

CARLO TANCREDI FALLETTI

MARQUIS OF BAROLO

CALLED
TO HAPPINESS

Spiritual and pedagogical writings



House of Printing

(Behind the outer cover)

CARLO TANCREDI FALLETTI, Marquis of Barolo, was born in Turin on 26 October 1782. Right from his youth he distinguished himself for his intelligence, noble sentiments, attentiveness to the needs of the times and a strong tendency to do good. At the court of Napoleon he came to know Giulia Colbert, daughter of the Marquis of Maulévrier, whom he married at Versailles in 1806. Not having had the gift of children, this couple competed with each other in making themselves apostles of Christian charity, «adopting» the poor of Turin. At the age of 34 Carlo Tancredi became one of the “Decurions” of Turin, a Municipal Body composed of 60 members. As a Decurion, he recognized in pauperism and illiteracy the two principal wounds of the society of his time. He made himself a promoter and an upholder of works that not only helped the indigent people, but also favoured harmony amongst the various social classes. In 1834 Carlo Tancredi in agreement with his wife founded the Institute of the Sisters of St. Ann, dedicated to receiving and educating little children. He died on 4th September 1838.

On the cover:

Carlo Tancredi, Father of the little ones and the poor (a detail)
Antonio Lomuscio, Trani (1991)

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*We thank Angelo Montonati
for the collaboration given towards making this book a reality.*

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“*Called to happiness*” is the thread running right through the works of Carlo Tancredi di Barolo that we are publishing in this book. *God created man so that he might be happy*: this is the *opening sentence* of one of his spiritual works. What permits man to hope, notwithstanding his sin, is exactly the *promise of that happiness* which was historically fulfilled in the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ; it is for us an *already and not yet*, and urges those who have got just a glimpse or a taste of it, to communicate it to others, so that the common destiny of happiness may be realised in everyone.

To take up again and to present writings that go back to more than 160 years ago, might seem a mere archivistic and anachronistic task. Wanting to take out of the dust of oblivion, these volumes which no one had taken in hand to read for so many years, might seem useless and vain. Instead, knowing the value of these writings, we, Sisters of St. Ann, feel the great responsibility of welcoming and distributing these *seeds*, so that they may continue to bear abundant fruit.

We do it with gratitude and a desire...

With *gratitude* because we acknowledge that these writings are a gift placed in our hands, a small sign entrusted to us to make present and alive the works of Him who, by the providential designs of God’s grace, has generated us in History.

We do it with the *desire* that this gift offered to us may also become a gift for others. For the sake of historical justice and not only that, we desire to bring to light from anonymity, the one who published these works mostly anonymously, in the first half of the XIX century.

We desire to restore the face and the voice to those words which, feeble or high-sounding, persuasive or consoling, but at the same time always “warm and full of wisdom”, vibrated in the rooms of the Barolo Palace, in the spacious municipal halls and along the streets and lanes of nineteenth century Turin.

We desire that those words, which echoed of the Divine Word, and were incarnated in his life, may resound in our ears and in the ears of all, reviving the *hope* for which we were created, the *joy* of the salvation we have received and the *desire* to do good, so that all are oriented towards authentic self-realization, towards happiness.

From among the different literary works either of a popular or didactic nature, written by Carlo Tancredi di Barolo, we have made a choice, giving preference to the spiritual ones, which though less familiar, are significant and actual since they propose an itinerary in strict conformity to the Word of God (*The First Man and the Man-God* and *Jesus, Mary and the Angels*), and the pedagogical ones, (*On Education of Early Childhood* and *Very Brief Instructions directed to the Youth*) which, since they do not contain obscure and abstract philosophical or psychological theories, are fascinating for the concreteness of the details described, and for the actuality of the principles and suggestions contained in them.

The spiritual works reveal to us the faith of our author, simple but strong, sincere and deep, anchored in the Word of God...They make us participate in the spiritual journey of the

one who, starting from the awareness of having being created in the image and likeness of God, experiences the distance and the pain of sin, and goes forward, animated by the hope that is generated by the promise of salvation, in order to be immersed in the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, who redeemed us by His Passion.

The other two works, *On Education of Early Childhood among the poor class* and *Very Brief Instructions directed to youth*, dealing with the problems connected with the education of children and youth in concrete terms, demonstrate to us the specific form which his passion for man assumes in Carlo Tancredi. It is not mere philanthropy, common to the nobles of nineteenth century Europe, but a passion that comes from contemplating Christ's humanity. His attention towards little ones and the youth, expressed in a thousand ways, therefore manifests not only the vision he has of man, but above all, the urgency, the anxiety, I would say, that animated Carlo Tancredi's life and that of his spouse Giulia, namely, that all be truly happy.

Therefore we can say that the entire existence and work of Carlo and his wife Giulia are a kind of extension of the redemption realized by Christ, to take man back to that happiness for which he has been created.

The works of Carlo Tancredi were written, as we said before, for gratuitous distribution, in a simple and significant style, without any claim to being of a literary nature. We publish them in present day language, expressed by the masterly pen of Doctor Angelo Montonati, to whom we express our heartfelt thanks for his attention and care.

The text is wholly in conformity to the original, and simply transposed in modern language, so that it may be more easily and directly understandable, as was the intention of its author.

We hope that reading these pages, will cause a re-flowering of that *call to happiness* that is carried in each one's heart. We have experienced the love of God, who in creating us, has imprinted in us His very own image and, by saving us, has shown that all of us are infinitely "dear" to Him. May the certainty of this love be our hope on the journey, inevitably marked by fatigue and pain, towards true happiness.

So, let our gaze be extended towards the whole of mankind, without being afraid to "dive into" the situations of sadness and misfortune of the human condition, in order to bring to every person, though in a humble and silent way, the seeds of hope and of happiness.

SISTER FRANCESCHINA MILANESIO

Superior General of the Sisters of St. Ann

Short biographical profile

Carlo Tancredi Falletti, Marquis of Barolo, last descendant of the Falletti di Barolo, a noble family of Piedmont, was born at Turin on 26th October 1782. From his Savoy mother Paoline d'Oncieu de la Bâtie, he inherited his goodness of soul and a profound religious faith. His contact with his father, Marquis Ottavio, who had as a norm of life, sincere devotion to the Catholic Church, strengthened the Christian spirit, while his rapport with various persons and realities in the political, social and economic spheres procured for him a direct knowledge of men and matters, that would be invaluable to him in his public activities.

Right from his youth he distinguished himself for his intelligence, disposition towards justice, nobility of sentiments, concern for the needs of the times and the strong tendency to promote and to do much good. At the court of Napoleon – as a page of the Emperor – he came to know Giulia Colbert, daughter of the Marquis of Maulévrier, a woman gifted with exquisite femininity and genuine spirituality: It was love at first sight and their marriage was celebrated at Versailles in 1806. He was 24 and she 22. The couple resided alternately at the Barolo Palace in Turin or in Paris; they travelled often, taking lively interest in the new social initiatives inspired by the principles of the Gospel.

Not having had the gift of children, the couple in admirable agreement competed in making themselves apostles of Christian charity, “adopting” the poor of Turin so as to help them in their necessities, but above all to reveal to them the love and mercy of the Father and their own dignity as children of God. Thus they lived a spiritual maternity and a paternity that was most fecund, giving a real example of a family open to evangelization and to the gift of themselves to their brethren. The more their Christian commitment grew, the more Carlo Tancredi and Giulia realized that life and the immense wealth which they possessed was to serve the fulfilment of a providential plan of God at the service of the poor and the suffering.

Carlo Tancredi was the protagonist of significant events, but even in positions of power and responsibility, he preferred to stay in the background. Silvio Pellico, who for years was the diligent secretary and librarian of the Barolo House, has written about him thus: “He avoided honours as much as he could, and would suffer when he could not escape public admiration. His humility was all the more praiseworthy because he had all the talents to render himself remarkable and to excel above most others; an amiable and gentlemanly countenance, words that were warm and full of wisdom, an excellent taste for arts and above all an irreproachable reputation for justice and goodness”.

At the age of 34, the Marquis became one of the “Decurions” of Turin, a Municipal body reinstated in the spring of 1814, composed of 60 members noted for “uprightness and intelligence” as well as “for considerable patrimony”. His contemporaries saw in him besides his noble birth, the human qualities that won for him, in the course of 22 years, (the duration of his duties in the Municipal Council) the favour of his colleagues and the love of the people.

As Decurion, having identified pauperism and illiteracy as the two principal wounds of the society of his time, he made himself promoter and champion of works not only to help the indigent but also for harmony among the various social classes. In his first year as a mayor (1825-1826) he thought of the heating system for the houses of the poor and got distributed six

thousand quotas of ration of wood, re-arranged the schools of arts and practical geometry, opened elementary schools in two districts of the city, improved the public lighting system, created new green areas, restructured (at his own expense) the prison for women of the Forzate where Giulia was engaged in carrying out a courageous initiative of reforming the imprisoned. In the second year, he dedicated himself above all to the re-organization of the Municipal buildings, to the reform of the schools and to the institution of the first Savings Bank. Returning to the rank of Decurion, he offered an amount of three hundred thousand lire (something like Rs. 8 crores today!) for the realization of the new cemetery of Turin. In exchange he asked for a small "place" to be reserved for him with a slab on which there was to be an invitation to all those who entered that enclosure to pray for him, for his parents and for Giulia.

In his initiatives of charity the little ones occupied an important place: For them, Carlo Tancredi instituted in his palace "shelter rooms" or "kindergarten classrooms" on the model of those already functioning in France. Here, as he himself writes in the booklet "On the education of childhood", he had thought of accepting "The greatest number possible of male and female children, who were not yet of age to attend the ordinary schools, and to take care of them during the day, permitting the rest of the family to work, and dedicating themselves in that way to the physical and moral education most suitable for little children». He acted on the principle, later sustained by modern experimental psychology, that the body has great influence on the moral, specially during early childhood, and that many psychic deficiencies are the effect of corresponding physiological defects. The time was spent by alternating the lessons of catechism, with courses of literacy and reading, moments of prayer and games. Everything was directed towards a moral and religious education by striving "to implant in those tender hearts the essential precepts of true morals, namely of religion: among which were the fear of God, respect for parents, obedience, reciprocal love and the habit of sincerity".

Until 1832 the teachers of the Kindergarten were lay people; after that, for a certain period the educative activity was entrusted to the Sisters of Providence, a Congregation spiritually guided by Abbot Loewenbruck, a collaborator of Rosmini. In 1834, Carlo Tancredi in agreement with his wife, founded the institute of the Sisters of St. Ann so that they might continue in the Church, this mission in service of the poor. It was also his intention to construct the hospital of Saint Philomena for the poor children at Moncalieri, but his premature death interrupted the initiative that was starting. It was Giulia who completed it, not at Moncalieri, but in Turin, close to the monastery of the Magdalenes (the religious Congregation founded by her) and to the "Refuge" an institution founded for women ex-prisoners or those at risk. The initial plan was to accept both male and female children, but later, to avoid the criticism on promiscuity that had already been raised regarding the "Kindergarten classrooms", only poor girls between 3 to 12 years were accepted (but they could remain until the age of 18, if they were in need of special treatment). According to the *Giornale di Pediatria* [Journal of Paediatrics] of this hospital of Saint Philomena - whose first spiritual director was young Don Bosco - it was the first paediatric hospital established in Italy.

Reference has been made to the important contribution made by Carlo Tancredi to the development of popular education at Turin. It was he, in agreement with the magistrate of Reform, who opened higher elementary schools for the children of the common people desiring to complete their education so as to engage themselves later in industry and business. On his initiative, the Brothers of Christian Schools were called to manage them. But his name is linked to a unique project: since he was used to often going to Valsesia and knew the ability of the people in producing works of art, being a member of the «Society of Encouragement» for the study of drawing founded at Varallo by professor Geniani, in 1835 he committed himself to pay a sum of lire 400 as board and lodging for two Valsesian students of the School of Drawing. Thanks to his generous contribution, (then ten thousand lire but 250 thousand Euros today), a

Workroom for sculpture started in January 1838. In July of the same year, the Marquis donated further amounts, to furnish two bedrooms in the residence of the students and to acquire equipment.

In 1835, Turin was afflicted by cholera and Carlo Tancredi along with the Decurions of the Municipality, dedicated himself to organizing help for those stricken by the epidemic, opening shelters and infirmaries, erecting centres of aid in various parts of the city where there were people available day and night. Giulia, on her part, did not spare herself, doing all that she could to assist the sick. On that occasion, the Decurions made a solemn vow to Our Lady of Consolation, patroness of Turin, beseeching her to liberate the place from the epidemic. This is what happened, and the Mayor entrusted Carlo Tancredi with the fulfillment of what had been promised. The granite pillar, on which a statue of Our Lady is mounted, that was erected in the square in front of the famous sanctuary is admired even to this day.

Owing to certain recurrent indispositions, Carlo Tancredi was advised a period of rest. He thought of going to Tyrol together with his wife, but having arrived at Verona with high and continuous fever, the doctor who was accompanying him considered that it is more prudent to return to Turin; and along the way, at Chiari close to Brescia, Carlo Tancredi fell into a sudden drowsiness, that was neither sleep nor temporary collapse, but a true agony. The carriage was stopped at the house of the Parish priest, Don Bedoschi, who gave him Extreme Unction, and there, Carlo Tancredi peacefully breathed his last in the arms of his inconsolable wife, Giulia. It was 4th Sept. 1838.

When the Marquis died his “doves” (as he used to call the Sisters of St. Ann) had not yet grown their wings, but soon, under the guidance of his spouse, the wings appeared and they began to fly far. As a faithful interpreter of the charismatic guidelines given to the new religious family by the Founder, Giulia thought of drafting the Constitutions. These were first approved by the Archbishop of Turin, Mons. Frasoni, and then by Pope Gregory XVI in 1846. Today the Sisters of Saint Ann are present – besides Europe – in many missionary zones in India, United States, Brazil, Philippines, Mexico, Peru, Argentina and Cameroun, to meet the new forms of poverty and to carry out their apostolate in the educative and pastoral field in schools of every kind and grade, catechesis, assisting the children and youth in Parish groups. In India, the Sisters work also in the field of health: in hospitals and dispensaries.

THE FIRST MAN
AND THE MAN-GOD

Certainly, "God created man so that he might be happy".

He gave Adam all that could make him a perfect and noble creature: a garden, Eden, to live in; a companion, Eve, "treasure of grace and purity"; the simple love which united them; the freedom to dialogue familiarly with God Himself; wisdom, which enriched him with divine revelations.

But all this did not suffice. The first man abused the freedom granted to him, and gave in to the snares of the devil. From that moment, the spirit of evil and of pride "spread horror and fear there, where earlier everything was peace and heavenly harmony".

Man became mortal. Man experienced pain and suffering.

But, that same God who struck him down, now raises him up.

He looks at the work of His own hands, he does not want to lose it.

He sends His Son Jesus. And He, "moved by love, offered himself to the Father as a sublime holocaust, which would redeem man from sin; The Cross will save the world, and only those who bear the imprint of this divine Cross will form the elect!"

Since it is not enough to admire Jesus, the Man-God, the descendent of the first man, Adam, must follow the lamb in sacrifice: suffering and death seem to be the indispensable way to conquer back the heavenly homeland. Certainly our journey is wet with tears, but in heaven we shall gather its fruits.

What are we to choose?

"God, while offering us peace and pardon, does not force us to accept it".

Our freedom guides us. Towards the joys of Paradise? Towards the perdition of Hell?

So, let us learn from the example of the Man-God.

*Et sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur ita et
in Christo omnes vivificabuntur"*
(1 Cor: 15:22)

God created man so that he might be happy. He made him King of Nature and gave him the garden of Eden for his Kingdom, a delightful place in which all the wonders of the earth sparkled with rising and pompous magnificence.

Adam, the most perfect, the most noble of creatures, had Eve for his companion, a treasure of grace and purity. These two beautiful souls were united in the infinite love they had for God, and in the chaste and tender affection they nourished for each other.

What more could they desire? To complete their already immense happiness, God the incomprehensible Being, who from the formless chaos had drawn order and light, descended to have familiar colloquies with man, the last prodigy of creation. Thus Adam and Eve, enlightened by the mysterious revelations of the Most High, almost seemed to participate in His divinity.

We, the degenerate children of our first parents, how will we ever be able to relate, with what sublime enchantment they listened to the voice of the Lord and welcomed His ineffable words? These words poured into their bosom torrents of light and love, continuously instilling into them a happiness that is unfortunately unknown to us, their wretched descendants.

So, God wanted man to be happy: and in fact man enjoyed this happiness, that surpasses all that our feeble intelligence can comprehend. He was indeed happy; he would have been so forever, and death, at that time, was sleeping, buried in the dust of the earth.

This great happiness of the first man responds adequately to the audacious questioning of the irreligious: "Why did God create man from nothing if he was destined to suffer and die?". No! Man was not created to suffer and to die. Gifted by God with great intelligence and profound wisdom, man was happy.

But man was also free, and precisely this liberty, magnificent gift without which he would have neither vice nor virtue, unfortunately proved to be a fatal gift to our first father. Adam, son of God, made himself a slave of Satan. He disobeyed His Lord, His benefactor. What more! Adam sinned!

At that moment, the earth, which was so beautiful before the sin, so placid and pleasant, all of a sudden shook and trembled; the clouds, which were an unknown phenomenon in the firmament, condensed in a black whirl and hid the splendour of the sun. The spirit of evil and of pride subdued Adam and his pestiferous breath spread horror and fear, where before everything was peace and heavenly harmony.

Adam trembled. On hearing the voice of the Lord, he was terrified and hid himself from the voice of the Lord. But, he has to answer. In what way? Alas not any more with that sweet confidence of a favourite son; but rather with the trembling of a culpable slave, who drags himself to the feet of a very severe master, to confess his guilt to him. Adam appears thus before the Lord, only to hear his nefarious ingratitude punished with an irrevocable sentence of death. "You shall die!" the Lord tells him, "and you will eat your bread by the sweat of your brow". At these words, Adam fell down in a faint. That Adam who until that moment, had shared the happiness of the Angels, who like them used to sing the heavenly hosannas with the rapture of divine happiness, now a sinner, disheartened, pale, disfigured, soaks the earth with his first tears.

That earth, which a little while before was enchanted and fruitful, already became arid, and thorns and thistles could be seen springing from its womb, while the withered flowers made

the languishing stalk droop, having just a few days of life. Therefore, fallen man and his destitute posterity, were lost for ever! Therefore sad miseries, inevitable death, eternal torments will be the fruits of the fault of Adam!

Adam does not dare hope for pardon. Who will save him now? Only the One he had outraged with such monstrous ingratitude!

No! God did not want to lose the work of his own hands; therefore in a second creation, more sublime than the first, He revived man to grace, promising him a Redeemer. At this unexpected promise, Adam prostrated himself humbly. Already he seemed to be less unhappy, although he was inconsolable, because the remembrance of his fault haunted him at every hour and in every place, piercing his heart deeper and deeper, like the metal of a poisoned arrow.

Sin, that abominable monster, that mortal enemy of God, how horrible it must have looked to Adam, who had also experienced all the ineffable beauty of innocence! This sin oppressed him, lacerated him, but, however great was the unhappiness of his lot, and the horror of his exile, he accepted everything, recognising the great disproportion between his crime and the punishment inflicted on him.

As for us, how far we are from such a concept of justice! We sin and remain undisturbed by it; we sin and are unwilling to bear the punishment for it, we sin, and we dare to say boldly to the Lord: "Why do you strike us?"

Adam then, fully understood the whole enormity of his crime. He saw rising before him the future generations on whom he had imprinted the seal of God's disapproval. Those innumerable peoples still slumbered in the uncertain future; yet, roused by the voice of his conscience, they already appeared to him terrible and threatening.

"Ah no!" he exclaimed, bowing his head with deep humiliation: "No! do not curse me, all of you who will take birth from a sinful father! Remember, that God moved to pity by my cries, has created hope, to comfort my repentance and to lighten your sufferings!"

The promises of the Lord were not empty. While the earth watched with fear and trembling the terrible changes that sin generated in her bosom, the heavens heard echoing only ineffable voices of grace and pardon.

The second person of the Divine Trinity, moved by love, offered himself to the Father as a sublime holocaust, which would redeem man from sin; and the Almighty abandoned his only Son to a disgraceful death, to save the guilty one who was still very dear to him. Then a powerful voice arose from the heavenly council, proclaiming this consoling prophecy: "The Cross will save the world, and only those who bear the imprint of this divine Cross will form the elect!"

Let heaven and earth be dumbfounded with amazement and admiration, at seeing God struck with anathema for the sake of an ungrateful creature! Let every being in the universe humble itself, and adore profoundly.

It is not enough to admire Jesus Christ offering himself as a victim of expiation. It is necessary to unite ourselves to Him in such an incomparable sacrifice; it is necessary to follow him in the bloody struggle that lies before him; it is necessary to suffer, to be racked with pain, to die, in order to regain our beautiful heavenly homeland.

Well then, for man who has fallen and been redeemed by the blood of God, it is only just and necessary, to walk along a path of suffering. Therefore, while this inescapable outcome is repugnant to a vile and sensual man, the unchanging oracle, the faithful believer follows joyfully

in the footprints of His Redeemer, asking for even greater torments, which might open the eternal gates for him.

Our first parents gave us the first example of this just and terrible need for sufferings. Adam ripped open the hard earth with painful labour, to obtain his food from it. Eve could not give birth to her children without experiencing intense pain.

