums to increase it, and favoured it with his protection. This excited all persons to vie with each other in contributing to it. Indeed the charity, patience, and modesty of St. John, and his wonderful care and foresight, engaged every one to admire and favour the institute. The bishop of Tuy, president of the royal court of judicature in Granada, having invited the holy man to dinner, put several questions to him, to all which he answered in such a manner, as gave the bishop the highest esteem of his person. It was this prelate that gave him the name of John of God, and prescribed him a kind of habit, though St. John never thought of founding a religious order: for the rules which bear his name were only drawn up in 1556, six years after his death; and religious vows were not introduced among his brethren before the year 1570.

To make trial of the saint's disinterestedness, the marquess of Tarisa came to him in disguise to beg an alms, on pretence of a necessary law-suit, and he received from his hands twenty-five ducats, which was all he had. The marquess was so much edified by his charity, that, besides returning the sum, he bestowed on him one hundred and fifty crowns of gold, and sent to his hospital every day, during his stay at Granada, one hundred and fifty loaves, four sheep and six pullets. But the holy man gave a still more illustrious proof of his charity when the hospital was on fire. for he carried out most of the sick on his own back: and though he passed and repassed through the flames, and staid in the midst of them a considerable time, he received no hurt. But his charity was not confined to his own hospital; he looked upon it as his own misfortune if the necessities of any distressed person in the whole country had remained unrelieved. He therefore made strict inquiry into the wants of the poor over the whole province, relieved many in their own houses, employed in a proper manner those who were able to work, and with wonderful sagacity laid himself out every way to comfort and assist all the afflicted members of Christ. He was particularly active and vigilant in settling and providing for young maidens in distress, to prevent the danger to which they are often exposed, of taking bad courses. He also reclaimed many who were already engaged in vice: for which purpose he sought out public sinners, and holding a crucifix in his hand, with many tears exhorted them to repentance. Though his life seemed to be taken up in continual action, he accompanied it with perpetual prayer and incredible corporal austerities. And his tears of devotion, his frequent raptures, and his eminent spirit of contemplation, gave a lustre to his other virtues. But his sincere humility appeared most admirable in all his actions, even amidst the honours which he received at the court of Valladolid, whither business called him. The king and princes seemed to vie with each other who should show him the greatest courtesy, or put the largest alms in his hands; whose charitable contributions he employed with great prudence in Valladolid itself and the adjacent country. Only perfect virtue could stand the test of honours, amidst which he appeared the most humble. Humiliations seemed to be his delight: these he courted and sought, and always underwent them with great alacrity. One day, when a women called him hypocrite, and loaded him with invectives, he gave her privately a piece of money, and desired her to repeat all she had said in the market-place.

Worn out at last by ten years' hard service in his hospital, he The immediate occasion of his distemper seemed to be excess of fatigue in saving wood and other such things for the poor in a great flood, in which, seeing a person in danger of being drowned, he swam in his clothes to endeavour to rescue him, not without imminent hazard of his own life; but he could not see his Christian brother perish without endeavouring, at all hazards, to succour him. He at first concealed his sickness, that he might not be obliged to diminish his labours and extraordinary austerities; but, in the mean time, he carefully revised the inventories of all things belonging to his hospital and inspected all the accounts. He also reviewed all the excellent regulations which he had made for its administration, the distribution of time, and the exercises of piety to be observed in it. Upon a complaint that he harboured idle strollers and bad women, the archbishop sent for him, and laid open the charge against him. The man of God threw himself prostrate at his feet, and said: "The Son of God came for sinners and we are obliged to promote their conversion, to exhort them, and to sigh and pray for them. I am unfaithful to my vocation because I neglect this; and I confess that I know no other bad person in my hospital but myself; who, as I am obliged to own with extreme confusion, am a most base sinner, altogether unworthy to eat the bread of the poor." This he spoke with so much feeling and humility that all present were much moved, and the archbishop dismissed him with respect, leaving all things to his His illness increasing, the news of it was spread abroad. The lady Anne Ossorio was no sooner informed of his condition, but she came in her coach to the hospital to see him. The servant of God lay in his habit in his little cell, covered with a piece of an old coat instead of a blanket, and having under his head, not indeed a stone, as was his custom, but a basket, in which he used to beg alms in the city for his hospital. The poor and sick stood weeping round him. The lady, moved with compassion, despatched secretly a message to the archbishop, who sent immediately an order to St. John to obey her as he would do himself, during his illness. By virtue of this authority she obliged him to leave his hospital. He named Anthony Martin superior in his place, and gave moving instructions to his brethren, recommending them, in particular, obedience and charity.