“Ah!” repeated the unfortunate couple, “Why did we sin? We were sovereigns in a garden of delights, whereas now, strangers in this land of exile, we have to go on without rest, from suffering to suffering. Our pale lips no longer bear a smile, while our eyes, filled with tears, no longer dare to turn to that heaven which witnessed our crime. All day, we are pursued by tormenting remorse; then all night we are besieged by fearful fantasies, born from our afflicted consciences. What would become of us, if God had not promised us a Saviour? When will he ever come, the One Desired by all Nations? Ah! before he comes, will we have to wander for many long years in this land of misery, to be then buried for an even longer period in the valley of darkness? Will our souls have to sleep for many ages? We shall die! Yes, we shall die! the Lord said so. Why did we sin?”

They both wept, and each new day revealed to them more and more, the unlimited future open to the unhappiness of man. They were still not aware of all its desolating immensity, when jealousy poisoned the heart of Cain. Abel fell under the blows of the fratricide, and the miserable parents cried out in the anguish of despair: “So this is death! It is we who invoked it upon that beloved head! Abel! Abel! without our disobedience you would have been happily alive! Cain! you would be innocent!”

In that way, Adam discovered the first link of that unending chain of crimes which was about to begin and would stain the world with blood. He was overcome with horror and fear in perceiving how mankind, signed with the seal of original sin, is capable of every possible crime. From the sin of Adam flowed the blood of Abel! From the blood of Abel arose black whirls of all sorts of crimes.

In order to regenerate man, it was expedient to have a model of virtue which would make virtue possible again. Jesus Christ appeared! The whole world, prostrated before the crib of the Divine Babe, began to count, from that moment onwards, a new age full of marvels.

Let us observe the marvels of the life of Christ, and also those of His death, which are even more admirable. In the face of that mystery, full of sorrow and of hope, we shall feel the deepest veneration and an unlimited gratitude that is beyond words.

The great mystery is finally revealed to man. The sublime way of the cross is pointed out to him as the only way that leads to final salvation. Who would refuse to step on this way and to tread it at a determined pace, when Jesus Christ himself says to him: “Take up your cross and follow me?”

Then, let us follow the pure and Immaculate Lamb on the painful path of poverty and humiliations. He formed out of this poverty and humiliation a treasure, which virtue makes fruitful on earth, watering it with her tears, though its fruit will be gathered only in heaven.

Now, who can ever be ashamed of wearing the garments of poverty or of illness, since a God has deigned to immortalise the cross and to make of it the sceptre of the universe?

Therefore, blessed are the oppressed, the afflicted, the sorrowful, those whom the world despises, rejects or scorns! God has sanctified their pains; he has exalted their sufferings. Oh you who know the world only by its thorns, be hopeful! Soon, the hour of your liberation will be

sounded, and to you, death will not show itself surrounded by its dreadful retinue. You will see the Angels flying down to receive your soul and to bear it triumphantly to the feet of the Eternal One. Up there, in the rays coming from the divine throne, it will again live in immortal splendour, while the sinful soul will drop down, withered like the dry straw of the fields.

The above is the significance of the Gospel. The kingdom of heaven is for those who suffer. Therefore, anathema to the world, to the foolish pleasures of the world! They wage a rebellious war against the destiny of man who is a pilgrim and traveller on the earth, against that God who willed to die in torments in order to save us. Yes! He willed to offer just this sublime sacrifice: who can doubt that the Lord could have chosen a thousand other ways to redeem us?

Then, why did the Sovereign Lord of the universe select the ignominious death of slaves? Because he is the very essence of goodness; because men being condemned to fatigue and sorrow by the fall of Adam and by their own wickedness, he wanted his own life to be nothing but fatigue and pain. In order to give us an example, to give value and dignity to misfortune, and to console and inspire us to struggle up the steep path that leads to Heaven.

Would we still dare, perhaps, to continue living a soft and pleasure-seeking life, when the God of the universe has no place to lay his head, when he receives only persecution and insults from men and uses His powers only to heal the sick and run behind the lost sheep?

When the Man-God mixed about with sinners he did not do it in order to approve the maxims of the world, but to fight against them. He never tasted its pleasures. He never laughed unbecomingly; and his sweet and majestic seriousness inspired reverence in those who, even though they did not recognise him as God, admired him as a man.

Jesus Christ, while conforming himself with generous condescension to all the duties imposed upon him by his social status, wanted to sanctify them with his example; at the same time, he thundered against the abuses of a corrupt age, which adored pleasure and fled from suffering. He cursed the rich and sensual man who fed on delights, who wore luxurious clothing, who spent his life in continuous feasting, and who, puffed up with his abundance and his prosperity, despised poor Lazarus, who lay dying at his gate, full of sores. But, says the Gospel, *It happened later, that the wicked rich man died, and was buried in hell, while Lazarus also died, and was triumphantly carried to Abraham's bosom.*

So, it is the rich, gay, luxurious world that Jesus Christ condemns; it is the virtuous poor man that he receives into his kingdom. Now, which of us thinks about that anathema of the Saviour? Which of us understands that suffering and fatigue are as necessary for our eternal salvation, as air is for our fleeting existence? Quite different are the feelings of the worldly man, when he closes his eyes to such a luminous truth, and goes on repeating: "that there is nothing wrong in living as the world does, when one belongs to the world, and that therefore that can in no way offend God".

Cruel ignorance! Fatal insensibility that makes us trample on the blood of a God, and leads us to lacerate the divine code of the Gospel, whose words spell out our condemnation. Oh Victim covered with blood! The world despises and insults you. It completely forgets you. I see You alone and abandoned on Calvary. When You exhale your last breath for us there, there is no one amongst us who cries over your spasms, who collects your tears, who pays attention to your sighs. Your perverted children have turned their backs on your bed of death, and are already running far from you, panting as they race behind the attractions of their sinful inclinations. Your sorrowful lamentations cannot move them to pity, not even for themselves.

The disciples of the Man of Sorrows want pleasure at all costs, even at the cost of their own souls; which cost you the last drop of your blood!

The sinner defiles himself with such monstrous ingratitude without any scruple, even calling it open-minded philosophy! Return to your senses, poor fools! Open the holy books and learn what a debt you have contracted with the Lord. Think that, to expiate your sins there is no other way than that of uniting yourself to Jesus crucified, making reparation for the sins of the past with penance, preventing further falls with prayer and almsgiving, keeping far from the amusements that inflame the passions. In short, you must seek happiness in the fulfilment of your Christian duties and consequently those of your state of life.

Miserable blind people! Who will ever open your eyes to the extreme danger of your prosperity? May be reason? But you no longer listen to it; it is suffocated like a groan by the inebriating din of the world. May be Religion? But that is dead in your hearts, where only a profound ignorance of the eternal truths reigns supreme. Will it be at least reflection? But you flee from it as from a hateful enemy of your tranquillity. Then it will be experience! But no, not even that has any voice with you, senseless throng, who, under your white hair, conceal the tastes and whims of improvident youth!

No! There is no human power that can save you! On the other hand, you do not want to save yourself! That would ask too high a price of your passions. Well then, God wants this for you: from the infinite treasure of his patience and his mercy, He draws out the whip with which he strikes you, not so much to punish you, as to correct you. Unfortunately, adversity is beneficial only to those souls who humble themselves under the stroke that wounds them.

In offering us peace and pardon, God does not force us to accept. Man retains his dreadful freedom to lose his soul, and the irreligious man uses this freedom to rebel against that hand that touched him only to heal him. He blasphemes against his God! He curses himself; furiously tearing at the wound that consumes him, he causes terror in all around him, with his excessive rage!

A terrible sight, which reveals to us already on this earth, the horrible mysteries of hell.

On the other hand, let us take a consoling look at the Christian who recognises the Justice of God in the blow which strikes him. He suffers; but in peace. He weeps; but his tears, like beneficial dew, appease the burning that torments him. Having repented, he hopes, and smiling without bitterness at all the bitterness of life, he waits for death serenely. He even calls on it as a liberating Angel through whom he will be reunited with the God whom he adores, and without whom he cannot attain life.

Then the Eucharistic Bread, which formerly was his food and his delight, no longer suffices to satiate his ardent love. He would like to remove the mysterious veil which conceals Jesus on the altars. He yearns for an end to that alternation of fervour and tepidity with which God puts him to a severe test. Like St. Theresa, he dies of anguish at not being able to die!

Oh worldly men! It is not possible for you to understand these exalted values, since you see in the Christian only a slave destined to die in shackles, worn out by anguish and sufferings. Get out of your deception! Know that the delights of your entire life cannot compare with one single moment of those sublime joys, of that delightful peace that constitute the happiness of the Christian who is faithful to God or is reconciled with Him!

Therefore, pray! love! suffer! Thus you will arrive at acquiring the only true wisdom, the wisdom of the Saints! Thus you will attain an understanding of the unparalleled necessity of pain and suffering!

JESUS, MARY AND THE ANGELS

or

THE PILGRIM

AT THREE FAMOUS PLACES

IN THE HOLY LAND.

...

A pilgrimage of the spirit, a journey of soul which is proper to every believer. It does not matter whether it is a “real” pilgrimage, a physical transfer towards the Holy Places. It is the heart of the author that travels, that crosses seas and skies to go to the Holy Sepulchre, to Nazareth, and finally to the mountain where Jesus was tempted for forty days. He reflects and prays there.

First of all he stays in front of the sepulchre... “ On my knees, I bowed low on the stone that had received the sacred Body of Jesus, and meditated on all that the Saviour, so good, so loving, so merciful, has done for us. It was a precious occasion for me to express sorrow and repentance and, through deep meditation, to express the deep gratitude I owed to the infinite goodness of God that saved me from the precipice”.

Jesus, the promised one of the most High, the faithful one, the patient one, has regenerated through blood and the pain of death that very man who did not want to recognise him and crucified him on the cross. The awaited Redemption was accomplished all the same. It depends on us now to accept its fruits, to bring them to fulfilment.

The pilgrim reaches the dwelling of the Holy Family in Nazareth, and turns his mind and heart to the Mother of the Son of God. “This is the mother that God wished to give man, so that she might act as mediatrix between human misery and divine mercy. Oh, Mary! Who can ever explain what treasures of grace the Lord bestowed on you in abundance? With what immense charity you consented to participate in the great mystery of our redemption? Your resignation in accepting as your children, those very men who immolated Jesus, the fruit of your womb?”.

Mary perseveres in her work. The sinner can and must throw himself at her feet, narrate to her his own sins and his repentance: then he will feel penetrating into his heart the consoling certainty that the Queen of Angels intercedes for him as well as for all of us, obtaining forgiveness for us.

Finally he pauses on the Mount of Temptation, where he experiences the fatigue of trial and the consolation of the Angels, a mysterious and constant presence that accompanies man from birth to death. “The universe, which seems to the unbeliever to be only material, to the eyes of the faithful appears full of mystery and rich in divine signs. Heaven is populated by innumerable spiritual creatures, whom God, in his generosity, sends as guardians to each country, every city, even to the most miserable of dwellings. How can we doubt that they work for us, when we read in Holy Scripture: “God will send his Angels, lest you dash your foot against a stone”?

Can a wise man refuse to offer his own heart to such a divine design?

Jesus, His Virgin Mother, the Guardian Angels, are our most sure supports.

Inside the church that encloses the Holy Sepulchre, almost at the foot of Calvary, and also within the same enclosure, one sees a magnificent rotunda, with a gallery and a majestic dome resting on a circle of sixteen tall pillars. Right under that dome, from which comes the only light in the rotunda, is erected in the middle, a white and yellowish mausoleum in the form of a sarcophagus: this is the monument that encloses the Sepulchre of Jesus Christ.

One enters from the eastern side. From there, just after passing by the door, one enters the "Chapel of the Angel", the inner walls of which are lined with marble. In the centre is a pedestal supporting a stone that measures 45 cm. on one side. This is the stone on which the Angel sat on Easter morning, when he said to the women who had come to embalm the body of Jesus: "Surrexit: non est hic!", "He is risen: he is no longer here".

It would almost seem that God, in his goodness, through the serenity of the ambient and the thoughts of life and joy that are awakened in the soul, desired to temper, here, the overwhelming sorrow that would have been caused on suddenly seeing the Sepulchre of Jesus Christ. Instead, the voice of an Angel seems to say to the Christian today, as he then said to the women, "Be comforted! He is not here!", "Non est hic!".

In front of the pedestal one perceives an opening, a small door, low and narrow, from which beams a very bright light, and which can be entered only by bending very low. This leads to a small room, not much more than three square metres, about two and a half metres in height, and illuminated by forty lamps, the smoke of which escapes through three openings made in the ceiling. To the right one sees a marble table, occupying the whole length of the room and half its breadth. This room is the Holy Sepulchre, and that is the slab on which the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ was placed, with the head towards the west and the feet towards the east. The tomb and the table have both been chiselled entirely from the rock itself. In the course of time they were lined with marble, as a protection against the pious but reprehensible custom of pilgrims, who considered it licit to break off a little piece to take away with them.

The Franciscan Fathers, who have a small residence within the enclosure of the church itself, sing a solemn Mass inside the Holy Sepulchre, every morning at 5.00 a.m. The singers remain outside, but the priest celebrates in the Sepulchre itself, on a portable altar which is removed later, after the divine office.

I will visit the Holy Sepulchre every day it is open during Lent. Meanwhile, I entered it last Saturday, and spent the last three days before Ash Wednesday there, in deep recollection.

(Fr. Geramb.'s Journey to Jerusalem, 1836)

During those disturbing days when people seemed to know no other temple than banqueting halls and theatres, I felt anxious to climb up Calvary and there do just reparation for the errors of sinners, and for those most harmful pleasures that I, too, had tasted in my life. It was a precious occasion for me to express sorrow and repentance and, through deep meditation, to express the gratitude I owed to the infinite goodness of God for having saved me from the precipice. How sweet were the moments that I could spend near the tomb of my Saviour! How sweet, were the hours of night and of silence! So different from those in which people, inebriated with insane joy, between their dancing and their gormandising, forget their own eternal salvation and the God who redeemed them, immolating tranquillity, sacrificing their health, losing for ever that very soul that they had received from the Creator!

On my knees, I prostrated on the stone that had received the sacred Body of Jesus, and meditated on all that was done for us by our Saviour, so good, so loving, so merciful. My thoughts followed him every moment of his poor and laborious life, in the suffering he took upon himself, from the humble crib of Bethlehem, where I had adored him a little earlier, to the Cross of Golgotha, on which he willed to consummate his sacrifice in expiation for our sins; up to the cold Sepulchre which I now touched, and in which he remained three days as a prisoner of death. Never before as in that moment, had I understood so clearly, nor perceived so deeply, the excess of love with which Jesus loved human beings. With what excessive ingratitude he has been rejected. For this, in the depths of my heart I asked him to pardon the world as well as myself, who, unfortunately, had imitated its errors.

But in the meanwhile another thought began to pervade my mind: alone, in the silence of the night, and in adoration of that Sepulchre, I experienced a new kind of happiness, which cannot be described in words. The love of Jesus spoke to my heart, as forcefully as it would have if that tomb, opening itself, were to show me to what state he had been reduced by his torments and death, which he himself had overcome. I saw his holy head, that forehead pierced by thorns, his hair dripping blood, those hands and feet that were pierced. Immediately after that, I saw him risen and victorious, feeling myself almost crushed within his loving arms. While I tasted the ineffable sweetness that he sends to those who want to serve him, to those who want to belong entirely to him, a voice, in my heart, cried out: "You, what have you done, to deserve not being confused, during these days, with those unfortunates who, while such a pure happiness fills your heart, abandon themselves to vain pleasures, to a foolish gaiety, to a brief and fleeting delight, which will later change into a long series of remorse and disgust?". Hearing that voice, I felt myself driven to deep gratitude, made even more profound by the most vivid awareness of my unworthiness. I did not know how to thank heaven for having granted me, a repentant sinner, such a great grace that it could constitute a reward worthy of a saint.

Similar thoughts filled the days indicated by the Church as preparation for the sublime mysteries of our Redemption, which were followed by the most sorrowful and glorious days on which the Man-God gave his life for us. What inexpressible sentiments then penetrated the depths of my soul! What silence! What consternation! What dark clouds surrounded me! What a sombre and solemn night enveloped the entire atmosphere with its heavy gloom! It lay heavy on a silenced earth, whose vast territories lay inert, lifeless, uninhabited. The astonished air wailed and held its breath, and the cold silence of death reigned supreme over nature, who, causing dismal mourning, proclaimed to the universe that its Author, its supreme Ruler, lay there in that Sepulchre. A dismal calm and mournful silence reigned supreme; such that I felt nothing but my own heart-beats and heard only the sighs of my soul.

Kneeling on the threshold of that venerated tomb, I humbly adored my Saviour, bowing my head towards the sacred floor, holding my tear-drenched face in my hands. The Son of the eternal God, of the love of a living God: He, the splendour of divine light, to whom the heavens pay homage with the name of the Most High, and whose word created the universe, Jesus, the object of my love, was inside that solitary Sepulchre, enclosed within walls of rough stone! Oh,

adorable Body, disfigured by the most atrocious torments and by a most cruel death, allow me to wash you with my tears! Those torments were truly indescribable. Not even the heavenly voices suffice to relate them, even when mixed with the canticles of praise that echo around the Throne of God.

How pale are those cheeks today, which, with sweet enchantment, wonderfully combined with divine greatness and heavenly peace, expressed the grace of pardon, human goodness, the mercy of an infinitely merciful God! His eyelids are closed; and those bright eyes, the sanctuary of divine love that could look at man only with tenderness, are now lifeless, even though perhaps moist with some tears, the sure sign of inexhaustible charity. His mouth is closed with the seal of death. Those adorable lips, from which came words of life, whose heavenly smile promised all the delights of Heaven and which often opened to announce mercy and bestow pardon, I see them now livid and swollen! I see, pierced and bleeding, those hands that generously bestowed great graces! Cold and wrapped in funeral cloths, is that divine heart, that had once been open to all who were unhappy. That side, pierced by a lance, and the open wounds! Those feet, always ready to pursue the lost sheep, so cruelly pierced! Oh Jesus! Oh my beloved Jesus! Listen to my cry of anguish: tormented by such a sorrowful scene, frozen with inexpressible terror, the strength of my spirit seems to fail me!

What a detestable crime! What an abominable shame! How it must have hurt the heart of the Father, who, filled with pity at the fate of his slaves, had sent them his only Son, in order to reconcile them with their offended Master; seeing them, on the contrary, brutally immolating their own generous Liberator! Oh Heavens! Who, then, is the monster that dared to stain his murderous hands with the blood of God's beloved Son? Who is the wicked person who dared to plait on his august head, the crown of thorns, sprinkled with his most precious blood? Oh Jesus! The most amiable, the most beautiful of all human beings! Who disfigured you so cruelly? Who scourged your adorable body? Who tore that divine flesh over which I now shed a torrent of tears? Who? Draw near, you sinner! Come and contemplate the horrible sight, and then tell me, if you, know, whose arm *had* inflicted the heaviest blows! You become pale! You step back with terror! No! Come! Draw nearer! Raise your hand above that livid corpse, above that bleeding face, and then swear, if you dare, that you are not his assassin!

But, what sudden disturbance fills my heart? While I shudder with horror and indignation, why do I feel my heart beating desperately? Panting with fear I tremble, even to the marrow of my bones! O just God! Am I, perhaps, the guilty one? Here a terrible voice resounds in the depths of my heart. I try in vain to smother it, but it cries out: "Yes, you scoundrel, you are the one!" I? "Yes, just you!" I, the author of the most atrocious offence? Of the most monstrous crime? I, the assassin of a God! I, a deicide! How can I have these thoughts without my heart breaking into two? Without bursting out into a torrent of tears? How can I not experience terror, at hearing the voice of Jesus saying to me continuously: "Yes! You scourged me, through the hands of my murderers! You wounded me, you crowned me with thorns! The murderers are your sins!". Oh, my soul, humiliate yourself to the lowest degree of contemptibility! Oh sin, abominable monster! Who will not be struck with horror at the sight of you? Who will not flee even your shadow, knowing that you caused the death of God! And what a death! The torment of the Cross!

What a wonder! Ineffable mystery! The wicked one sins, and the innocent one is punished. The unjust person is spared, while the just one succumbs to unheard-of harshness. The Eternal One abandons his Son to redeem a base slave! The Author of life lets himself be led to the slaughter like a timid lamb! The lethal blade opens his veins, and blood spurts out and spreads throughout the world, to cancel the sins of his creatures. What a miracle of mercy! What an excess of compassion!

Jesus! The one promised by the Most High, faithful and patient, you have given us new life in the blood and suffering of your death! Liberator, Redeemer, Saviour of us all! Jesus, the

only perfect friend! God of my life! Love of loves, divine heart and inexhaustible fount of mercy, pardon, generous and constant tenderness, unprecedented and unlimited goodness! Yes! From today I return to you, and do not wish to go away from you for even a single moment, nor to shift my spirit and my heart from the thought of you, of your blessed love! From now on, I want to place all my glory in belonging to you, loving you, serving you, conforming myself in everything to your divine will!

Would I not be the greatest of sinners, if I were to deny my heart to a God who loved me so much as to give his life and his blood for my salvation? Certainly! The price of my soul is the blood and the life of Jesus. I know its value, from knowing how much it cost. No human mind in existence, my Jesus, can understand your indescribable sorrows, nor the infinite patience with which you bore them. More righteous than all mortals and heavenly spirits, you were made to suffer the torments of Hell. You wore the purple robe of derision while your enemies insulted and mocked you; your Royal right hand held a contemptible rod instead of a sceptre; your divine head was crowned with a diadem of thorns! You were dragged up the infamous hill, and the cruel wood supported your body and blood! You groaned with a burning thirst that consumed you, and the bitter gall defiled your dying lips. The long agony of the Cross consumed your immortal life.

O divine tomb! You enclose all my affection, all my hopes. Jesus, my Saviour! Jesus, whom I love and adore with all the strength of my heart and soul! O my sweet Jesus! The best, the most merciful of all masters, because you wish to be obeyed only to bring happiness to the one who serves you. You spent all your days in bestowing continual benefits and with your inexhaustible goodness, made the blind see the heavens and the deaf hear their brethren. You, who loved the poor and unfortunate so much, healed the sick and raised the dead to life! Jesus, who lived only to suffer and to pray, to teach the unchangeable truths and then to suffer still more and drink to the dregs, the chalice of dishonour and sufferings! My beloved! You sleep, away from the torments of the most atrocious martyrdom! You sleep, but it is like your sleep on the turbulent waves, which did not prevent you from hearing the cries of your disciples; that sleep that does not leave you deaf to the secret prayer of my heart.

Because, your eternal and omnipotent divinity never sleeps. Resting in this sepulchre are only the earthly remains of the uncreated Being, not subject to corruption, like mine, and like those of all mortals. Always vigilant over your creature, with your divine presence you know all my most hidden thoughts. Not a word escapes my trembling lips, not a sigh rises from my oppressed heart, but you, Lord, who sees everything, know it already! You, whose strong right hand has every power, whose sublime and sacred Name cannot be pronounced, not even by one who invokes the Heavens! O Supreme God! The origin and fulfilment of all things, who, from all eternity, offered yourself to be immolated out of love! Yours is not a deep sleep! You sleep, so as to quickly rise again. In the same way, you created the universe in a split second, when, at your word, the flaming heavenly bodies started moving, drawing with them the obedient spheres. You sleep; but this tomb, which I press to my heart that is palpitating with anguish and with joy, which now holds your poor remains, will shortly see you, free from the shackles of death, ready to triumphantly trample the lifeless dust.

But, what do I hear? From the depths of the sacred Sepulchre, I seem to hear a heavenly voice addressing me with these loving words: "Son of my tears and my blood, do you really wish to spend your days, until that terrible moment that will terminate them, in that softness of life, in those deceitful delights, in proud ostentation and in vain glory which is the triumph of pride, in that great love for the world, my enemy, in disgust for the Cross that sanctifies souls? Son of my un failing love! Take care of your eternal salvation, without delay. You have no time to waste. The longer you live, the closer you are to the end. Just a few days more, and you will fall, enveloped in the darkness of death. That body which you pamper and idolize, will be placed in a coffin and abandoned to the earth, to be food for the most loathsome worms. Today

you live in luxury and splendid honours, you are obeyed, admired and acclaimed! Tomorrow you will be in your tomb! Son of my heart, believe me! The joys of this world are short-lived, and they turn into eternal tears! Pleasures flash by before us like lightning, and those flashes announce the thunder-bolt that will strike wrong-doers for all eternity. Tonight, yes, perhaps tonight itself, you will have to say goodbye to the world forever, to its allurements, to its deceitful attractions. You will have to leave the vain dreams, honours, amusements and celebrations. The thread of life will be cut, prestige will be destroyed, life will be annihilated and the irrevocable abyss of eternity will be opened”.

In this way, prostrate on that stone that spoke to me, within those most eloquent walls, I stayed for some time, absorbed in profound meditation, and repentance, with its sacrifices of reparation, took over my heart. Tremendous truths struck my mind, and filled me with unspeakable terror. Then, one sweet and powerful thought prevailed over all these salutary worries: what singular and gratuitous privilege was this, that I found myself thrust out of the ways of the world? What was the still greater favour, by which I was privileged to taste, on the Sepulchre of Christ, the spiritual delights reserved for those who receive their life from the Cross?

Mary or The Pilgrim at Nazareth

Nazareth, whose inhabitants boast that it is the most beautiful of the simple towns of the region, is in reality just a poor suburb, with nothing attractive. A general view of it shows some small, ordinary houses crowded in disorder at the foot and on the slope of a mountain that rises above it like an amphitheatre. Among the most important buildings, one is undoubtedly the convent of the Fathers of the Holy Land: beautiful, spacious and solidly constructed. The church is inside the convent, but it has never become possible to complete it, because of the jealousy of the Ottomans and the tyranny of their governors. For this reason, one who enters is immediately struck by the disproportion between the length and the breadth of the construction, which otherwise is very beautiful and preserved with the greatest care.

It is this very church that encloses the heavenly and hallowed place in which the ineffable mystery of mercy and salvation, the divine mystery of the Incarnation, took place. Here, the Angel Gabriel greeted Mary! Here, he announced to her the unfathomable plans of the Most High regarding herself. Here, Mary replied: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your word!”

A wide and magnificent staircase of white marble leads down to the exact spot where Mary was at that moment. As in all the sanctuaries of Palestine, this sacred spot is also under an altar, with many lamps burning continuously around it. Inscribed on a marble slab in large letters, one reads the memorable words that contain the most powerful expression of the infinite love of God for mankind:

Verbum caro factum est. The Word Was Made Flesh.

Behind the altar are two rooms carved out of the rock, which formed part of St. Joseph's house. Their very appearance clearly shows that this work is very old. Together, they are about seven metres long and three and a half metres broad. A few unequal steps lead from the first room to the second, in which there is an altar, with an ordinary picture of the Holy Family, and with the following inscription:

Hic erat subditus illis. Here He Was Subject To Them.

In front of these two underground rooms, there was another, outside: according to a pious tradition, this was precisely that exceptional little house that was transported by angels to Dalmatia towards the end of the thirteenth century, and a few years later to Loretto, in the Marches of Ancona. In the place from which it was lifted, two altars have been set up, one to the right and the other to the left of the stairway that leads to the Sanctuary.

Houses similar to that of St. Joseph can still be seen in Nazareth: small, low, and each connected, at the back, with a grotto carved out of the slope of the mountain.

Among all the shrines of the world, the church of Nazareth is undoubtedly the one that inspires the most lively and most tender devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. One sees her picture everywhere. No Catholic gathers flowers without offering them to Mary and placing them on her altar. All over, there are inscriptions in her honour, so much so that on every door and on every wall, one reads: Hail, O Mary! In short, that sweet name is found everywhere. Then, in the choir of the Franciscan Fathers, there is a very large picture of the most holy Virgin. Even though it is not the work of a great artist, it arouses a fascinating effect. The artist has succeeded in giving Mary's features such a gentle and touching expression that, after having lingered to contemplate it for a long time once, the pilgrim cannot go away without returning to admire it a second time. It is before this picture that the Catholics of Nazareth daily offer their homage of their prayers, to the one whom they consider their special mistress and omnipotent protectress.

Having reached the humble place that was one day made important by the great marvel of the divine Incarnation, exactly on the solemnity that every year commemorates the memorable descent of the Angel sent by God, the ineffable acceptance by a most pure Virgin, and the fulfilment of the sublime mystery to which we owe our Redemption, I was very happy to go and stay within the sacred walls that witnessed such great marvels. I chose the night hours, when the crowd of pilgrims and Nazarene Christians was a little less. There, prostrating myself before the picture of Mary, I admired her in her humility, I venerated her in her glory, I implored her in her inexhaustible goodness. Then, since the feast of the Annunciation happened to coincide with the sorrowful days of the passion and death of the Son of the Eternal, the Son of Mary, for our sakes, those very days which, the preceding year, I had spent within the walls of the Holy Sepulchre, suddenly all the mysteries of our salvation flashed through my mind. Almost summarised here, my mind and my heart went through them rapidly, from the Incarnation of the divine Word to the death of the God-Man, from the grotto of Nazareth to the Cross of Calvary. Thus, after having joyously participated in the holy joys of Mary, I cried bitterly over her unspeakable sorrows.

In the old law, God had prescribed "that the sheep should be taken away, before her lamb is killed". The one who issued such a compassionate command, understood the heart of a mother so well! That is not surprising, because it was that same God who made maternal love a marvel amongst all earthly loves, animating it undoubtedly with the burning breath of his own divinity.

Thus, the Lord willed that man, right from his birth, should find, in the solicitous care of a mother, a clear token of what a limitless, tender love can do, since it dedicates itself without reserve. After that, he says: "My love for you is much greater than that of the sweetest of

mothers! Trust in me!" At such an invitation, how can our hearts not burst out into the most fervent gratitude for that God who promises us a more tender love than that of any mother? How can we doubt, then, his infinite goodness towards his weak creatures?

But even these adorable words do not seem sufficiently sweet and persuasive to the Almighty. He fears that the brightness of his divine majesty may terrify and discourage us, that man may not dare turn to him with filial abandonment, and that, like the Israelites, dismayed at the wonders of Mount Sinai, he may exclaim with trembling: "Let the Lord not speak to us!" For this reason, the God of all goodness remembers the promise he had made to Adam and his descendants, of a Redeemer. Behold, at his word, the Saviour of the world took flesh in the womb of a Virgin conceived immaculate, of a Virgin who, one might say, had nothing of our fragile humanity, except the physical appearance.

This is the mother that God wished to give man, so that she might act as mediatrix between human misery and divine mercy. Oh, Mary! Who can ever explain what treasures of grace the Lord bestowed on you in abundance? With what perfection of love and virtue your soul was endowed? With what immense charity you consented to participate in the great mystery of our redemption? Who can measure the humility with which you kept silent about the marvels that were being worked in you? Your resignation in accepting as your children, those very men who immolated Jesus, the fruit of your womb? The strength of soul you manifested at the foot of the cross, from which your Son, the benefactor of the world, was hanging in anguished agony?

Innocent and tender sheep, no one took you away out of pity, at the cruel moment when the immaculate Lamb bled to death! Jesus, so provident with you, abandoned you to the most painful torments. He willed, in fact, that in the sublimity of your love, you should share with him, the bitterness and the glory of his agony. Mary, worthy creature! There you received the divine command to adopt us as your children! There you accepted, with your tears, the testament of love of a God. Your tears were the only reply with which you promised Jesus that you would be our Mother! This title, glorious for every woman, is still more glorious for Mary! She is the Mother of her Lord, and so draws from the breast of the divinity itself, the mysterious truths that are hidden from all mortals, the infinite charity by which she shares in the salvation of the human race.

With what holy solicitude she takes possession of the inheritance left to her by her Son! She adopts all of us, because all of us are equally dear to that adorable Son! And she constantly turns towards men that provident look full of love, that a mother always has for her children, feeling compassion for our miseries, and grieving for our sins. Man is so sinful, so stubborn, so obstinate! Who will defend his cause before the supreme Tribunal? Who will dare to ask for mercy even for those who, with stupid folly, refuse to ask for it? Ah, yes! Only a mother can still hope in the face of an evil that already seems hopeless. Mary tries to save these miserable shipwrecked people: the more furious the storm, the more she keeps watch over them, and makes them see the lighthouse, whose guiding light will lead them to the port. Therefore she asks God, with the penetrating accents of maternal love, to warm those cold hearts, to give life to those corpses, already destroyed by moral corruption. Oh! loving Mother, I seem to hear your most sweet voice imploring for my pardon, to see the lively solicitude with which you hear my prayers in anticipation and You see beforehand, what is necessary and beneficial to me! I know that you love me, that you protect me, and with the fervour of such well-justified gratitude, I exclaim: "No! No one under the protection of Mary can be lost!"

Sinners, if you still have a trace of reasoning left, a small corner of your heart that is not hardened, turn your eyes to the refuge of all sinners! Pray and hope! and do not say that the number of your sins makes this impossible for you! Why should we thus limit the power of the Virgin, most blessed among all women? To encourage you, even if with a weak comparison,

think of the woman who gave you birth, of her affection for you, of her inexhaustible indulgence, of that heart that is entirely yours, which calls you when you leave her, and runs to meet you when you return to your father's house, of those loving arms, that open to press you to her palpitating heart as soon as a single word of repentance issues from your lips. Think, finally, of the tears of tenderness and of joy that stream from her eyes, to wet your cheeks, in the close intimacy of her maternal embrace. Think of her great love, and reflect: "How good my mother is! But Mary is a thousand times more good, because she is a thousand times more perfect, in Heaven, than any other creature who lives on this earth, can possibly be".

Go, then, O sinner! Go and throw yourself at Mary's feet! Tell her all about your sins and your repentance, and in your troubled heart you will experience the consoling certainty that the Queen of Angels is interceding for you, and that she will obtain pardon for you.

My God, what inexhaustible goodness you showed to your weak creatures! Certainly your love, your omnipotent protection would have sufficed to make man completely happy. Yet, your adorable solicitude for us was not satisfied with that. You brought into being a most holy creature, that she might be our mother, our consoler, our advocate. Then, you yourself, submitting to that Virgin Mother, lived for thirty years in obedience to her, and chose to work your first miracle precisely at her request. Then, how can we doubt your esteem for her? How can we not pay the highest veneration to the one who received your first cries and your last sighs?

Oh Nazareth! The most important and most glorious city in the whole universe! Relate to me about the life of the Holy Family, that passed its days within these walls! Since he is our model, I need to know how Jesus behaved on this earth. You show him to me here, hidden in the humble paternal home, at the service of God, with simplicity of heart, obedient and docile to Mary and Joseph. The only pleasure they enjoyed was to go to the temple to venerate the Lord there. Having fulfilled this sacred duty, the humble family, descended from a race of Kings, returned home, and continued the work of a simple artisan. What peace, what calm, reigned in their solitary dwelling! Mary was never bored there. The very sight of her Son filled her with happiness. She admired his grace and his meekness. She learned from his divine words, preserving in her heart an unforgettable memory of all the marvels that it was granted her to participate in. The world, that is indebted to her for its Redeemer, did not attract her at all: chosen from all eternity to be the Queen of the universe, she remained hidden from all, treasuring this privacy.

Who will permit me, now, to give life to these places again, to lift the veil of the past, so as to gaze at the existence of such a holy and privileged family? First, Jesus will appear to me, shining with majestic beauty; though dressed in those modest, common clothes, he carries himself with the dignity of the Lord of the universe. Mary and Joseph contemplate him, adoring the son who is submissive to them. Normally, silence reigns in this house: and what need is there for words, where there is such a wealth of the most intimate sentiments? Why to speak, when desires rising from the heart find a response even before they can be put into words? What immense joy shines in Mary's eyes! What a noble and meditative serenity is seen on the venerable face of the adoptive father of Jesus Christ, and how well it shows that his mind is immersed in the most secret designs of Providence!

How this silent, hidden life of Mary and Joseph, rebukes the noisy life I lived in the world! The world teaches that there is nothing more annoying than living with God and with ourselves. Poor me! Unfortunately, I had obeyed that deceitful voice! I was never able to remain in solitude, not even for one hour. The days that were not dedicated to pleasure, I considered wasted, and the thought of the Creator, to whom I owe all that I am, was lost in the whirl of agitation in which I culpably wasted myself away. Family life, domestic joys, recollection of soul,

the sweet tears of compunction, prayer with its wings of fire: nothing sufficed to move my heart. In my sentiments, which were too materialistic, I recognised that the most sublime delights of Christianity caused me intolerable annoyance. There would be no way out, no eternal salvation for me, if Mary had not interceded on my behalf. From now onwards, therefore, I want to dedicate myself with all my heart and mind, to being devoted to her, taking pride in imploring the Son through her intercession. Then, meditating on the great mystery of our redemption, I shall weep bitterly over the sufferings she had to bear for love of us. What a cruel sword, Mary, pierced your tender heart when you saw the blood of your beloved Son shed for us on the Cross! That blood was your own blood: Jesus had received it from your virginal womb. Therefore, you felt that you were dying together with him. And only your immense pains made you understand that you had to go on living.

It is a consolation to think that at least one sorrow, the only one that was not experienced by Mary, was that of a good mother who fears for her son's eternal salvation. It is an immense suffering, that follows her continuously, grows, burns and consumes; that follows her step by step throughout the day, only to then sit vigilantly at the bedside of the unhappy woman at night. It does not allow her to rest, nor to sleep. Rather, in the darkness it seems to become a terrible monster, that captures and throws into the abyss, that mother's dearest possession, dearer to her than a thousand lives. Faith, which can heal many wounds, only makes this harsher, uttering only these terrible words: "Your son is lost! The eternity of the damned is getting ready to claim his soul!" At such heartrending words, the unfortunate mother is gripped by the anguish of the bitterest sorrow. Cruel desperation draws near her, and is already about to take possession of her! But no! Be reassured. The name of Mary is still pronounced by her trembling lips, and from there, rises to heaven, together with the anguished cries of her maternal heart. These strike the heart of another mother, sweet and powerful: the Comforter of the afflicted, moved by so many tears, then intercedes for the sinner, and for the afflicted woman who wept over her son, already imagining him dead and miserably buried in the ditch dug out for him by sin.

Not only the sufferings of the soul move you to pity, Most Holy Virgin: the illnesses and infirmities of the body also touch you. You stay awake near the sick, and with your benign intercession put an end to the pains they suffer. Still more, you get permission from God to console them with words of conversion, then of hope, and still further, of pardon. This is why, Mary, the Christian world, all over, acclaims the miracles of spiritual graces and the marvellous cures obtained through your intercession, and your maternal tenderness, always provident and active, that trembles for every child of yours asleep on the brink of the precipice.

Be my protectress, then, merciful Virgin, as you already are my firm hope. I invoke you, not that you may ask for those days which I have spent so badly to be given back to me, but only so that, you obtain for me a mitigation of the pain I am suffering, and above all that I be granted humble and Christian resignation. Later, when the hour of my death finally arrives, I entreat you to assist me in my last moments, to accompany my trembling soul to the supreme Tribunal, there to plead the cause of a miserable sinner. In fact, my only hope lies in the infinite merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, and in your intercession, O most clement Virgin! Can your divine Son refuse anything to Her whom he himself chose, from among all women to be his mother?

These are the fervent prayers that I lift up to our sweet Queen, placing them at the feet of the picture before which she is venerated here. I offer them to her, for myself and for all of you, brothers and faithful Christians whom I have left in my native land. Listen to my voice, even though it be of a tired pilgrim, in case it can reach you over the seas that he will probably never cross again! Pay attention to his serious words! They rise feebly from the lips of a man, but

they are inspired by, and echoed by, those very walls that, years ago, used to hear the voice of the Son of God.

Yes! The veneration most worthy of Mary is undoubtedly to meditate on her life, in order to learn to follow her with humility, with love for solitude and silence, in the spirit of prayer, in tender solicitude for the unfortunate! We can hope to obtain everything through her powerful intercession, provided we merit this by our repentance. With respectful fervour, let us recite the Angelus, that heavenly formula that, for the last eighteen centuries, has brought glory to Nazareth and happiness to the Christian world, that sublime prayer that contains the homage due to Mary, faith in her virginal maternity, the suppliant desire for her protection in life and in death. What more can I say? Let us not mind what others say, and let us not fear being seen fingering the rosary, those blessed beads that represent the most frequent prayer and the most precious wisdom of the humble person. Let us venerate every picture of Mary! May she be for us an almost visible lesson of humility, obedience and love of God. May she be the star, the model, the guiding light that shows us the way to salvation and to eternal happiness.

The Angels or the Pilgrim at the Mount of Temptation

The mountain called the Mount of Temptation because Jesus Christ stayed there fasting for forty days before being tempted there by the devil, is a place venerated very much by Christians and by pilgrims in the Holy Land. It is only a short distance from the River Jordan and not very far from the ruins of the ancient city of Jericho. Taking the road from Jericho to the mount, one sees, almost at the foot of it, the spring named after Elisha the prophet, to whom it owes its water, clear, fresh and delightful even today, though not very abundant.

At the time of Elisha, the water was morbid, unhealthy not only for human beings and animals, but even for plants, which usually died there. Troubled by this misfortune, the inhabitants of Jericho had recourse to the holy man, so that he might intercede with God for the end of that calamity. "And Elisha replied: 'Bring me a little salt in a new vessel'. Going to the spring, he threw the salt into the water, affirming: 'This is what the Lord says: I have made these waters salubrious, and in future they will no longer cause death nor barrenness'. And in fact, those waters became salubrious, and are so even today, according to the promise made by Elisha" (2 Kings 2).

This spring, thanks to its green banks and the shade of the trees it nourishes, enlivens the gloomy aridity of the surrounding areas. From here, one climbs up to the Mount of the Temptations, by a steep and rugged path, leaving behind the ruins of ancient aqueducts and the remains of a monastery. The mount is a huge mass of marble, almost triangular in form, and its greyish colour causes quite a gloomy atmosphere. Scanning the rocky slopes, one sees

no shrub, no grass, nor any other sign of life. Only the sight of several cells carved out of the hard rock, and of some caves which still have some fragments of ancient altars, remind the traveller that the Christian hermits used to live here. They had habitations for prayer and penance, similar to those used in other places for death: the Mount of the Temptations has human dwellings of the type that similar mountains in the East have for burying the dead.

The cave in which, according to pious tradition, the Redeemer stayed, is situated near the summit, in a place that is almost inaccessible. And it was from those towering heights that the spirit of darkness showed the Son of Mary the regions of the north, south, east and west, saying to him: "All of this I will give you, if you bow down and adore me".

The caves which are lower down, are used today by the miserable inhabitants of the place, to store the little grain that they manage to get.

Leaving my companions on the lower slopes of the mountain, together with the men who escorted us, I went further up, to the crags amongst which the Man-God stayed in long and austere penance, when, having climbed over some of the steeper edges, I found myself at a point from which I could see the vast extension of the surrounding countries. These, then, I thought, are the countries that the tempter showed Jesus, this is the kingdom which he offered him. And it was here that our Divine Master wanted to give us an unforgettable example of humiliating temptation and victorious rejection.

Then, sitting on a rocky projection, I opened the Gospel of St. Matthew and read the following passage: "At that time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'.' Then the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, 'All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me'. Then Jesus said to him, 'Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve', and behold, angels came and ministered to him."

The thought of this divine scene must make us very grateful to our beloved Saviour, who, becoming Man for us, gave us the example of a rigid abstinence, of which our fasting is merely a pale imitation, and above all showed us clearly the weaknesses to which humanity is subject after the sin of Adam. The wicked Spirit who instigated him, never stopped tempting his miserable children, heirs to that great sin. But the good God himself taught us, to repel the insidious assaults of the Evil One, showing us how in fighting against them we have the aid and the assistance of the Angelic Spirits, who then rushed to serve him in this solitude. For the pious soul, can a place populated by such great images and by such consoling thoughts be called solitude?