In going out he visited the blessed sacrament, and poured forth his heart before it with extraordinary fervour; remaining there absorbed in his devotions so long, that the lady Anne Ossorio caused him to be taken up and carried into her coach, in which she conveyed him to her own house. She herself prepared with the help of her maids, and gave him with her own hands, his broths and other things, and often read to him the history of the passion of our divine Redeemer. He complained that whilst our Saviour, in his agony, drank gall, they gave him, a miserable sinner, broths.

The whole city was in tears; all the nobility visited him; the magistrates came to beg he would give his benediction to their city. He answered, that his sins rendered him the scandal and reproach of their country; but recommended to them his brethren the poor, and his religious that served them. At last, by order of the archbishop, he gave the city his dying benediction. His exhortations to all were most pathetic. His prayer consisted of most humble sentiments of compunction, and inflamed aspirations of divine love. The archbishop said mass in his chamber, heard his confession, gave him the viaticum and extreme unction, and promised to pay all his debts, and to provide for all his poor. The saint expired on his knees, before the altar, on the 8th of March, in 1550, being exactly fifty-five years old. buried by the archbishop at the head of all the clergy, both secular and regular, accompanied by all the court, nobles, and city, with the utmost pomp. He was honoured by many miracles. beatified by Urban VIII. in 1630, and canonized by Alexander VIII. in 1690. His relics were translated into the church of his brethren in 1664. His order of charity to serve the sick was approved of by Pope Pius V. The Spaniards have their own general; but the religious in France and Italy obey a general who resides at Rome. They follow the rule of St. Austin.

One sermon perfectly converted one who had been long enslaved to the world and his passions, and made him a saint. How comes it that so many sermons and pious books produce so little fruit in our souls? It is altogether owing to our sloth and wilful hardness of heart, that we receive God's omnipotent word in vain, and to our most grievous condemnation. The heavenly seed can take no root in hearts which receive it with indifference and insensibility, or it is trodden upon and destroyed by the dissipation and tumult of our disorderly affections, or it is choked

by the briers and thorns of earthly concerns. To profit by it, we must listen to it with awe and respect, in the silence of all creatures, in interior solitude and peace, and must carefully nourish it in our hearts. The holy law of God is comprised in the precept of divine love; a precept so sweet, a virtue so glorious and so happy, as to carry along with it its present incomparable reward. St. John, from the moment of his conversion, by the penitential austerities which he performed, was his own greatest persecutor; but it was chiefly by heroic works of charity that he endeavoured to offer to God the most acceptable sacrifice of compunction, gratitude, and love. What encouragement has Christ given us in every practice of this virtue, by declaring, that whatever we do to others he esteems as done to himself! To animate ourselves to fervour, we may often call to mind what St. John frequently repeated to his disciples, "Labour without intermission to do all the good works in your power, whilst time is allowed you." His spirit of penance, love. and fervour he inflamed by meditating assiduously on the sufferings of Christ, of which he often used to say: "Lord, thy thorns are my roses, and thy sufferings my paradise."

SAINT FELIX, B. C.

HE was a holy Burgundian priest, who converted and baptized Sigebert, prince of the East-Angles, during his exile in France, whither he was forced to retire, to secure himself from the insidious practices of his relations. Sigebert being called home to the crown of his ancestors, invited out of France his spiritual father St. Felix, to assist him in bringing over his idolatrous subjects to the Christian faith; these were the inhabitants of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire. Our saint being ordained bishop of Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, and deputed by him to preach to the East-Angles, was surprisingly successful in his undertaking, and made almost a thorough conversion of The most learned and most Christian king. that country. Sigebert, as he is styled by Bede, concurred with him in all things, and founded churches, monasteries, and schools. From those words of Bede, that "he set up a school for youth, in which Felix furnished him with masters," some have called him the founder of the university of Cambridge. St. Felix established schools at Felixtow; Cressy adds at Flixton or Felixton.