No! Our holy Religion, our compassionate and solicitous mother, offers us wonderful examples of consolation everywhere. We think of God as an august and magnificent Being who fills the universe that He himself has made. We, his humble creatures, fall prostrate before such immensity, trembling with admiration and respect, not daring to raise our eyes to the uncreated light, whose splendour dazzles us. But there are also other creatures, who are totally spiritual and reflect that heavenly light: God gives them duties as his mediators, his ministers, guides for our lives. Who can imagine the infinite love of a God who places his Angels at the disposition of human beings? Such an excess of goodness ought to confuse us and kindle in us the most lively gratitude; and yet, which of us thinks of thanking the Lord for this? To love that Angel who accepts us right from the cradle, guides us by hand along the sad pilgrimage of

life, and even comes to watch by our tomb, when all have already forgotten the way that leads to it?

Yes! Our Guardian Angel, faithful to the orders of the Most High, adopts us, accompanies us, consoles us, and speaks to our heart always and everywhere, with the most gentle inspirations. Why have I so often turned a deaf ear to his sweet invitations? Why have I suffocated the remorse that he awakened in my conscience? Why have I afflicted him with my indifference and rather, with such ungrateful negligence? That is not all! How often did he have to shudder with sorrow and indignation, when I made him a witness to my sins and to the evil thoughts that I nurtured in my heart? Then, most pure Spirit, hiding your face behind your wings, you wept over me without abandoning me, contrary to what worldly friends usually do for the smallest mistake. Inspired by the charity of God, you kept even closer to the one who, by violating virtue, insulted you. And instead of getting embittered, you were moved to compassion for my infirmities, and made efforts to heal me by causing a continual, beneficial uneasiness in my soul; and by mixing bitterness in the cup of pleasures with which I inebriated myself.

Finally, sick of that drink which was tempting and fatal at the same time, I fled the world. Nevertheless, my reasoning, always hesitant, hated evil but did not yet embrace good. For this reason, God, having pity on my weakness, sent me troubles and suffering, terrible but fruitful trials that teach us how life is a fleeting gleam of light: the least breath extinguish it. Trials, besides, urge us to extend a deep look into the whirlwind of eternity, ready to swallow us up. Just then, when sorrow had preyed on me and tortured me unceasingly, you, my good Angel, did not go away from my tear-drenched bed, never ceasing to comfort my soul, shattered by repentance and by fear of the divine judgement. The flapping of your wings purified the air around me that suffocated me, and your beneficial breath, refreshing my burning eyelids, closed them in a refreshing sleep. Is there any thought more consoling than the certainty that a Being who is all love, dedicated completely to us, never abandons us even for an instant, guarding us while we sleep, helping us when we are awake, solicitously caring for our good, and guiding us infallibly, finally, to eternal happiness, if we only pay attention to his inspirations?

Once I was persuaded about this truth of faith, that is, of the continuous presence of a heavenly being sent to guard me, never again, and not even now, amongst these desert cliffs which I climb on pilgrimage, did I experience the annoyance or the terror of solitude, and never again have I been downhearted. I confide my thoughts to my Guardian Angel, I entrust my sufferings to him, I relate my pains and show him my tears, so that he may wipe them away. I confess to him my interior struggles, so that he may give me the strength to triumph. When the evil is so strong that it consumes every vestige of strength and firmness, I ask him to pray for me. In that predicament, confident of his defence, my soul finds peace even in the midst of the storm, and no longer fears being submerged by the fury of the waves.

Another truth, which is no less certain than the one that tells us about the existence of the good Angels, affirms that there are also wicked spirits. They are those proud spirits who wanted to be equal to God, but whom He cast down from heaven to the depths of hell. God, who never does anything evil, had originally created even these fallen Angels, good. But, He left them their own free will. They, taking delight in the rare beauty which the Creator had given them, said among themselves: "Let us become gods! Let us become similar to the Lord!" At such sacrilegious words, the foundations of heaven were shaken. Michael, the Archangel of vengeance and right hand of the Most High, soared into space, shouting: "Who aspires to be like God?". With a flash of his flaming sword, he cast out the rebel swarm. Immediately a song of triumph was intoned by the celestial Spirits and, while a lasting peace was re-established in the kingdom of glory, the Angels who remained faithful, now become impeccable, became the first elect of the Lord. The heavens rejoiced, while hell rumbled with the roars of Satan, furious

and unrepentant. In an impetus of rage, he and his accomplices swore relentless hatred for man, seducing him with the same evil mirage that had once ruined them. Pride became the tyrant of the universe.

The devils want to fill the kingdom of hell with unfortunate wretches who, like them, might burn and suffer for eternity. In order to execute this abominable plan, they spread out everywhere, in shadowy groups, wandering around us, always *in search of someone to devour*. They snatch numerous victims, unfortunately, because man is the cause of his own ruin, listening to the voice of his own passions and looking away from the heavenly homeland to which he must tend with the practice of virtue. Yes! Man, blind and wicked, adores Satan under the guise of sensuous pleasure, of glory, of attachment to riches. Why does he not pull away the foul mask from the fallen Angel? Pleasure would then present itself to him in its real colours, shameful and disgusting; earthly glory would vanish from his eyes as smoke that rises into the air without leaving any trace of its passing; and the greed for gold, which brings sunken eyes, rapacious hands, and a hard heart always full of insatiable desires, would not cause him less horror than the rapacious vulture, that greedily tears at its prey and does not leave it till he has reduced it to a bare and shapeless skeleton.

Come, O Lord, to revive my faith, because the Angel of darkness is trying to make me fall. He shows me, in the world, a mirage of happiness, and assures me that I can still enjoy many adventures. Such false visions entice me, generating a restless sadness within me, and I almost regret to find myself, now, far from the joyful crowd of the living.

O my soul, why are you afflicted? Why do you disturb me in this way? Can you forget the unfortunate days spent in the dissipation of the world, the wickedness of the envious, the calumnies of the evil, the anxieties of the celebrations, the fatigue and the satiety of pleasures? How often, going out with the hope of enjoying myself, I have instead found the entertainment cold and insipid? How often, in a flash, an insuperable melancholy took possession of all my thoughts, almost like a dark veil before my face? The repeated disappointments, the many illusions that vanished, ought to have made me wise. On the contrary, I confess with shame, for a long time these sentiments only made the pleasures bitter, rather than making me disgusted with them. Finally, all this, which had seemed important, fell away, and I left the world, distancing myself from the civilized world.

"But why", continues the tempter, have you crossed the seas? Why do you want to abandon the pleasures of life in this way? Now that you have become wiser, you could enjoy, in your own country, the delights of a rich life, and in good company. An easy career, gratifying and pleasurable, lies open before you, the world smiles at you, and you turn your back on it. You want to disown the richest of fortunes! Change your mind, foolish one! and enjoy the fruits of this life, while they are still granted to you by Her who, with one single stroke, can put an end to them all".

But, it is exactly the expectation of death, which is *inevitable*, that disturbs every earthly joy. There is some madness, some frenzied desire, in preferring a passing happiness to the happiness of eternity which will never end. Death, I know, forces cruel detachments on us, and, since no one can stop him, what is the use of trying so much to delay him? No! Life is beneficial to us only when it is considered as the way that leads us to the Lord, like the desert that I can see from these heights: by the whitening lines of its furthest horizon, the Israelites reached the promised land with great fatigue. In the desert, as in life, one suffers the heat of the sun and the torments of thirst, and what is more, one must sometimes battle with ferocious wild beasts. But what does that matter? The faithful one goes ahead courageously, persuaded that his perseverance will be crowned with victory. This is why the virtuous man passes through life in happiness, at the same time longing eagerly for the end of his exile. This is similar to the pilgrim, who enjoys the pleasant places that he may pass through, but never slackens his pace

as he journeys towards the desired goal. Happy, therefore, is he who proceeds along the right path!

Now, who can boast that he has always remained unharmed by the hellish storms of temptation? Who has never been ashamed of having entertained wicked thoughts, or culpable desires, or wicked and shameful hopes? Only Satan can raise such storms in our hearts, and only he can instigate so many evils, even in the hearts of the innocent. So, who will come to defend us from the terrible assaults of the enemy Spirit, if not you, Angels full of love for mankind? From how many falls you have already preserved me! From how many dangers, unknown to me, you have saved my soul! Now, my good Angel, how can I fulfil my debt to you, if not with gratitude? Obtain this grace for me from God, that what I offer you may correspond worthily to your great goodness!

The universe, which seems to the unbeliever to be only material, to the eyes of the faithful appears full of mystery and rich in divine signs. Heaven is populated by innumerable spiritual creatures, whom God, in his generosity, sends as guardians to each country, every city, even to the most miserable of dwellings. The humblest Church, like the poorest family, has its own Guardian Angel. These heavenly Spirits do not disdain to dwell under the roof of a hut, to accompany the home-life of the needy: and, though raised in the shade of the throne of God, they generously leave the beautiful heavenly homeland to visit this land of exile, for the benefit of ungrateful mankind. What divine harmony reigns amongst these sublime Spirits, in mutually helping one another to serve humanity! How can we doubt that they work for us, when we read in Holy Scripture: "God will send his Angels, lest you dash your foot against a stone"?

Thus, down there, towards the east, beyond the lands within my range of vision, in the regions cut by the majestic river Tigris, the Angel Raphael guided Tobias in a foreign land, later restoring him happily to his dear parents. In the same way, in the valley of Mamre not far away, God, by means of his Angels, promised numerous descendents to the aged consort of Abraham. Besides, in the nearby desert he sent one of those merciful messengers to slake the thirst of the dying son of Hagar. So also, an Angel saved Lot and his family from the destruction of the wicked city, drowned in the abyss of the lake that I can see at my feet, waters that are infected and deprived of life in horrible solitude, almost the woeful image of a revengeful desolation. Finally (and this was the most glorious and memorable task entrusted to the blessed Spirits), at God's command, the Archangel Gabriel descended to a miserable village, beyond the mountains of Samaria that I see branching out to the north, and there announced to the purest of Virgins, that of her would be born the Saviour of the world.

Thus, the heavenly messengers intervene everywhere. They pray for those who do not pray for themselves, and stop the deadly thunderbolts that are ready to fall disastrously on many cities, whose inhabitants are perhaps not much less culpable than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose terrifying catastrophe I contemplated there.

As a result of all these thoughts, I already felt that I was no longer alone, among the deserted cliffs through which I had ascended. In rejoining my friends, I almost felt I was leaving a heavenly company that was more welcome, more joyful, more consoling than the human company that I was obliged to return to.

While I descended the Mount, as though the rocks that surrounded me were human beings, dear brothers to whom my heart always spoke, I repeated to myself: "Ah yes! Let us offer our gratitude to the heavenly protectors, ready to save us even when we are unaware of this favour. Let us make it a habit to converse with those faithful friends, who have no other desire, intention or care except our eternal happiness. Let us greet our Guardian Angel and the Angels of our acquaintances. Let us pray to them in all the circumstances of our life, and let us never undertake anything without asking their advice, so that they may inspire us to act

righteously, and may obtain for us from God that help without which every undertaking of human wisdom crumbles like the house built on sand”.

ON EDUCATION OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD
AMONG THE POOR CLASS

*Brief instructions dedicated
to charitable persons*

Introduction

This brief work, as the subtitle says, is offered to the good will of charitable persons.

It is ascertained, in fact, that good education, both of the body and of the spirit, is fundamental for the child to grow up physically healthy and spiritually upright.

Likewise it is clear to all that such an education must necessarily be given especially for the benefit of the children of the poorest classes. Fathers and mothers absolutely deprived of the means necessary for the primary education of their children, often expose their little ones to hardships of every kind: from a poor diet to child labour, to which the little ones are pushed in order to contribute towards the meagre family income. These adults lack the means, money, time, ability and at times even the desire to do their best for the healthy growth of their little children.

That is why free shelters were started all over. These were the “shelter-homes”; Carlo Tancredi’s Kindergarten was an improvement on them. The author wished that soon, in Italy, free Kindergarten schools would be started, entrusted to the generosity of those who could offer their patrimony as a remedy for such a grave social evil.

To quote Carlo Tancredi, these Kindergarten schools were erected for the purpose of gathering in secure places the greatest possible number of children, male and female, not yet old enough to attend the ordinary schools, and of taking care of them during the day, permitting the rest of the family to work, and in this way dedicating oneself to the physical and moral education most suited to the children themselves.

The schools have to be planned out with care, built in the most suitable localities, open to all who are really in need, managed according to strict rules. They should be characterized by obedience and sincerity on the part of the children and loving kindness on the part of the teachers. Moral teachings, some small handwork, a few notions of history and Sacred history, much enjoyment: this is the recipe for a happy first scholastic experience.

Without neglecting their relationship with the parents, whose influence always remains fundamental. The best fruits of childhood will depend, now and always, on their honesty and their love for their children

Everyone, parents, benefactors and society, must sow today in order to reap a hundredfold tomorrow.

*“See that you do not despise
one of these little ones”.*

Mt 18:10

Whatever may be one's opinion regarding the much-debated question of whether the character and behaviour of man are influenced more by nature or by his education, there is no doubt that the tenor of the entire life depends, in most cases, on the first impressions, whether physical or moral, received during childhood. Therefore, if on the one hand the education of the spirit is undoubtedly useful, on the other hand, the attention paid to the well-being of the body and to the development of its faculties, succeeds in bettering, correcting and almost transforming, during the first years of childhood, the physical gifts received from nature. Therefore, regarding the education imparted in early childhood, it can be affirmed that both its components are equally important for the formation of the child. The long dispute that is going on, regards which one carries more weight.

Anyway, one thing is sure: that part of the human temperament that tends to be attributed to nature alone, must logically be considered the effect of a determined structure, or rather of the combination of the senses and the intellectual faculties. A combination which, if it undergoes change while it is still malleable, through external solicitations, whether casual or willed, produces corresponding changes in that very temperament that is usually called natural. One who doubts this, is invited to observe the tantrums and the emerging passions of children: he will see how their moods are almost always an indication of their health, and by analysing this, it is possible to explain the defects or the pleasing inclinations of these innocent creatures. Besides, physiology teaches us – and experience proves it – that in the development of the feelings, which is very rapid when life begins to unfold itself, the days correspond to months in the life of an adult and the months correspond to years. Every whimper, every slight indisposition, the milk that is sucked, the air that is breathed, uncomfortable swaddling clothes, or a moderate freedom for nimble and lively movements, are all things that in a short time produce effects that are lasting and sometimes permanent. Care has to be taken that during that age, when the physical impressions are more profound and almost indelible, these impressions do not meet any opposition from those other impressions, which the soul is capable of receiving only later on, and much less from the formidable force of habits, justly known as second nature; therefore, they alone reign over the other faculties, and prepare them efficaciously for every further impression. It must therefore be concluded that, if moral education is more useful for the youth, physical education is more suitable for the age of infancy. The assiduous care that is taken of infants in rich families, shows this clearly and the solicitude of mothers or of women to whom the children are entrusted, only reinforce this conviction.

So, one understands how important, if not necessary, this first physical education is for the poorer class, even more than it is for the higher classes. Robust health is the most precious gift for anyone who has to earn his living with his own hands. Strength is necessary for the more arduous professions, health is necessary for all. How many poor people find it hard to support themselves with their own work, because they are weak or affected by some infirmity! All of them end up depending on public or private beneficence, to the detriment of manual work, which is so important for the prosperity of the State.

There is no better sight than that offered by a country animated by robust people, without any people struck by disease, because the vigorous and lively aspect of the lower class denotes that they are adequately well-off and that they are used to work. Vigorous farmers, brisk workers, prompt and strong soldiers, can be formed by taking good care of early childhood. Women with a healthy constitution will have beautiful children; little by little,

hereditary and endemic illnesses will decrease among the poor. In short, from the single source of an elementary education that is better cared for, immense benefits will be derived, such as to benefit all the branches of public prosperity. Besides, if robustness and good health are essential to a poor man for the work that procures him what he needs - and brings even the superfluous to others - these are equally advantageous for his morality, keeping him away from a forced laziness and inevitable begging. Therefore, it cannot be denied that, in the interests of the rich and the poor, of the public and private persons, every effort made in favour of the primary physical education of the poor class will procure an incalculable benefit for the entire community.

But, who should take on himself this task, the great importance of which is now very clear? Perhaps the parents, the brothers, the sisters? This is what naturally should be done, but with what means can they do it, since these poor people lack everything? They do not have enough money to buy sufficient clothes, substantial and good food, clean clothes to substitute their filthy rags, wood for warming their benumbed limbs, or for drying the walls of a humid hovel. They have no time to see to the ailments of the children, to interpret their tears, to listen to their babbling voices. Lastly, these people do not have the capacity nor even the inclination to do this, rough as they are and often hardened, by fatigue and humiliation.

Many government and religious charitable institutions provide free education for the young, as soon as they seem to be capable of receiving it. If this instruction, which, though elementary, is sometimes beyond their capacity to benefit from it, is completed by a Christian discipline, then there is nothing more to be desired. But the minimum age for this is often fixed at between five and six years. In the meantime, what is to be done for the smaller children? In what manner can we make them live those first years of infancy, the decisive effects of which cannot be cancelled later and whose negative consequences cannot be counterbalanced? One might reply that there are hospitals and institutions of various kinds for abandoned children, whose families are unable to pay for their maintenance. That is certainly true, and these pious organisations do a great deal of good. But they are rare and necessarily limited; and, besides, many conditions are required for children to be admitted there. For this reason, the benefit that is conferred on one or on only a few in a large family, being insufficient to relieve the other members who are able to work, does not solve the problem and does not free the family itself from the extra burden it has taken on itself. Besides, some parents suffer real anguish to detach themselves from their own children: this natural sentiment deserves much consideration, and in fact it would be very good to encourage it and reward it, more than pity it. It is useless to speak about certain women who, for a modest salary, pose as teachers and guardians of little children. Apart from the fact that even the most reasonable expense is beyond the possibilities of a family in misery, it is well known that the self-interested care taken by these women has little value. Everyday we become aware of the disastrous consequences: no one bothers about the children, so that, abandoned to the harshness and neglect of these presumed educators, they suffer much more than they would at home. Many of them have been attacked by serious illnesses, and among these, one little child was left for many days in the bitter winter without the mistress to whom she was entrusted in the absence of her mother, taking off her shoes and socks, so that her little feet got frozen and had to be amputated.

In view of this situation, and considering that very few means are available for procuring primary education for the infants of the poor, a natural conclusion would be that the parents must see to it, but they are absolutely unable to do this. To have a true picture of this impossibility, let us enter, at dawn, into the miserable dwelling of a poor family, on one of those laborious days during the long winter season, when their life is very difficult because of poverty

After a cold night and a sleep disturbed by frequent crying, which has disturbed and perhaps even irritated the parents, the children wake up, one inside a dirty cradle, one on a torn mattress, another in a corner of the threadbare blanket that is often used to cover the

entire family. Cold and hunger make them cry again, while the mother, with hasty impatience, dresses each one with the worn-out rags that hardly protect them. Then, with no thought about washing them or combing their hair, she hastily hands them a piece of bread, at the most, and prepares herself to leave for her usual work, her husband having left before her. She is followed by the bigger children, who make their way to the public school or to gain that poor handout that is given to those who are not yet strong enough. What will the mother do with the smallest children, who, recently weaned and hardly able to stay on their feet, need continuous care? She cannot count on her husband, who cannot or will not bother about this. She will turn to the brothers or sisters who, even though older, certainly do not have the physical strength and the common sense needed for this task. If she does this, these will lose precious time, they will stop attending school, and will not learn any trade. How will they spend the whole day? Up and down the stairs, when they are not roaming about on the streets, sometimes bent under the weight of the baby they are carrying, sometimes putting him on the ground and pulling and tugging him in a deplorable manner. How many risks they are faced with, besides that of suffering from excessive strain!

One might say that in some professions of the working-class, the mothers can take their little ones with them, and that happens, unfortunately! Many fruit vendors and hawkers, settling themselves with a table or a bench near a wall, in a corner of the road, of a porch, of a compound, or worse, in the middle of a square, work surrounded by their little family the whole day long. Who can say that he has never come across such a sad scene? Exposed to the bitter cold, to the wind, the rain, the sun, with their feet in the muck or in the water, those miserable creatures are to be seen seated close to their mothers upon a stool or a stone, and often upon the bare ground. If they try to take a few steps, the wheels of the carts and carriages threaten to crush them, the horses to trample them. One who passes in haste bumps against them; an animal frightens them, another knocks them down. Everything is a danger to them. Then, if you approach them, the baby will stretch out his little hands towards you, to play, and the mother will immediately turn his smile into tears, grumbling at him and hitting him. The harsh treatment and the blows are often repeated during the day, either because the poor little one tries to move about, or because he playfully upsets something, or because he cries with pain, cold, hunger or fear. His cries disturb the neighbour, interrupt the conversation, irritate the customer. The most he can hope for, when the mother is not in a bad mood, is a small piece of stale bread, or some unripe fruit that cannot be sold. In this way, the little victims lose their health, catching all sorts of diseases. While the many defects of a rough and rude character grow even greater in the parent who already has too many of them, these very defects take root and develop in tender souls, which, like soft wax, easily receive every influence of evil.

One might think that in such moving scenes, which cannot be denied because they take place in the sight of all, are summarised all the misfortunes that accompany the little children of the poor class. If only that were true! But it is not so. Because, while we have spoken up to now about those mothers who are not constrained to be separated from their children, there are many others who unfortunately are forced to do so. Besides, there are others who, because of some difficulty or illness, are not able to look after the family, nor work for it. It is well known that there is little work for women of the lower class, and that it is poorly paid. Serving in private houses, in taverns, in shops, in factories, stitching for a tailor or a second-hand dealer, doing the laundry, washing at the river, going from house to house settling beds, sweeping rooms, carrying water up the steps: this is the life of numerous poor mothers of families in the city. Still worse off are those in the countryside, who have to work in the fields. With what heart do these abandon their children for hours and hours, when not for the whole day? One who works in private houses certainly cannot take them along with her. In the shops they are a nuisance, in the factories they disturb, and while some merciful person may tolerate them, many others send them away or, even dismiss the mother. Those mothers who can take their children with

them, unfortunately leave them on a stairway, in a corner, supposedly in the care of some neighbour. Sometimes she takes them to the river, and quite often fatal accidents take place. In short, there is no escape: either she renounces her daily work, which allows her to survive with difficulty, or she leaves the children alone at home. Here we find dangers of another kind, no less painful, if narrated frankly. How many fires are caused by this fatal imprudence, this wretched necessity! How many children locked in their home, are found hurt, wounded, suffocated or dead! Some fall from the bed; others pull some heavy object that falls on them; some, rummaging here and there, find some dangerous things and put them in their mouths; some stumble and fall into the fire; some, in play, set fire to a straw mattress or to a bundle of twigs. The least that could happen is that the little ones remain alone for long hours, suffering, crying and fretting, shouting, causing great worry to the neighbours and to anyone with a merciful heart. Sometimes, to rescue some of them, so barbarously abandoned, it has been necessary to request the public authorities to come and force open the door of the house.

Such violence or stupidity of the parents is not very frequent, thank God. Rather, in order not to leave the children alone, some mothers look for work that they can do at home. But, the scant payment apart, this is difficult to obtain, because, lacking the peace and the continuity necessary, because of the continual pauses, and because the work already finished is sometimes spoiled by the children, the result is such that it displeases the one who orders and pays. In this way, many remain without work. If we add to these, the mothers who are breast-feeding an infant or looking after a sick child, we find that there are many mothers who are able and willing, but are prevented from exercising a profession that could bring them sufficient income to maintain themselves. Can we be surprised, then, if some, who are more lazy and less demure, degrade themselves by dragging out of the house the children who are so burdensome to them, exposing them publicly to all the possible inconveniences, so as to evoke pity, making use of them for lucrative begging?

It is well for the little children that people in general feel pity for them, so that rarely do their pleas go unanswered. But, just because it is felt for those who are less deserving of it, since the misery of beggars is certainly not the greatest nor the most painful, this compassion justifies and makes acceptable to many, the long series of less apparent evils described above. Sometimes, it all ends with a reproof from one who is unaware of the real state of affairs.

Some will say that the description of these miseries is irritating and nauseating; others will find it exaggerated; still others, perhaps rightly so, may think that these pathetic descriptions—good for moving insensitive hearts or for substituting reality with the imaginary stimuli of certain romances or theatrical tragedies—are superfluous and almost inopportune for the charitable persons to whom we have dedicated this booklet. Oh no! May true charity never tire of delving with loving concern into every smallest or most disgusting misfortune of the human condition. How many miseries, because they are hidden and ignored, out of the path on which alms are usually given, would wait in vain for some relief if they were not taken into consideration by compassionate people! Therefore, may those souls be praised, who try in different ways, individually, to alleviate the unhappiness of children. Let them not be discouraged if they find that isolated beneficence is insufficient, because from their experience and from careful observation comes the conviction about the absolute necessity of more universal means, directed towards obtaining the desired ends.

To pay a widow or an elderly lady who has no fixed work, is in need of help and is known for her religious morality, for looking after, during the day, a certain number of children whose mothers are working, is a very good thing, practised with advantage by a few charitable persons, especially if the widows have the time and the goodwill to dedicate themselves to the children with diligence. Better still, if some small shelter be opened near a factory or market or other places of work, if the benefit can be extended to many children, and if the expense could be increased, for giving them some nourishing food, some medicine for their ills, some help that

is most urgent. Other persons, with as much charity but with limited means, make an agreement with some woman near the mothers, whom they want to help. Still others, when the circumstances permit it, take some of these children to their own home, look after them and teach them, with a goodness of soul that is extremely praiseworthy.

May Heaven protect us from wanting to underestimate such practices, which are all very good: their worth is perhaps greater, in the eyes of God, as well as in the eyes of men, when done by one who dedicates time and energy, spending his superfluous, and perhaps even more than the superfluous, when compared with one who spends lavishly, without renouncing anything and never manifests interest in this regard, We affirm, instead, that these works of charity can never be praised and promoted sufficiently, especially in certain circumstances, when they become indispensable. But, the time has come for acknowledging that, since the needy class is numerous and consequently the needs of little children have multiplied, such partial charity is insufficient, and of little use for the masses in general.

There would certainly be cause to wonder, judging the human heart to be worse than it actually is, if, in a century of universal philanthropy and even, thanks to God, of solid and enlightened charity, it were not thought of, whether for fashion or out of genuine charity or for wise politics, to increase the benefits in proportion to the increased misery, to proportion the means to the greater population, and to provide good education in answer to the new intellectual needs which the progress of civilisation instils even in the lower classes, in spite of every obstacle. This is why, amongst the numerous initiatives mentioned, it is important to remember that of charitable persons who have thought of gathering in a secure place, the greatest possible number of children, boys and girls, who are not yet old enough to attend the ordinary schools, and to look after them during the day, thus allowing the rest of the family to work, and thus dedicating themselves to the physical and moral education most suitable for children.

Much fruit was awaited from such a happy system, and its success justified the expectations. In the course of a few years, in fact, institutions of this type were founded in England, in France and in Switzerland, with various names, like "dame schools", "infant schools", or "shelter homes", all to the great advantage of the needy. Their rapid spread, the virtues of the persons who promoted them, and their prosperous condition today, all prove the excellence of the system on which they were based. Since this system is the fruit of a minute study and of practical experience regarding the age-group that is to be helped, it is proposed as an invariable model for everything concerning the general principles of the branch of charity concerned.

But, if those principles are to serve as uniform rules for whoever desires to help the little children of the poor, regarding the temperament, character and needs of infancy, which are exactly the same in every place and in any circumstance, this will not hold good, regarding matters of the more minute details. The exigencies of climate, the customs of the people, the character of the nation, the nature of the country, the characteristics of the means that it provides and of its institutions, must necessarily have an influence on the mode of conducting the charitable work for the little children. Not all can have exactly the same model, and not all will be of the same size. However, whether they be bigger or smaller, with more generous or more frugal means, more successful or less perfect, every institute of this type will be equally praiseworthy, if it is formed with the same spirit of provident and religious charity.

In the lines that follow, in referring to the "most" that one might be able to do, the intention is not at all to discourage anyone who is doing "less", and if it is possible to demonstrate all that experience shows to be better, this will be useful to one who, wanting to do good, will be able to do it in proportion to the circumstances and his means.

Second Part

*“And whoever welcomes in my name
one such child as this, welcomes me.”
(Mt 18:5)*

The primary needs of a poor child in its infancy and consequently the most essential points of its education are reduced, from the physical point of view, to not experiencing hunger and cold; not suffering maltreatment, avoiding the many dangers which threaten it; having wholesome food, moderate temperature, fresh air, clean surroundings, freedom of movement, a happy and orderly way of life. It could be said that less care is required for moral education, either because its intelligence is still in the formative phase and should not be taxed too much, or, because this care is indirectly substituted by the physical care mentioned above. Keeping them away from bad example and evil impressions, obedience, kindness, sincerity, some elementary teaching, a little work, and above all, the religious principles to be inculcated at every opportunity, constitute the complete moral side of such education. Experience teaches that all these points must be observed without exception.

The purpose of the institution being settled, having arranged the means whereby it can be realised and after thinking of the details of its establishment, it is necessary to choose an appropriate site. The rooms allotted for receiving the children must always be on the ground floor, precisely because by climbing up and down the steps these babies risk having falls and deformities, one of the very evils we must remedy. The rooms must be free from any humidity; rather, they should be airy and ventilated taking care that there are no harmful drafts. It would be best to have many windows, so that the temperature can be modified at will, and the air entirely changed in the absence of the children.

The number of rooms cannot be fixed beforehand, but the greater the number of rooms, the greater will be the benefit, and the children will have more space to move about and amuse themselves. One single room is not enough. Two rooms before which there is a passage or a small entrance-room, could be enough. Then above all, it is indispensable that an adjacent room, easily accessible and not too restricted, be allotted for the toilets. This should be divided into various compartments and adapted for the use of those small creatures. A garden would also be a very good thing, and much to be desired, as is seen in some cities, where much advantage is derived from it. The children could walk in it more spontaneously, enjoying the fresh air, feeling free to play any game and do any exercise, roll on the soft grass, run and play as they like. But in the interior of a much populated city it is difficult to find such a happy combination, more so in those quarters occupied by the lower class, where such institutions should, naturally, be located. In case nothing better is available, a solitary yard, well enclosed and firmly sheltered from all danger, receiving sufficient sunlight and air, could suffice. Here the children can be taken during the few warm hours in winter and for longer and more frequent periods in summer. Where not even a yard is available, or when the weather is not good, one of the rooms must be used for recreations. Finally, the structure must be well placed, and must be easily reachable by those who have to accompany the children. It should be rather close to the houses of the common people and not very far from their working places and the shops frequented by them, so as to spare them time and fatigue.

Once a suitable location has been chosen, the rooms cleaned, the walls painted, the closing of the doors and windows assured, only the apparatus and the furniture remain to be provided, which will not cost much. The greatest expense would perhaps be a wooden floor in the place reserved for recreation, while in the classroom, wooden steps on which to rest one's feet would suffice. It is useless to have wood in the room chosen to be the refectory (in case there are three rooms), since wood absorbs grease and dirt more easily and gives out an unpleasant odour.

Passing on to examine the various objects that need to be provided and observing step by step those which are appropriate for each room, we see that the entrance should be furnished with a bucket and a ladle, a tin basin, a jug for water and some towels, besides a sideboard on which to place the wooden bowls, the spoons of iron or brass, the tin cups and other similar objects. The walls must have shelves, on which to keep the little baskets that the children bring along, containing that little food which the parents give them for the day.

The first room after the entrance should be used as the refectory, because its nearness to the entrance makes serving as well as cleaning easier; several rows of benches, of two different heights and breadths will be enough. The higher and broader ones will be used as tables, the others as seats. Later they will be kept one over the other along the wall, specially where, if only two rooms are available, the first one has to be used as refectory as well as the recreation room.

The second room, which needs the most light possible, is usually used for school. It must be furnished with two or three rows of benches with wooden foot-rests and arranged like an amphitheatre, easily moveable for the usual cleaning of the floor, but connected to one another in such a way that the children may not be able to shift them.

Where a third room is available for recreation, this should be the farthest one, in order to avoid the accidents that might occur near the entrance door. It is enough to have a few seats, some toys for children or some simple and safe equipment for the exercises of gymnastics compatible with the age of the little ones. One or two bookcases to keep books, handwork and toys, some chairs of different sizes, a big and simple picture of St. Joseph, like the ones used in the schools of Christian Doctrine, a clock, a Crucifix or a statue of Our Lady, some pictures of piety or Bible History, complete the list of furniture necessary for a Kindergarten school. The pictures should be coloured and should not be very small. It is good to hang them on the wall, but the ones that represent episodes of Bible History or other instructive subjects should be easily removable, so that they may be shown and explained to the children from close by.

In no public school is fire used. Lighting it would be troublesome, dangerous and expensive. However, in those places where children are kept for long hours, many of them sickly, of weak constitution and often insufficiently dressed, it would be good to maintain a moderate temperature. Therefore, a heater is needed, to be used only during very cold months and to be kept between the classroom and the entrance, in such a way that the first may be warmer. The room which is used for recreation must be left absolutely cold. The heater must be protected by a grill of strong iron, close to which the children can warm themselves sufficiently. There should be no metal parts in the heater, nor in the tubes. Towards the closing-time of the school, the temperature must be decreased, so that the children may not suffer on returning to their freezing houses.

Having made the choice of the place and organised all that concerns the material aspect, one must think about the choice of personnel, i.e. the persons who will have to take care of the children, serve and teach them. There is no doubt that these should be women, because women are considered more capable of every minute and loving care of the children of both the sexes, and this in the richer classes too. Besides, they are more easily available, being often unoccupied, more docile and generally requiring less salary. In some places the direction of such structures is entrusted to an entire family: the husband takes care of the male children

and the wife of the female ones, while the rest of the family helps in the service. It would be better to have only a husband and wife, but in any case men are not suitable for this kind of work. Besides, thinking about the family distracts them from that exclusive and wholehearted dedication which is the main condition for this kind of service. First of all we must exact an exemplary religious morality, to which charity, sweetness, great patience, love for order and cleanliness ought to be added. Young women well known for such qualities and coming from some homes where they lived in very strict discipline, are best for this task, if widows of the right age and without a family are not available, who are known to have the above mentioned virtues. The latter have the added benefit of already knowing the nature, the needs and the language of children. Then, a healthy and robust constitution is required of all, in order to bear up the fatigue which, if not particularly heavy, is continuous for the whole day, to know to read and write, a good knowledge of the catechism, of Bible History and of simple handwork which can be taught in the early childhood.

Two teachers would be enough for a hundred or more children. In some institutes they suffice even for a greater number, if it is a matter of ordinary care: but in that case we cannot hope for even a minimum physical and moral education. Two teachers for a hundred children have continuous work. Accompanying the little ones to the toilets is a continuous and annoying disturbance. Then, they have to substitute each other during meal-time and, if they do not have a kitchen close by, they will have to eat in one of the classrooms when it is not occupied. If even their apartments are at a distance, it is indispensable, anyway, that, once they begin their service, they should never leave the children alone, not even for a moment. Obviously, to these two teachers a man or woman helper should be added, specially if the number of the children enrolled goes beyond hundred, for the important daily chores, such as cleaning of the place in the morning, bringing water or wood, and later on also, the lunch of the children, where this most useful charity is practised. Then, needless to say, the person who has founded the school or, if they are many, one of them, or somebody else whom these might consider trustworthy, should keep careful watch over the teachers themselves, and over the day's proceedings. Truly, when it is compatible with one's state, this dedication of one's time and energy to the children, will really be the best charity, much more meritorious and useful than money, because its price can never be paid. This person will also have to decide about the admission of the children, gathering all the information that is required before the registration that follows, and any other similar task.

The admission of the children depends on their age, on their poverty and on other particular conditions in which families live.

We cannot fix beforehand the minimum age of the child for admission. We would say that every child, having ascertained that he does not dirty himself without perceiving it, and that he can walk by himself or at least know to stand on his own, must be admitted. The age beyond which the child should be dismissed must be fixed at 5 or 6 years, both because, after that, having girls and boys together would be inconvenient, and because it is obligatory for all to attend the public schools at that age.

Poverty is another necessary condition for admitting the children: in fact, since this institution is fully gratis, it ought to be reserved only for the poor. It is true that in some cities where there are many working people, it was thought of opening institutes like elementary schools and day shelter homes for the children of artisans or of other families of common people, asking them to pay a modest sum per month for admission. But this is a different matter, and though in itself a good thing, because it favours the spread of such work and extends it to a greater number of families, it does not fit in with my way of thinking. The great difficulty lies in defining true poverty, i.e. the most deserving cases to receive the benefit of which we are speaking: these may not always be in absolute poverty, but relative, so the circumstances of the family ought to be taken into account. In fact, there are many persons

who usually earn their living by doing some common work, who cannot be defined miserable. However, they would soon become miserable, if their family would be an obstacle to their usual work. To admit one or two children from each family when a large number cannot be admitted, would seem, at first thought, the best solution: but it is, in reality, opposite to the aim proposed by this institution. It is true that in this way a greater number of families will benefit; but, not leaving them completely free, will not benefit anyone totally. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that we must decide to admit all the children of a poor mother or of a widowed father at the right age, each time we are sure that leaving even only one of them at home would hinder this person from working and earning his livelihood.

We need to have minute and reliable information about the family situation on which the admission of the children is primarily based. All know that the usual affirmations of poverty are not sufficient. Therefore, one must ask for a certificate from the Parish Priest or from other persons who are well-acquainted with the family, or protect it, and can take responsibility for it. These certificates are kept along with the birth certificate of the children, to be collected at the time of their admission. Besides, in the admission register where the names and surnames of the children, the profession of their father and mother and their home address are written, the name of the person who has sent the guarantee certificate must be noted down, so that it may be possible to contact him if necessary. This will naturally give rise to uncertainty in the benefactors, whether to give preference for admission to children of those parents who have good conduct according to the information taken, and who therefore seem to be more worthy of receiving help. In fact, some others would say that this is beyond discussion. It is true, such preference would be absolutely right were it a matter of a simple subsidy, alms, or ordinary charity. But we must focus on the present and future benefit to the children, namely their physical and moral education, with all the important consequences of the same in the future. Therefore, the main scope of the institution requires precisely this: that we accept in preference to the others, children of depraved and blameworthy persons, in order to save them from danger, and from receiving bad example. Such being the case, it is best to reconcile oneself to this preference, and overcome the repugnance one might feel, reflecting on the true spirit of wise and impartial charity, which must always direct and distinguish this type of beneficence. It would not be contrary to this spirit, but rather perfectly in accord with it, to use the giving of this help for observing the conduct of the parents, encouraging them to work, even correcting them and threatening them if necessary. Who knows what influence such methods could have on their behaviour, or who would deny the indirect influence that the education given to the children might have on the rest of the family? A child educated in this type of institution, who happened to be at home on a holiday, climbed down the steps by herself and went to look for her father in a nearby tavern (something incredible at the age of five), and said to him: "Dear Daddy! Why are you making merry, eating and drinking here, instead of being with Mummy and with us, we who are miserable creatures, alone and disconsolate at home?". The father left the tavern rather vexed, thinking that his wife had sent the child and later had to acknowledge that the latter had come on her own.

So, it is useful to try every means to come to terms with the parents regarding their conduct, and particularly with regard to their commitment to work, to which they must be pushed and encouraged. Besides, one must insist on hygiene, and that they do not ill-treat their children. This last point must be recommended in every possible way, so that the good effects of so much solicitude during the hours spent in school, may not be destroyed during those spent at home.

Punctuality, too, is an essential point. The time for entering the school differs according to the season, in such a way so as to be able to clean the rooms and prepare everything before opening them, but it must not be delayed too much beyond the time at which the common people usually start their work. Since all the children cannot arrive together, an extended period

of about an hour will be established for the entrance, after which no one will be admitted for that day, so as to avoid disturbance and continual interruption of the daily activities. In the evening, we must insist that the children be taken back before night, and that is, the parents, brothers or sisters should come to take the children on their way home after work. Then, if it is late and the way is dangerous, it should be recommended that the children must not be accompanied by boys just a little elder to them.

One wonders, what would happen if one of these children is abandoned by the family, and no one comes to take the child. Such a thing is not very probable, above all because of the information gathered and the detailed registration of the house, of the door number and the floor on which each one of them lives. In order to reduce the fears on this point, we can add that in an institute in which a hundred children have been admitted, and which has been running for eighteen months, until now there has been no such abandonment and not even any great delay. However, it is prudent to secure the assistance of the public authority under whose protection these schools always ought to be placed, both because they are of general interest, as well as because it has continuous dealings with all sorts of persons. Making this known and threatening the intervention of the Authorities against doubtful characters, will be useful on various occasions. It is always good, therefore, to speak to parents every now and then. Conversations with the parents should be encouraged and they ought to be received well when they come to see their children, provided this does not happen too often, in order to understand how they live and how their children are treated. Such visits permit us to understand the attitude of the children, from the way they behave with the father or mother, and, above all, the behaviour of the same parents towards their children. At times we see parents of good will who ask permission to enter in order to caress their children or to bring them some trifle which would make them happy; a mother, separated from her daughter owing to family disputes, slips in only to give her a kiss; a poor widower worker uses his occasional free time to come and put into his child's basket something which he had not succeeded in getting earlier. Such examples, like many others that could be added, are useful to prove the excellent qualities of the poor class, more frequent than what is generally believed, and often constitute a sweet compensation for the commitment, economic and otherwise, of helping them.

One of the things that we ought to insist upon with great severity is the regular attendance of children who frequent the Kindergarten; if not, their education, already very limited, will not bring the least benefit to the children themselves. The interruption of the school for a month during summer is almost indispensable, both to give the teachers at least a brief holiday, as well as to permit the general cleaning or repairs that these places, constantly frequented by these little ones, require more than other schools. During the period of activity, the building should be open the whole day, except on Sundays and on days of obligation. This exception, based on the need for rest and the sanctification of the holy day, is very useful for another aspect too: the good parents on such days can freely enjoy the dear family, and the less good ones, precisely because of it, have to restrain themselves from going to taverns in order to make merry or to get drunk, thus wasting the earnings of the week. As far as the attendance is concerned, one must not tolerate, therefore, the absence caused only by the whims of the parents, and the false excuses that certainly some will produce must not be accepted. In case the child is ill, they ought to inform. And they should know that if they do not respect these rules, after a certain number of absences the child will not be admitted any more and his place will be given to others. In general, however, we ought to have a lot of patience in dialoguing with rough and unreasonable people, whose mind has become obtuse by the lack of education and whom misery has sometimes made greedy and suspicious. Therefore, they must be pitied and helped even against their own will.

The third essential condition, on which we must be inflexibly severe, is cleanliness. We cannot ask the poor to send their children well-dressed, but their clothes, even if worn out, must

be clean and mended. To comb the children's hair, wash their hands and face, need just a little time and attention but they show the affection and orderliness of the parents, and have a great influence on the health of the little ones. Therefore any neglect regarding this should not be tolerated and the stubborn ones, who turn a deaf ear to the reminders, must be excluded from receiving the benefit. Dirt and parasites spread fast among the children, doing great harm to those children whose attentive and disciplined parents will have to pay for the neglect of the few.

Therefore, the first thing to do in the morning will be to carefully examine the little ones in the presence of those who accompany them, sending back without any compromise, those who are infected by harmful insects in their hair or in their clothes and threatening them with dismissal if, after the period needed for delousing, they do not show up with clean hair and clothes. Children suffering from contagious diseases, too, will not be admitted, in spite of the sympathy they might arouse: each time a child has high fever, he must be sent home, so that the day school may not be changed into a hospital. Instead, all the other sickness of little children should never constitute an obstacle to their admission; in fact, they are sometimes reason for preference. One who is acquainted with the situation of poor families, knows how unhappily sick children grow there, often treated with an almost barbarous harshness, surprising only to those who do not reflect on the exclusive importance that physical strength has among the lower class, with which they daily earn their sustenance.

After having carefully examined the little guests, especially those who come for the first time or those about whom there is some doubt, the baskets can be kept on a rack, sticking on them a number in order to recognize them and tying a small tin badge on the arms of the little ones, bearing the same number. Then, having gathered them altogether and after the hour given for the entrance has passed and the doors are closed, the morning prayers must be begun. They will be brief, recited in a composed manner and in a loud voice by one of the teachers, while the other teacher will see that it is repeated by the children. Then the baskets will be opened and children will have breakfast, keeping aside a share of it for lunch and another for the interval.

Three small meals a day may seem to be too little for an age in which one eats, all the time, but added to something that many take in the morning and with a little supper which in the evening they share with the family, these would be sufficient and, if taken at with regular intervals, will be better for their health. The reality is that the food that the children bring along with them does not suffice for an entire day. Still, many poor parents starve themselves, in order to put something in the basket, and often we can see elder brothers and sisters depriving themselves of a portion of their daily food, for the sake of the little ones. Added to this, this food, besides being cold, which is not helpful in the winter season, is less healthy, because it consists of a little bread and some potatoes, and above all of cheese, chestnuts, nuts and unripe fruits. Having made the due considerations, in the majority of institutes founded till now it has not yet been decided to integrate in some way the scarce meals of children and, truly, considering only the savings that results from this decision, which favour the other expenses more in keeping with the main aim of the work, such a choice cannot be blamed. It must also be mentioned that the expense prudently regulated, for distributing a hot soup at mid-day to the children would not be so considerable, as some fear: this can be made at times with rice, pasta, flour of corn or potatoes, always cooked till it thickens, and then seasoned with salt and very little butter. Oil, lard, leafy vegetables, pulses and other similar things are to be avoided. This distribution of soup could be only during the winter months, or, better still, extended to summer, during which it could be substituted by some other good but inexpensive food. However it is done, it will always bring a real benefit to the health of the children, and one who wishes to calculate how petty the expense could be (about four cents per plate), observing how the appearance, humour and health of the little ones improves after some months of such care,

will not hesitate to loosen the strings of his purse, for the benefit of the sturdiness and physical growth of the poor children.

The time between the three meals ought to be spent in various activities, each for a brief duration, thus being adapted to the nature of this tender age. Lessons in catechism, reading and recognising the alphabet or a syllable, doing a little hand-work, praying, relating sacred stories, singing songs of praise, walks and games in the garden, can all be done, alternating them regularly.

To learn the alphabets and syllables on a common elementary chart or on cards specifically made for the little children, requires a mental application that must be brief, in order to accustom the little ones to fix their attention: repeated often, then enables them to pass on later to the public schools. The teaching of catechism, to be stressed more than anything else, at first sight would seem too serious a task for an age in which the intelligence does not understand much. However, continuously listening to some words serves to impress them in the memory, where they remain, ready for the coming age, in which they will be able to understand their meaning and explanation. The manual work with which to exercise the hands of children are very few and the easiest, which is knitting socks, is suitable for both the sexes, having above all as its aim to pass the time keeping them occupied in some way. Even if prayers do not precede the beginning of every activity, they must invariably be said, must be said at the beginning of school, before and after lunch, before the break, which is almost at the end of the day. They must be recited by all together, but during the day it is good to teach them separately to those who do not know them yet. The singing of tiny poems of praise composed for children, amuses them without making them tired; in fact, their voices provide a good outlet for their need to exercise and develop the tender faculties of the body, which is so clearly manifested in the frequent noisiness and continual movement of childhood. It is because of this natural need, that intervals with physical exercises should interrupt not only the teaching, but also the other forms of recreation during which the children remain still, like singing, picture-talks, and the telling of Bible-Stories; these latter must substitute other types of stories which would have less value, and especially the usual popular nonsense stories. Silence, which is so difficult to impose, yet must be insisted on during the short periods of teaching, is easily obtained with stories, and is compensated for by the singing of praises and by the shouting of the children during their play. In the same way, the stillness required of them for fixing their fleeting attention, provides rest from the endless movement they make as soon as they are given a little liberty; and this liberty must be allowed them frequently.

Given the above, physical exercises must be encouraged not only after meals, but after all the periods of prolonged mental activity, even if these seem brief to grown-ups. Provided we keep an eye on them always, it is absolutely necessary to let the children jump and run at will. In fact, the teachers should also join them, adapting themselves to their amusements, with kindness. To avoid the excessive confusion that might easily arise, it is very useful to have exercises guided by the teacher, like walking in manoeuvres in which the order of lines is continually changed, or in the form of processions, which the tiniest ones enjoy very much. Finally, sometimes playing the harmonium or some other popular instrument, is a great help in restraining that endless clamour which leaves the children exhausted and bewildered if prolonged too much.

These and other similar activities serve to occupy the day in the Kindergarten. They could be changed, increased, perfected in many ways. Anyone who desires to know more, could read printed reviews on the various Kindergartens which already exist in several countries. Minute instructions on each point and on the perfection that one thinks of introducing will be found there. Not the last, the method of *simultaneous* teaching which is popular in various religious institutions, like the Lancastrian method, helps to save time, money and fatigue. But such particularities are usually subject to the characteristics of the place, to the money

available, to the ability of those employed and, above all, to the judgement of those who establish and direct the said institutions. Therefore, it would be useless to discuss it any longer. It would be right only to add a few indications on the moral direction of the Kindergarten schools, and about the fundamental principles which should be followed uniformly in this field.

One might say that children are all the same regarding their nature and temperament, notwithstanding the differences in individual characters. Therefore, bearing in mind the consequences of the general observations made on the age of early infancy, it would be good to try especially to implant in those tender souls, the most essential precepts of true morality – namely of religion – especially the fear of God, respect for parents, obedience, reciprocal kindness, and truthfulness. Several other virtues need to be fostered in young hearts, particularly the habit of hard work, for the poorer classes, but these are rather difficult to inculcate during early infancy. Nonetheless, we should lose no opportunity for humiliating and correcting laziness, hopefully looking for fruit even in those little ones, among whom are often found those precocious individuals who are developed beyond their age. One four-year-old, for example, was so impressed by the necessity of work, that, on seeing his father still in bed when he was leaving the house with his mother and brothers one morning, said to him: “But, if you do not get up and work, what shall we eat this evening?” Here it would be fitting to remark that in lauding the virtues we should avoid any reference to the vices of the parents, always being extremely prudent in this matter, so as not to lessen the respect that children should have for them; we should strive through our words and example, too, to inculcate this sacred duty, never forgetting how important it is in civic education to strengthen family ties and deference for the father's authority, since these are essential and basic elements for the strength of the State. For children, respect for parents should be, like the fear of God, another instinct that takes possession of their hearts and merges with their very existence. Thus they will remember it all their lives, and, without being aware of its origin, will be influenced by it irresistibly, as by instinct.

In order to inculcate truthfulness in the children, it is most important to give them good example, never deceiving them, even to benefit them. The mistresses and those directing them are to take a serious stand regarding this matter, since it is a common error, especially among the common folk, to deceive children for some good purpose, or to intimidate them sometimes; this is to be strictly forbidden. We should not demand the truth from the children uselessly; as far as possible, the child should not be put into the situation of having to tell a lie in order to escape a punishment, but the greatest indulgence should be shown to one who confesses the truth; tale-bearing should not be encouraged, and false accusations should be severely punished. Outbursts of temper and brief childish quarrels are only momentary interruptions in the natural affection children have for one another at an age when this good seed planted in the heart of man is not yet suffocated by the passions. Sudden fiery outbursts, fighting, crying, and then forgetting everything after a few moments, is natural to infancy, and does not in any way negate the mutual affection which usually characterises it. One often sees children who are more advanced or more generous taking it on themselves to look after one or more of their companions; it is easy, then, to foster similar dispositions, encouraging some to help the others, thus facilitating the general organisation. We should have no fear of the evils involved in teaching one another, for which the Lancastrian method is often criticised. This is not a question of superiority that might cause pride in those tiny hearts, or hinder that obedience to which they must be habituated from an early age with the greatest insistence. Certainly, since the people of the needy class are always in a situation of dependence, either direct or indirect, it is very important that they be accustomed to it from a tender age, so that they may submit to it without getting annoyed, and without feeling humiliated. Yet, we find that the chief fault of these children is precisely disobedience, because they do not yet understand why the command has been given, nor why they should obey it, and also because their moody and

capricious temperament finds it difficult to bear any contradiction. So, one must treat them with much kindness, insist with much patience and punish with much self-control.

Punishments and rewards, which are popularly considered so important for educating children and for governing men, should be thoughtfully studied and scrupulously evaluated. They are like a moral lever which, with a mere touch from the robust hand of mature age, can have serious effects on the child. In any case, corporal punishment must be invariably prohibited. All forms of striking, however light, all acts of anger, blows, kicks, slaps, shaking the arms, taking them by the ears or the hair, are to be absolutely forbidden, as they are very injurious to those tender bodies, and made to harden and embitter the heart. Nor should the bad behaviour for which we usually reprove the parents, be tolerated in the teachers. Some deprivation not of necessary food, but of a trifle or of an enjoyment, some reproof in the presence of all or at the most to be kept kneeling for a short time, or to stay with folded arms, or having to stay in a corner of the room, are enough to punish any failure that does not merit expulsion. Such punishments, though mild, are sufficient for delicate and sensitive bodies, and succeed, even in early childhood, to tame the most obstinate and irascible characters. It is easy to find rewards for the little ones. Some toy, a small picture, walking at the head of a procession carrying a banner or wearing a uniform, certain positions in the classroom, a caress from the benefactor, a word of praise in the presence of the parents, can all be used as prizes, provided they are given with temperance, equanimity and justice. Further, whether for prizes or for punishments, undue haste should be avoided, as this might endanger just judgement; nor should there be too much delay, since children forget very quickly. The best and most important of all prizes is the distribution, during winter, of clothes, shoes or stockings, as this achieves a double advantage: while it is a powerful stimulus to the children, it is also a form of charity that is a great help towards their good health.

Having examined briefly the main points regarding both the physical and moral education of the early childhood among the needy class, epitome of the well known science of human education, and having looked into even small details, which are necessary for understanding an institution not yet well-known, it would seem opportune to add some news about similar establishments, published in various countries. But we are dissuaded, more than by the love for brevity, by the fear that certain particulars of those institutes, not much in conformity with the ideas and habits of some persons, can lead them away from these institutes instead of winning their favour, since the national genius is not inclined towards novelty; and that some others, illustrating some real advantage, may discourage, those who are less enterprising or less able, because they are considered too difficult and costly. So, considered it opportune to keep this information for the future improvement of Kindergarten schools, if they will develop among us we expect, for the moment limiting ourselves to explaining things that an experiment carried out on this side of the Alps has suggested to us, and hoping that as soon as it is known, this too may be numbered among the pious institutions raised by Divine Providence.

God willing, the thought of starting such an advantageous charity will not be placed after many others in which, today, in thousands of other ways, an ardent spirit of charity is manifested. It will be seen that investing a modest sum of twenty-eight to thirty new lire of Piedmont annually per child in such institutes, is truly sowing to gather a hundredfold. No one doubts that such a well organised Institute in favour of early childhood will make it unnecessary to give other alms later, in favour of mothers who are without work, of young people without trades, of persons incapable or vicious, weak or sick. Above all, it contributes directly towards abolishing beggary, towards improving public morals and the true prosperity of the State.

VERY BRIEF INSTRUCTIONS
DIRECTED TO THE YOUTH
who frequent the Italian Schools
regarding

VARIOUS STATES OF LIFE

which can be chosen by them
and the dispositions with which
they must be taken up

.....
.....

Introduction:

“Man on earth must eat his bread with the sweat of his brow: this is what God willed after the fall of Adam, the first man he had created. This is what the Eternal Word ordered him and his descendants”.

This is the reason why, to a law from which no one can escape, and which in a clear way influences the life of every man, the author dedicates this work. Rather, he dedicates it to the

adolescents who, having frequented the schools, are at the threshold of the world of work, committed to a choice which will determine their future.

It is not a matter only of opting for a profession, but for a “state”, therefore a complex condition, of which the profession exercised is only a part. It is accompanied by the various duties towards family and society, towards subordinates and towards God Himself, which compete to every adult, no matter what profession he may take up.

Fulfilling such duties will bring individual and collective benefits. Thus, while recommending to the craftsman or to the businessman to control the activities of the dependents, so that they might not work on Sundays, the author observes: “He will know that one who is used to transgressing the divine laws, may easily transgress human ones, and he will realise that, to the advantage of his inferiors as well as his own, he must make sure that they live truly Christian lives: the way of rectitude and honesty being the most secure in every circumstance”.

One can choose the military profession or teaching, farming or craftsmanship, on the basis of the economical conditions of the family, one’s own inclination or according to one’s actual ability. However it is important to remember, that “all professions, of whatever type they may be, mechanical or not, including those which at times due to unjust prejudice are despised, though in this world only evil is really contemptible, everything, as we were saying, when useful for earning one’s livelihood with fatigue and hard work, are equally praiseworthy”, because they are in accordance with the divine precept mentioned at the beginning.

No better rule can be given to the youth: this includes all the others.

Chapter I.

On the Need of taking up a Profession

There is certainly, no young person with average common sense and thoughtfulness, among those who are about to complete their studies in the Italian schools, who has not often thought about both, the necessity of shortly choosing a profession and the importance of this choice, whether made by him personally, or by his parents on his behalf. “Man on earth must eat his bread with the sweat of his brow”: this is what God willed after the fall of Adam, the first man he had created. This is what the Eternal Word ordered for him and his descendants.

However this does not mean, that all men are bound to undertake extremely hard work and laborious professions, in order to earn their food, or that only this would fulfil the divine precept. Rather, it means that laziness, inertia, waste of time and inactivity are blame-worthy; that each one, within the limits of his physical and moral possibilities, must try and make himself useful to his neighbour, to the country and to humanity, through whatever work he can do, even though it is humble or indirect. This must be done not merely for the material advantage it may bring on this earth, seeing that often this seems really too little in proportion to his labour, but rather out of obedience to his Divine Maker; in order to serve as a chosen, though weak instrument of Providence, for the realisation of Its wonderful designs. In fact, the

good God made this earthly life brief, because it is destined to labour and to earning merits, while he willed that the other be eternal because it is dedicated to reward and to rest.

Therefore, it is the duty of every young man to take up a profession, even if this is not necessary to make both ends meet, or useful to procure some comfort, or opportune for gaining wealth and honours. Instead, a profession must be taken up in order to satisfy one's conscience, making good use, according to the Will of God, of the talents God has given him precisely for this reason. And, not only physical qualities, but also moral and intellectual gifts and any other natural or social advantage: we owe everything to Him.

An alluring and deceitful dream of a life that is all freedom, gaiety and thoughtlessness be far from every young mind! The adolescent who is almost at the end of his studies without ever experiencing the absolute necessity of earning his daily bread, should not aspire to that repose that he perhaps envies in young people of a different social status, if that repose is not alternated with praiseworthy occupations. Let him be convinced that there is no social status in which work is not a necessary part of life, in which one will not experience fatigue, which, even if it is of a different type from what he fears will be his lot, will be equally heavy. Let him be convinced that laziness does not make life happy, but rather renders it heavy, sluggish and boring: this is proved by the complaints of those individuals who find time dragging, and are constantly on the look-out for ways in which to pass the time.

Finally, even if he does not fear having a miserable and abandoned old age, full of suffering, if he does not mind being considered a useless person, if he does not think about the end for which he came into the world, let this young man at least think about what will become of him, when, towards the end of his useless life, he realises he will soon have to render an account to God for so many benefits received and wasted. Looking around, he will receive nothing but indifference from those whom he never tried to benefit, and, soon after, perpetual oblivion, if not, perhaps, blame and contempt.

Chapter II.

On the choice of a profession, when free and when fixed

Now that the necessity for choosing a profession is clearly established, it is easy to understand that the young man who has finished his studies should not, for any reason whatever, defer making his choice: in fact, his whole future depends on this step. Though the importance and seriousness of such a choice, on which many good moral and religious books have been written, is naturally felt by anyone who reflects at least a little on his personal situation, there is no sufficient reason for dwelling on it too long, and for unduly delaying a decision that has inevitably to be taken sooner or later. In fact, in the meantime, the habit of hard work would be lost, what had been learnt would partly be forgotten and precious time would be allowed to slip away, which otherwise could have been employed for training oneself for the profession which one would finally take up.

Now, just so that the young man may be able to reflect well in advance on a topic of such great importance, I thought of explaining the main characteristics of the same, before one is faced with the moment of making the choice, or of a decision that can be sudden, determined by unexpected circumstances. It would be fitting to observe that when one speaks of choosing

a profession, this does not mean that such a choice can or must always be a free choice on the part of the young man who is to make it. He can be influenced by three modes, very different from one another.

The first is when the parents of the young man, or those who take care of him in their stead, have no well founded motive for directing him to one particular profession rather than to another. The second, when, seeing that he is more suited physically or morally to a certain profession, they themselves make the choice, making their will known in the matter. The third, when the situation of the family, his familiarity with the branch of industry carried on by his parents, the good will of the one who can train the student or can guide him in the new profession, or some other weighty circumstance, not only points out the way he should undoubtedly take, but makes it an absolute necessity for him to follow it with perseverance.

In the first instance, the young man who has to choose his profession on his own, must reflect very much, because he bears the weight of an immense responsibility. It is true that, if he remembers his inexperience and the natural irresponsibility that mark his life, he will not fail to seek the support of his parents, or of those persons who, because of their mature judgement and the affection shown him, are more willing and able to give him sound advice. This does not mean that he may not propose, and even ask for, the profession towards which he feels more inclined, and in which he feels that his talents, his studies and his habits might help him towards greater success.

But he should not put forward his proposal without having first examined himself very well, to see the defects that might threaten to corrupt him, the qualities he may be lacking in, the illusions that perhaps beguile him; nor should he fail to reflect on the allurements of the profession he desires, as well as on the difficulties, the problems and the thorns that he might have to encounter. Then, if he is sufficiently satisfied with this examination, let him not cling to his decision stubbornly. Let him think of the many wise considerations that could be proposed to him by those who know more than he, and how many things he might probably not foresee, which, since they can be known only through experience, and often too late, and even at a high price, will certainly cause the ruin of all the illusions that he might have created for himself.

In the second case, where the sense of obedience to paternal suggestions or of deference for parents, which Heaven never leaves unrewarded even in this world, is not a sufficiently strong motive, a son must think that only for his good, and prompted by affection, they choose a profession for him that they judge most suitable. He must know that they are in a position to judge this suitability much better than he himself. By adapting himself to their will, besides the consolation that this will bring them in their old age, thus repaying them for the care bestowed on him in his infancy, he will receive those divine blessings for the entire course of his life, without which all the calculations of man are in vain, and it is impossible to prosper in any profession whatever.

This heavenly protection, whose great value we know from daily experience, will, be merited even more by the youth, in the third case, who, perhaps not without repugnance, for which reason he will have the greater merit, but without vexation or grumbling, resigns himself to taking up the profession suggested to him by the circumstances, and almost forced on him by necessity. This acceptance will greatly lessen his indecision, the responsibility of his parents, and the bitterness of simply accepting what may not seem necessary to him; besides, and even more, it will bring him an increase in those heavenly blessings, which daily experience shows us is so necessary for reforming our habits, for smoothening our paths, for making flowers appear where it was thought there were only thorns, and for scattering the way with true and full contentedness for those who know to make themselves worthy of such a great benefit. Now, those young men will render themselves all worthy of these blessings, who, in such an important circumstance, perhaps the most important of their lives, turn with fervent prayers and sincerity of heart to their Heavenly Father. He wills to be their loving and infallible

guide along the path they are preparing to tread, and they will implore of him, either enlightenment in choosing a profession, or the graces necessary for accepting one, which, first and foremost, is in conformity with His Will.

When, in these pages, I speak of “a state”, I do not mean to speak about the celibate or married state, or of other vocations, about which it is necessary to think and pray much more, since the sanctity of one’s life depends on it. I wish to refer to only those various professions, or skills, or conditions, which the youth to whom we address this, aim at. Therefore, we want to discuss these, explaining the disposition of spirit especially useful or necessary for each of them.

Chapter III.

On Persevering in one’s Profession and being content with it.

However, before dwelling on those dispositions of heart or mind that are proper to individual professions, it would be good to speak about a few others of a general nature, which apply to all without exception. We are speaking of persevering in, and being content with one’s own profession, whatever it may be, since, as we know, there is no true virtue without perseverance. Every profession, in fact, calls for a long training period, and when this is difficult, and added to that, calls for constant improvement, the surest way of succeeding - and perhaps the only way - is to persevere in the undertaking, struggling against obstacles, and being determined to overcome them at any cost.

In truth, sometimes, it would be better to abandon the profession entirely, rather than to continue in it lazily and listlessly. In fact, in every undertaking, as with every virtue, not going forward implies moving backward, until one has attained a certain degree of perfection. Perseverance should be distinguished, therefore, from the unreasonable obstinacy of one who, aware of his limitations for a certain profession, would continue to perform his duties in it badly, rather than take up another profession. In this case, changing to another profession would be not only permissible, but even opportune. In the same way, it would be praiseworthy to proceed to another profession, when the previous one has served as preparation for it, because in this way one progresses towards perfection, to which we should strive in everything; and so, this is one way, and perhaps it is the best way, of persevering in doing good.

Then, perseverance is exceedingly difficult for one who is not content with his profession, as it is well known that any work is done better if it is done willingly. Now, if it can be said that it is very meritorious to resign oneself and, out of a sense of duty, do things one may not like or may even have a repugnance for, it is much more meritorious to try and overcome this repugnance, and change one’s inclinations for a good purpose! Such merit soon receives its prize, unfailingly producing contentment with life, alacrity at work, and success in one’s undertakings.

But, in order to attain this very desirable internal disposition, it is not enough to simply ask it from God because He wants us to work hard in order to acquire it. For this reason, it would be good to study oneself in order to identify the obstacles to this disposition, and the attractions that draw us towards another profession. It is exactly this point that calls for the most attentive and sincere awareness of one’s own sentiments, since either laziness or pride, or both together, are most often the true factors that turn us to a profession different from that which we

are already following, making this latter hateful and unbearable. Nor is it only after having taken up a profession that such regrets manifest themselves; rather, already during the period of studies, they are generated by blind illusions, or even suggested by examples and comparisons that have been misunderstood.

It is very important therefore, that youth be forewarned from the very beginning, against such a dangerous error, and know well in time, the misfortunes that threaten him and his family, when he decides to leave his own profession, or that of the family, without possessing any of those rare qualities that almost single out persons who are destined to a more elevated lot. It is true that there is that religious or priestly vocation to which any youth can be called, irrespective of his social condition; and when this is a true vocation, not based on earthly or unworthy motives, that youth may, rather should, leave the studies of the Italian schools in order to dedicate himself to the study of Latin, notwithstanding the loss of time, since this vocation will be answered only at a more mature age. Similarly, this can be done in case a youth who, as he develops, shows an inclination for another profession that requires the study of Latin; he could change, provided this is compatible with the conditions of his family, that require the study of Latin.

But, he should be very careful not to deceive himself or others, by concealing, under plausible appearances, a shameful slothfulness or, worse still, real pride and undesirable ambition. These professions that cause envy and stir up regret at not being on the path that leads to them, are present in society. Some of them are more or less equal to those which young people can afford to arrive at, or some others are superior to those professions which young people are inevitably destined to embrace. In the first case, regret is not justified. In the second, which is naturally more common, it is sufficient to glance at the frequent consequences resulting from the pride of a young man and the blindness of his parents, when these lead him to leave his own profession in an effort to raise his status.

What a sorrowful picture is presented by certain families, in which the father gets old without any aid, the brothers and sisters grow up without support, the profession, the business, the shop go into ruin owing to lack of assistance, while that son who could have been the support and the consolation of his old parents, who would have carried the burden of their business, maintaining and even improving the affairs of the house, is, instead, running behind some employment in a post aspired to by a thousand other competitors, feeding himself on false hopes, on annoyance, and on unjustified spitefulness! In what way does he benefit himself or others? He gains nothing and spends much: rather, after having spent all that his parents had earned with much labour, he may even dare to scorn them in the miserable condition to which he has reduced them, and perhaps be ashamed to accompany them, because of their rough clothes or coarse manners, or their belonging to a social level much lower than that which the mindless son is aspiring to, and which he already believes to be his own.

One cannot cite as examples of those very few who, having arrived at high positions or professions because of their talents and virtue, remember those who had given them life, wish to see them happy, and show them the most tender filial devotion. Such examples are few, not because the youth are usually wicked or inhuman, but because it is very difficult for one who has risen to a higher social status, to reach a position that is sufficiently high and well paid as to enable him to draw his parents and his entire family with him to better conditions of life. How many young people, on the contrary, we can see today, who remain idle, because the positions or the professions to which they aspired cannot be multiplied endlessly, or since there is not enough employment for all; and because, the education received and the habits acquired do not permit them to return to the useful, necessary but ordinary profession, which had been abandoned with contempt!

Could they perhaps be excused for such contempt? No!

Improvident pride should not be concealed under the cloak of a proper striving towards a more honourable state! The varying human conditions are necessarily unequally arranged in the social order, so as to avoid confusion of works and of wills, which would deprive men of the possibility of helping one another and quickly put an end to earthly things, against the Divine Law. This does not mean that God, our common Father, makes differences between the various professions in which He has willed to place men. In fact, even in the general opinion, the one who lives an honest life as a good Christian and a good citizen in a lower profession, is equally, and even more, honoured, than another who lives his profession in a dissipated and inattentive manner and leads a useless and slothful life. Similarly the one who excels in a humble but necessary art, is honoured more than one who remains the last in a profession that is considered honourable.

Let us try in every way possible, then, to stifle that wicked ambition that leads youth astray today as never before! May the youth never look back, nor even too high, with fatal regrets. Instead, may they cheerfully, willingly, resolutely and firmly go forward to one of those professions which await them, and towards which it is time for us to guide them.

CHAPTER IV

On Military Service

Military service is an obligation that is incumbent on all youth equally, in whatever profession they find themselves engaged, unless the circumstances exempt them from it or permit them to be substituted by another. However it cannot be called a profession, because it is only a transitory duty, except for those who choose to take it up as a profession. Frankly, it cannot be denied that it interrupts, sometimes with some damage, the practice of the profession already undertaken: it is natural, therefore, that many seek to be dispensed from it, by being exempted or substituted.

In spite of that, there are ample reasons to console the youth who might not have been able to obtain a similar exemption. But we do not mean those graces which he might hope for to cheer up his new tenure of life: greater liberty of speech and behaviour, far from the control of the family members and the possibility of enjoying himself in merry company and in places of pleasure. All these things are contrary to the duties and to the spirit of such an honourable profession. We refer rather to the discipline that he will find severe right from the beginning, to the ability and to the easy manner that he will acquire in handling the arms, greater cleanliness, attentive obedience, promptness in responding to orders, punctuality in one's own duties: all habits which he will find useful on returning to his first profession. Further: if these fruits of an exact observance of the discipline typical to military life, are compared with the disastrous results of a disorderly existence and forgetfulness of one's duties, the good habits lost, the vices acquired, the grave sins at times induced by the abuse of wine, which later on bring about the most severe sanctions, then every youth whose turn it is to spend time in the army, should prepare himself for this profession, though temporary, with firm and free decision

One who thinks of embracing the military permanently, should be even more firmly and profoundly resolute. Such determination, to tell the truth, and specially in the beginning, is

rarely to be found among the aspirants from the lower classes, who are led, instead, by a destructive aversion for work, for domestic life, for dependence on the parents. But it comes naturally later on, with the practice itself of the profession of arms, when good conduct and the instruction received in the courses of arithmetic or good hand-writing or the like, give reasonable hope for a respectable career.

Let the youth therefore think about the possible choice of this profession, reflecting on it and evaluating from now itself, its dangers and merits. He should consider how disastrous, for the salvation of the soul and health of the body are the vices to which he would perhaps think of abandoning himself, to what ruin he can be dragged by bad company, insidious suggestions, spirit of independence or uncontrolled ambition. He should understand that he must not aspire to certain grades, to which the youth of better conditions can easily have access because of their wealth or in virtue of an education that is more complete and refined. But, this does not mean that the grades to which he can reasonably aspire are less honourable.

Let him think that true glory (even when not a widespread fame) in this life, and the reward promised in the next to the one who fulfils a lofty duty, await the one who fights valiantly or dies in battle in defence of his country, as much for the one who leads others, as for one who only follows the flag of the Prince and of honour. The youth should finally be persuaded that a valiant fidelity, the examples of Christian integrity that he will be able to offer, the affection obtained from inferiors, and the esteem received from superiors, will form the most beautiful titles that he will be able to present to God as useful merit before Him and before men.

Chapter V

On Employment in the Civil Service.

Whatever has been said regarding the comparison between the most honourable posts and those of a lower grade in the military service, can be well applied also to the civil sector and to the numerous offices that depend on it. Thus, even if in the offices, the greater part of the better jobs, require studies and certificates which are available only to only those who know Latin, in the public administration and in the ministries there are many other jobs, less important but sufficiently respectful, that even those who have pursued a different scholastic course aspire legitimately. Rather, since the education imparted to the youth in these schools is particularly appropriate for the exercise of such jobs, it is reasonable that many youth have the desire of taking up such a state, even more when the father or some other relative in the family, already carries out that kind of job. It is, however, good to reflect deeply on the convenience of such a choice, above all if they need to leave an inferior state, because they would face the obstacles and dangers already mentioned for those who, desiring to raise themselves above, abandon their own condition.

There is no doubt that since employment in the Civil Service is considered to be one of the more honourable jobs, the youth feel strongly attracted towards it. However, the youth must also reflect that in it, the betterment of one's fortune cannot be as rapid nor as lucrative as in other professions, and that they would be truly deceiving themselves if they think it is a profession of relaxation. Since the working-hours are fixed, and the earnings do not depend directly on the work done, it is thought that it might be a free profession and that one would lose nothing by not completing the work assigned, taking it easy, and not fulfilling one's duties industriously. If this fatal error gets rooted in the mind of some youth, it would lead him to carry out his duties very badly, to his great ruin, both in this life and in the next! Taking up a job with such dispositions, even if it be one of the least, which are allotted to beginners, would only

result in fulfilling it in such a way as to lose the benevolence of the heads, and to close the door to any promotion whatever. Besides this, he would be committing a very serious fault, by receiving a salary he has not earned, and by depriving the king and the public, and sometimes the poor, of the service which they have a right to expect from one who is paid to work for them.

One might say that having the protection of the heads and getting promotions do not always correspond with the greatest diligence, the greatest labour and the greatest merit; but the deciding factor is often age, or even caprice. But, to complain about their caprice, is usual for those who are not preferred by the Superiors, and, such complaints are often unjustified: one looks on the merits of his co-workers with envy, and refuses to admit that the heads, who bear the weight of responsibility for an important office, must therefore be free to ask the services of those in whom they have special confidence. Then, regarding age, there is nothing much to be said, if not that, resigning oneself to advance along this way, renouncing to carry out one's duties in a better way, is a great evil. Nor should a young man who is devoid of ambition and yearns only for a sluggish and undisturbed life, delude himself, silencing his conscience with the example of others, and with the thought that one stipend, more or less, certainly will not impoverish the Government or the public administration. This is, as the common saying goes, to eat at other people's expense, and one who does this can neither be a good Christian nor a good citizen.

Therefore, one who is going to take up the profession we are speaking about, should resolve to fulfil all his duties with zeal, with exactness and with perseverance. He will not have to trouble himself about what does not concern him, or to meddle in the affairs of others. It is sufficient if he gets through his own duties, not doing them hastily in order to be free early, but on the contrary, diligently and in the best way he can, not limiting himself to merely finishing them materially, but bringing them to completion and perfection. Let him impose on himself as an indispensable law, fidelity, secrecy and a meticulous integrity, that may not leave room for the least suspicion.

Let him note that in this profession, as may not be the case with others he might take up, his conscience will be bound by a precise commitment. In fact, he will not be able to say: "If I do not work, it is I who suffer and no one else". Instead, by his negligence and his disobedience, he will harm all others, even more than himself. Finally, in case he is firmly resolved to carry out the duties that he has been entrusted with, let him find comfort in the thought that in whatever civil employment he may have, no matter how humble, he can always contribute his share of doing good for the maintenance of good public order, and thus, undoubtedly, for the advantage of all his fellow-citizens.

CHAPTER VI

On the teaching of certain sciences.

There is a certain type of semi-public service, which, even if it does not ordinarily yield a fixed salary, can provide the necessities of life in an honest way, for young men who, besides being well instructed, are ready to work hard and have facility in expressing themselves. We refer to the teaching of certain particular sciences, and especially those whose basic elements form part of the courses in the Italian Schools, which are taught either in a fixed post as teacher, or through private lessons that are well paid and honourable. In whichever way it is

practised, teaching is always a profession to be considered by every young man who perhaps has learnt better than his companions, what is taught at school, and desires to give back to others what he has learnt, preparing himself for this through hard work and further study.

Certainly, such a one will not aim high; because, without the study of Latin, he cannot hope to have the posts proper to the Professors of Science and Letters in the High Schools, in the Academies and in the Universities. In spite of this, his work will be most useful, and certainly of a universal character. So, on the one hand he can console himself with the thought of the good that he would be doing by widely spreading some branch of knowledge that needs to be diffused more since it is used more commonly, while on the other hand he would have the well-founded hope of not remaining unemployed, since the utility of such knowledge is evident, in whichever state of society he may be.

Therefore, in case a young man opts for this Profession, he must work harder than anybody else, both in school and outside, always studying and drilling himself in what is taught to him. Later, when he has finished his course of public studies, he will have to perfect himself on his own, in the special science that he intends teaching. Nor should he dare to give lessons on matters that he does not know perfectly, since that could turn to his disadvantage and disgrace. Besides, he should never forget that it is to the expenditure and diligence of society that he owes the instruction and training that now bring him an honest income. So, he will try his best to recompense that community to which he is indebted, by zealously dedicating all his energies to the promotion of education, which can bring such a notable advantage to society.

He will add to this, another duty that is equally clear: to live up to, in every way, the trust of those who entrust their children to him, knowing well on the one hand that his zeal and his good conduct will become his best recommendation, and considering it a culpable betrayal, on the other hand, to neglect or to spoil the education of the youth.

Chapter VII

On the Liberal Arts

The liberal arts are linked in a certain way to the technical sciences most popular in common life, in view of the usefulness or the pleasure derived from them for the benefit of human society. But considering them as state or profession, most of them in fact seem different, regarding the ease of succeeding in it. With will power and obstinate fatigue, one can succeed in practising every other state quite well, while for these there is need of genius or at least talent, or natural inclination, without which progress is not possible.

Perhaps the only one, among the other liberal arts, for which such introduction might seem less necessary, is architecture. Belonging in some way to the exact sciences, both for the kind of teaching practised and because, being sister, in geometry and calculus, of that most important practical science which is engineering, it is possible with diligent study, to compensate sufficiently for the lack of a natural gift. It is true that, in this case, such study should be much more assiduous. However, neither similar perseverance nor experience will procure that sensibility, prompt and sure, in one who is not gifted with the origin of arts, which is a true sense of beauty.

But if a studious youth lacks the talent that is necessary for the magnificent works created by genius, he will always be able to do useful work, engaging himself in the many works of

public and private utility that form part of the competences of the architect or of the engineer. In view of this, one must mention the exactness and scrupulosity required from the one who takes up this profession: often the health, the commodity and the security of the public works, as well as the life and property of private people depend on them.

Painting and sculpture call for less commitment and are not of great material importance, though they influence man morally, and may be the source of great delight to him. In fact they serve to beautify, thanks to the enchantment of fantasy, what it was already necessary to found by the skill of science. Neither can it be said that these arts do not require doctrine and capacity. But they are so very different by nature, that ability alone is not sufficient to produce great things, natural talent being necessary to encourage and almost to vivify them.

Then in case a youth, has very little of this genius, he should not abandon the study of such valuable arts, even though they are not the most necessary. But, it is good to examine himself well and seriously, more than in other choices of life, casting aside every illusion dictated by pride and closing his ears to exaggerated praise, to gratification of the foolish, to the encouragement of the imprudent. It is good to reflect, since here it is a question of nothing less than risking one's entire life between adversity and hostility of every kind, and perhaps even in the throes of misery. Not all, rather very few, reach glory and riches in these professions, by dedicating themselves to the works of the most elevated kind; there is no middle path between the best and the mediocre, between selling one's works at a high price and not finding any buyers for them at all.

He should proceed then, with great openness of soul, to such an important exam. When a youth who feels the inclination for the arts of drawing and painting is not sure by himself nor through the judgement of wise, strict and impartial persons, of possessing a genius so very pure as to guarantee him success, beyond mediocrity, in the works of such a very high kind, he should dedicate himself with firmness to the other kinds of painting or sculpture which, while they are not the highest form of art, are surely not to be despised. He will find in them a stable occupation, of lower but sure income, and it does not mean that his activity remains without fame and praise. The portraits, the frescoes, the engravings of every kind, on marble or on wood, the work of engraving or printing, are all useful, worthy of praise and bring profit and at times even lead to fame. These should be sufficient, therefore, for those youth who are not very sure of greater success, and who cannot, or wisely do not want to, compromise their entire existence for a vain glory, which ridicule or ruin might follow.

The liberal art in which one reaches the perfection that brings fame and riches very rarely and with much difficulty, is music, the practice of which, on the other hand is so widespread as to render it at times an occupation of the people. Here, many choose teaching, many more than those who teach painting, or even simple drawing. But, to this effect, it is necessary to accept that none of these, who teach the aesthetic arts, can compete with the teaching of more usual subjects, which has already been spoken of as useful or necessary.

The exercise of any musical art whatever, involves grave dangers to the youth. When one is not continuously and untiringly alert, it can become a serious stumbling block to the practice of the principles of Christian morals, since it can easily lead one to bad company, or to waste the greater part of one's life in worldly pastimes. So, in case a youth has to take up a musical career for some reasonable motive, we should strongly recommend to him that he base himself firmly on good principles of religion and morality, that he fortify his conscience with good resolutions and that he arm himself to fight evil under whatever tempting form it may present itself to him. Thus he will attain greater merit, exercising a profession that is beautiful in many aspects, and will escape not only the wrath of God, but also the misfortunes that might await him already in this world".

Chapter VIII

On Large-scale Trade

The first and authentic basis of trade is given by the exchange, among men, of different goods which, produced by nature or by handicraft and by the industry of one country, prove to be absolutely necessary for another, or also simply useful, or unnecessary, or even a luxury. This exchange, of goods or with money which represents them by universal convention, forms, in fact, the essence of commercial activity. The buying of such objects, the selling of them in stock, as they were bought, the negotiations and speculations, the correspondence which regards this trading and the relative banking transactions, constitute trade on a large scale.

It is a very important profession for the public, profitable and honourable for individuals, when they accomplish all their duties regarding it. But, such an important activity cannot be open to all, since to enter into it, and still more to practise it successfully, not only a certain sagacity of mind, which is a natural gift, is required, but also considerable resources, credit, good will, a particular training and good fame. All things that depend, almost always exclusively, on the family background. Therefore, if this state is not to be excluded in any way, among those who can be chosen from among the youth, at least it should be added that it is most precious for those who, already in it by reason of birth, can dedicate their life to it. They must never abandon it for another, if not for serious reasons and only after careful reflection.

Those who get ready to follow this way in their fathers' footsteps, and perhaps in those of their ancestors, are helped by the innumerable facilities. But, at times there may be youth coming from families not pertaining to such a profession, who with good success, can be introduced to it, because of the particular predilection of someone who is already experienced, by recommendations, or by their own merits and extraordinary abilities. It is precisely the subjects, in which they were instructed when they frequented the Italian schools, that prove to be appropriate in smoothening out for them the difficult entry into this profession, more than to others. Thus, when the youth really feel they are experts in the practice of such sciences, they will need to give nothing else than the example of a spotless behaviour, and perhaps will attain the difficult entry into the commercial state, which will prove to be the source of incalculable prosperity for them. Their conduct must be perfect and exemplary, in order to inspire trust in those who having initiated them in the management of their business, and perhaps later on having shared with them the profits gained, favour them with such a special choice. This is how they must always remain invariable and persevering in good, in order to justify and safeguard the trust received.

In this regard, it is good to note that, while in whatever state a regular and Christian life draws blessings from heaven, at times in a very evident way, it is particularly necessary for what regards trade, in order to receive the favour of God, certainly, but also that of men. Every day we come across the examples of the former, through the success with which Heaven evidently rewards the activities of wise and virtuous dealers. As for the latter, it is easy to judge it, observing how a good reputation is on the one hand the foundation and motor of all commercial undertakings, and on the other hand, the fruit of a regular life, exempt from all vices, diligent in the accomplishment of duties, and still more in those of commitments assumed and promises made.

There is no doubt that a tenor of life that is modest and regular, in accordance with one's state, helps one to make useful savings. This enables the one who saves, to be satisfied, when speculating with a modest profit. In the same way as business gets more secure and continuous, it will lead the businessman, if not rapidly, certainly unfailingly, to a prosperous fortune, rightfully acquired. Later when one has reached such a state of sound and well-founded riches, he will not deprive himself and his family of the pleasures of a comfortable life, fruit of his hard work and of an honest and wise sagacity. In fact, to enjoy, even without pomp, but with total dignity, the wealth legitimately earned, does not remove, rather preserves the credit, adding to it, further, the benevolence of men.

Therefore the young person, who because of family fortune or other particular circumstances, takes up the profession of a businessman, must make it a habit from then on, not to confuse avarice with prudent economy of means, avidity and greed with keeping an assiduous account even of the minimum profit. Otherwise he will be reduced to a miserable life, will show himself as running short of ideas, and that will take away from him, the esteem of the people together with the courage to undertake any task about which he is not sure. Or he will indulge in wrong and at times even illicit speculations, which will lead him to a total and just ruin. On the contrary, having the duties of his own state as his aim always, and by practising the corresponding virtues, he will gain success in every transaction: and together with the credit, so important, of those with whom he generally deals, he will earn the right to universal esteem, which comes from true merit, while mere riches arouse, many a time, nothing but jealousy, illusions and perfidious flattery.

Chapter IX

On Retail Trade

Not all trade, however, is based on those big operations which require considerable resources and large credit. There also exists, a more limited and wide-spread type of business, to which many young people are directed, since it is the profession of their parents, and to which many others can reasonably aspire, attaining it without difficulty. It regards retail trade, that is, sale in the department stores, shops or even in the squares, in the markets or in other public places, of a particular type of goods or provisions: that is to say, handmade products or natural products.

Now, we should rightly repeat here, regarding such a state so appropriate to the greater part of youth to whom we are speaking, almost all the things already said about large-scale trade. But other, more specific things can be added to them, in order to prepare the youth better for it. Regarding the need to observe the former there is no doubt, because any sort of business depends on the same bases of hard work, good faith, of honest shrewdness and wise economy. Neither does the vast difference which passes between different types of sales, between big warehouses and humble sheds or worn out benches, between precious goods in great quantity and a few objects of very little value, justify any difference regarding the moral and civil duties which will concern all entrepreneurs in the same manner. Therefore, in every youth called to follow this profession, it is necessary to inculcate the same principles: these will apply to the small as well as the great things. to minor as well as major matters of business.

Thus, for example, excessive luxury, recklessness in speculations, greed in earning, all things very harmful in large-scale trade, are equally harmful in retail sale. Do we not see, perhaps every day, the closing down of magnificent, luxurious shops, opened only a short while before, due to bankruptcy? Shops that used to pay heavy rents because they were opened in the most frequented and most fashionable streets? While certain modest shops known and frequented by all, though more isolated, and though without any ostentation in their shop windows, signboards and stands, prosper happily and for many years. The good reputation that these enjoy, the minor expenses, the moderation in seeking profit, permit them even to sell at lower prices, things of better quality. For this reason they gain, with the passing of time, an advantage over their competitors, a very important objective in this type of trade, and besides ensure that their own goods have steady customers, always on the increase. An altogether different thing from that temporary favour of fashion, fruit of a superficial prestige, which fascinates the buyer for just a short time.

Passing on, then to those few suggestions which, in a special way, concern the profession of a salesman, first of all we must deal with honesty in the transaction proposed to the client: this is a virtue that is dutiful for a Christian and for a gentleman, proving itself also to be an excellent means to gain credit and public. Certainly we are not speaking about weights and measures, regarding which every fraud would be criminal, but of the quality of goods, of their presentation, and their value, always spoken highly of to the customer. Polite and courteous manners, promptness in serving those who enter the shop, without sparing oneself, without giving any signs of a bad mood, annoyance or impatience and avoiding any sort of preference among the clients, will also be very helpful to the salesman. It would be advisable to strive resolutely right from an early age to acquire these attitudes, making them so natural that they do not give the impression that they cost even the least effort. For this purpose it will also be useful to equip oneself early with a certain benevolence towards one's neighbour, which, with inimitable naturalness, must be evident from one's manners and face. Finally constancy, that is, one's presence in the shop, is an indispensable quality, because the opportunities for selling are continual but unpredictable, and because, thanks to such perseverance one acquires better practice in selling and a deeper knowledge of the customers, as well as greater favour on the part of the public.

Therefore, one who proceeds in the said manner will have a well founded hope of going ahead happily in business, and of improving oneself little by little, gradually becoming able to deal with more costly goods or to open shops of greater prestige. A particular success will even lead one to aspire to that large scale business, which is based on stable resources and on consolidated experience in the sector, and which could constitute the desire and the goal of any ambitious young person.

Chapter X

On the Practice of Mechanical Arts

The state which seems to be the most obvious choice for the youth educated in Italian schools, even more than trading, about which we have just spoken, and which in fact is most frequently taken up by them, regards the mechanical professions, that is, the work of the artisan, in all types of work, factories, manufacture.

Such a state at times requires funds not less than those needed to open a shop. Then, it demands, provided that one wants to succeed well, the practical school of apprenticeship,

industriousness often accompanied by considerable fatigue, special ability, patience, diligence and perseverance. It is true that such varied qualities are not necessary, in the same measure, for all the mechanical arts. Among them, as in the various types of trade, there is considerable difference with regard to importance, possibility of profit, and the tenor of life to which they permit one to aspire. Rather, even more: the difference regards also the fatigue and certain particular habits of the profession. Not all can adapt themselves to them, or sustain them, physically, in the same manner. Therefore in this field, if necessary, when one's health demands it, one should without difficulty change one's job. Similarly, one should not embrace the paternal profession or, having once embraced it, should give it up, when physical strength does not permit one *to practise it as it should be done*. Such a step cannot be simplistically considered abandonment of the career of one's parents, because it is suggested by good reasons and certainly not by pride, laziness or harmful ambition. Whatever mechanical profession one takes up, then, whether one deals with gold and precious stones or with less precious substances, whether one lives on the richest and most lucrative arts or in the ordinary condition of an artisan of the lowest degree, one always has the same obligations and the same duties, amongst which the two principal ones are, staying away from bad company and keeping the Sunday holy.

The first is an essential point, in this state as in military life: one must flee – and the youth must anticipate and protect themselves from it – the great danger which comes from practising those professions together with numerous companions. A youth who while still frequenting the school, goes in search of the liveliest and most reckless companions, desiring to spend his time with them, in games and in squabbles, in boyish pranks, that is, more or less blameworthy but certainly always seriously harmful to the studies and contrary to good conduct, must renounce such harmful inclinations without delay if he does not want to run the risk of infallible ruin later on, taking up the craftsmanship. Frequenting bad company will lead him to many evils, and one of the worst will be getting accustomed to spending Sundays in all types of revelry, sinning greatly against the law of God and sometimes also against that of man, but above all, spending all one's weekly earnings in this manner, and ruining one's health in excesses, instead of renewing one's strength during the time that Divine Providence has permitted, or rather ordered, for rest.

It is precisely on this that the sacred duty to sanctify the Sundays is based - a duty that is so easily left unheeded by those who have not understood its full importance right from their early youth. The suspension of work on Sundays is a divine precept, instituted for the required rest. Besides, this rest goes together with those religious practices to which such days are especially dedicated. We do not certainly wish to prevent them having some honest enjoyment, as the boys who frequent the schools do on weekdays, and as they should continue to do when, instead of classes they will frequent a workshop, a factory, a workroom of any art or profession. Then, a youth should not let himself be persuaded to continue working on Sunday mornings, nor even to spend the evenings in such revelry that would lead to a forced rest on the following day. The deplorable abuse of celebrating Mondays much more than Sundays is a vicious habit that produces real scandal in every good person. One should think that thus, besides sinning seriously before God, he will cause great harm to himself, for the future.

Reflect on what happens to those who practise a profession in which there is no hope of receiving a pension, nor of gaining the profit that can come from business speculations, or from works of great skill: when, unfortunately, he will see the source of his daily earnings vanishing, dried up by an early old age or diminished by unexpected illness, he will experience for himself and for all his dear ones, if he has a family, the anguish of misery devoid of any hope of relief. With what bitter tears will he then regret the revelry in which he now wastes the fruit of his sweat, instead of using it better. He could, in fact, put it in a bank, or save it in any other manner, so that with time it might become a decent sum of money, and be useful in times of

misfortune, or might perhaps permit him to become a head-craftsman, he who otherwise would remain a simple worker for the rest of his life.

Certainly, it would not be good for a youth should rely on such prospects thoughtlessly. A good worker, if well paid, is better off and runs fewer risks than the presumptuous one who, with scarce resources to back him and without any training, wants to open a shop and be its owner. However, if he ever attains such a privileged condition and succeeds in maintaining himself there, he should remember the special duties which belong to the chief artisan and keep them in mind from now itself. It will be his duty, not only to do his best in instructing and training his students in their trade, without jealousy or base covetousness, dealing with them lovingly and ensuring their greater good, but also to be vigilant about the conduct of the subordinates and strive to make sure that they improve and remain so. To this end, it is important that he always gives a very good example, preparing himself from now by living the virtues, the practise of which he will find easier and more natural because he would know that others are imitating him. He will not induce anyone, consequently, to work without permission on Sundays, fighting the temptation to work at home or in the closed shop, and especially in the professions that are more profitable on Sundays. He will be aware that one who gets used to transgressing the divine laws, can still more easily transgress human ones, and he will realise that, to his own advantage as well as that of his inferiors, it is better that they live truly Christian lives: the way of rectitude and honesty is always the most secure in all things.

Chapter XI.

On Other Occupations

Other professions are included in the category of trades which are practised manually, though extraneous to the practice of a mechanical art. Among these can be considered all those trades that concern a particular service to persons, and which require, besides a special ability, or sufficient good will to compensate it if it is lacking, many moral qualities, to be held in high esteem. Fidelity, assiduousness, meekness and loving care for one's master and his belongings, are the virtues that are most esteemed in these professions. So it will be greatly beneficial to get used to, a certain loving respect towards superiors right from an early age, thanks to which one's heart will then more easily submit to obedience and to carrying out the will of others, because the heart will be well disposed and will not rebel, but rather will favour such docility.

It is true that sometimes we meet masters whose ways repel instead of attracting; so, in cases where there is sufficient reason for it, it is better to leave them than to serve them badly and with rancour. But, it may also happen that it is not possible to leave the post; in that case, it would be better to patiently resign oneself; God will certainly keep a good account of this. In any case one should never fail in doing one's duty, and doing it perfectly.

On the contrary, those who have the good fortune of working for persons who are good, just and charitable, by serving them they can consider themselves as part of their family, and as such will show to them, to a certain extent, their sentiments of respect and loving devotion that children usually have towards their father. Such conduct will gain them the benevolence of their masters and even when they may not show the sharp and bright intelligence required to

always carry out their work to their satisfaction, an honest and wise conduct will procure them benefit, more than anything else, and highest fruit also in the payment which they have to receive. In fact, they will win the trust of those on whom they depend, a most important point for these professions.

The service we are talking about does not admit suspension of work on Sundays as is prescribed for the mechanical arts. However, this does not take away the obligation nor the possibility of sanctifying the Sundays, since there are very few masters who, even if not very religious minded themselves, do not love to see religious principles practised by their employees, as the only really safe assurance of fidelity and honesty. Perhaps the time necessary for fulfilling such an important duty will have to be taken from the hours of rest or for amusement, even the most lawful. But, every young person must be prepared for this from now itself, and no matter what situation or profession he may later find himself in, he will give priority to this obligation over everything else. Beginning right from the period of studies, he will always sacrifice the time necessary, and not at the cost of duties laid down by his state of life, but at the cost of his own pleasures, partly and if necessary, completely.

The youth must make the same resolutions when he thinks a role in public service. Drivers, office-employees, hunters and fishermen, and all those persons whose services might be requested on any day of the week, must never forget this obligation which they could easily transgress. But, all the more is this expected of those who keep open to the public their inns, wine shops, coffee shops or restaurants. They, besides observing feasts themselves, have to see to it that their employees and clients respect it: neither should they permit, notwithstanding the greater profit and openings that could be drawn from it, nor encourage or favour the non-observance of the divine and human laws, whichever day or hour it may be; in spite of the fact that the above-mentioned non-observance is almost encouraged, in such places, by bad example and by the establishment of incorrect habits.

All trades then, of whatever kind they may be, mechanical or otherwise, including those which are sometimes despised out of unjust prejudice, although the only despicable thing in this world is sin, all of them, I was saying, which serve to earn our living with fatigue and hard work, are therefore equally praiseworthy, since they bring us closer to the precept of God, which I have recalled in the beginning, provided that all the other precepts of God are fulfilled. No better norm could be given to the youth than this one, which includes all the others, and, if observed exactly, is in itself worth as much as the most minute and longwinded recommendation.

Chapter XII

On the Situation of Emigrants

It often happens, with almost all the professions and particularly for some, that the one who practises them considers it necessary to emigrate to a foreign land, in search of a more updated and complete formation, for the perfection of an already acquired art, or even for work, with corresponding earnings, which he thinks he lacks in his own country. Then, for one who

dedicates himself to the practice of liberal arts, we can add to these incentives, the desire and the advantage of going to places where the best schools and the most famous ancient and modern models, are to be found. As for the businessmen, they must travel for the purpose of their trade, some only occasionally, some quite often and some even continually. Finally there are many residents, of the valleys or of the lakes who usually cross the border either because of scarce productivity in their native land, or because of a family custom established from time immemorial: beyond the borders they carry out very different jobs, bringing with them their earnings on their longed-for return to their beloved motherland after quite a long time.

We have nothing else to add about the latter, because their profession and residence are carried out and established by them in a foreign land, and above all because they have little to do with the young citizens to whom, instead, we wish to turn to. Coming back, therefore, to the former, it is important to reflect on the purpose of their wandering about, and to understand what is the real fruit that they derive from it, so that they can arrive at the best conclusions in this matter, and consequently take the most correct decisions.

There is no doubt that emigration will often prove to be very useful to those who practise particular professions to acquire greater expertise and skill: by learning certain details of the art, by practising it more easily and by meeting those who are more specialized or perfect in it, in the foreign land. It is equally certain, that some are forced to take this step: those who remain jobless in their homeland owing to the lack of preparation, change of fashion, or for any other circumstance. In a different nation, they may be able to get a job. For them emigration is a dire necessity: we ought to sympathize with them, and recommend to them only to take with them, wherever destiny would lead them to stay, all the good dispositions and resolutions regarding his job, which he would have observed in his own country.

Then, those who intend to return after having concluded the necessary apprenticeship abroad, or who usually go there frequently in order to begin a trade or to initiate and regulate some business, must wisely safeguard themselves against the moral dangers which they will certainly meet outside their native land, in order to avoid the painful consequences, for themselves and for others, on their return home. In fact, it is itself a serious danger, and every youth who reflects on this honestly, would easily be convinced about it, to leave one's good parents, or reliable persons who love us, whose wise advice we obey out of gratitude, due respect or because we were used to it from childhood. That youth will understand that to abandon such a precious support during the most delicate moment of his growth, when all the passions will burn within him, but he will be lacking in experience and maturity of judgement, let alone prudent judgement which can be acquired only with them, will expose him to the risk of finding himself without a guide, at the mercy of all sorts of errors, every seduction, any evil advice, and perhaps the worst examples: things which would suffice to lose him forever. In such a trial he should do nothing else than have recourse to those healthy religious principles to which from now onwards, it is good to open one's mind and heart, so that they may be impressed there profoundly. In the same way, he should immediately take the firm decision to recall always, and without delay, those principles, and conform himself to them at all cost, in any future emergency.

Finally, if it is certain that amidst the many difficulties, the deep religious sentiments which the young person had identified himself with from his very childhood could be of better help to him, true love for one's country, which is the source of many virtues to defend oneself against the evil influence of foreign customs it would also be, of much benefit to him. He must not limit it to the natural predilection which, by calling to mind places, facts, things done as a child, instinctively draws back again to them, the one who in spite of his long absence cannot forget them. For him, love for his motherland must rather consist in a right affection for his co-citizens, for the laws and the customs of his country, in short, for that patriotic spirit, which he inherited from his forefathers, and of which he must always show himself to be not foolishly infatuated

but rather proud in a dignified manner. He must appreciate the importance of the national institutions, because in many things they are good, rather better, than those of others, but he should already know that in this world there is nothing absolutely perfect.

It is precisely such allurements of perfection, always seductive in appearance, and then often deceptive in reality, that he should not follow equally for the material as well as moral things: they are not two roads that lead one forward in the same manner. Novelty in the arts, the useful discoveries, the developments in industry are, in fact, the only purpose which could reasonably take the youth abroad, to instruct himself better, and much more if he will later enrich his homeland with the foreign inventions, or with the improvements he learnt there. But if such valuable victories will procure an undeniable benefit to his country, on the contrary real detriment will result, particularly to the one who brought them, from those moral, religious and political novelties which unfortunately, God permitting, are not always separated from the others. This too takes place according to the will of God, and precisely so that man may be convinced that the faculty, granted to his intellect, to improve the things of the world, can, instead lead him to the most fatal deviations when he chooses to misuse them by going beyond the limits fixed by Divine Providence and by the institutions which come from Him.

Chapter XIII

On the Life of the Farmer

The work of the farmer seems, to those who live in the city, the last among the jobs to be chosen, since they tend to judge it simply by the rough ways and by the hard life of those who work in the countryside. Such prejudice is, however, unjust, and can be overcome by a simple reflection on the supreme importance that agriculture has for human society, excelling as the most ancient and the most useful of all activities. It was, in fact, the first to be practised by men on their way to civilization, when they began to abandon the primitive existence of shepherds and nomad hunters. To strengthen the argument, we could quote the sublime lesson offered to us by Jesus Christ, who manifested himself first to poor and simple shepherds, and chose his disciples from among the rough inhabitants of the countryside. Or, referring to secular examples, the famous episode of the Roman captain Quinto Cincinnato who, having left the plough for the supreme Court, gloriously returned there after having saved the motherland. Or, still, the not less known Chinese festival during which, every year, the sovereign of that very great empire has the custom of digging a furrow with his own hands, and sowing seeds in it, with the pomp and solemnity which accompany the most important ceremonies.

Certainly, the labourers and daily wage earners are not used to sending their children to school, if not perhaps for simply learning to read and write, or, at the maximum, for Catechism. It would, therefore, seem not necessary to defend the agricultural profession here, and much less to illustrate the tenor of life which characterizes it, if not because it is a matter of the condition and the job of the children of the tenant-farmers, land agents, agricultural labourers, who now frequent the Italian schools. Naturally, if it is very useful for these to know to count, read and write, on the other hand, having to dedicate themselves fruitfully to the profession of their parents, it would be good for them to willingly adopt the typical way of living of the farmer.

The Christian education received at school is enough to give hope, for this as well as for the other states which we dealt with a little earlier, that at least those who received it will not

neglect the practices and the principles of religion, the source of every good in this life and in the next. The observance of feast days is not in itself an obligation particularly connected with the life in the countryside, namely prohibition to work on Sundays when this is not made indispensable by bad weather or by the urgency of harvesting, the Church in any case granting, in these and similar occasions, the authorization. Also the participation in parish life, or the reception of the Sacraments. Nevertheless, for the good example that will result from it, and on the contrary, for the negative effects that would be caused by transgressing them, such duties, and mainly the last two, must be more strictly observed if one lives as a farmer. This is because in the countryside and above all in small localities, every act, every step is observed, referred, minutely commented upon, and maybe even imitated, because of the lack of novelty, idleness of the spirits and mutual acquaintance which involve all the components of a small and unchanging population.

For the same reasons, also regarding this state, we add the exhortation to avoid the places of revelry, especially on the days of rest, the most appropriate to frequent them. Another recommendation, not less essential to the work of the farmer: not to seize the opportunity, with the desire to satisfy the harmful desire for the same revelries, of fairs and markets, which we know are frequent, where the countrymen are often dragged into habits of vice and thus, to real ruin. Neither should we neglect to inculcate, in those who will manage the agricultural business, the principles of perfect honesty in the transactions, attention towards the subordinates and vigilance over their conduct, charitable concern for those who are miserable and weak, and above all for the least, which have already been mentioned while dealing with the mechanical professions. Benevolence for one's neighbour, to which we have often exhorted the youth, does not exclude shrewdness in business and it will be very useful to avoid certain unending contestations, certain conflicts of little importance among the neighbours, which are generated by failed commitment or by a persistent animosity and which, if not fundamental for the preservation of one's own goods, only cause annoyance and embitter the life of the farmer uselessly.

So also, the one who is taken up with the work of a cultivator should be happy to live on the land, and, in order to taste its sweetness, without staining it with comparisons and useless complaints, he should go to the city as little as possible. After finishing the work which took him there, he must immediately return home, without listening to flattery and vain pleasures, which it would be difficult for him to leave without regret. Once in the countryside he would create a false idea, that novelty, momentary idleness, self-forgetfulness have a prestige that is very dangerous and unreal. In fact, even though supposing that in the city he does not fall into vices or blameworthy habits, he will continually feel attracted by it, and will seek every least pretext to return to it, even for a brief stay, with great harm to his work. Or, struggling to resist this temptation, he will feel a fatal disgust for his own state. He will no longer be able to apply himself fruitfully to the occupation chosen, but rather will fill his days with boredom, annoyance and irremediable unhappiness.

On the Condition of Property-Owners

We have tried to survey the various states to which the youth who attended the Italian schools can dedicate themselves, starting from the military service, which often precedes all of them at least for a brief period. Likewise I thought of concluding this conversation by speaking about a situation, which, in itself is not a profession that may be chosen at will, but generally serves as a legitimately desired goal for many other professions described here so far, and therefore is a source of continuous stimulus and encouragement. At times, then, this condition is already associated with the profession normally exercised, because to possess some property, be it a farm handed down by parents or one acquired by one's own savings, does not always dispense one from doing some income-yielding work. Since people of every status of life, especially the most respectable ones, could be property owners, it is not necessary here to make a special mention of the duties inherent to this condition, but only to those proper to all men, which we are reminded about daily by the Word of God and the reading of good books and which even now are being eloquently treated by a famous writer of today.

So, it will be enough here to consider the status of owner as a prize and fulfilment of the professions which we have spoken of till now. Certainly, enviable is the lot of the owner of a small piece of rural land, which is sufficient to provide the means for a comfortable life, who works to increase his property for the benefit of his children, thus accomplishing the decrees of Divine Providence and by observing His precepts religiously. Here we shall limit ourselves to inculcating in the young minds, some good thoughts for the time when, we hope, they will reap the reward given by God on this earth for their fatigue and the laborious and Christian life towards which we have tried to motivate them. Nor do we intend to enumerate their duties, which have already been often mentioned: what applies to those who work in agriculture is also valid for those who possess property, starting from the behaviour to be maintained in the field, to the dealings with the subordinates. And we have already exhorted the young people not to abandon the family profession, and so also not to remain idle, even when there is no need to work to earn the necessary or even the superfluous. Here we would encourage them only to remember such advice on the day they attain the desired status, except, naturally, if they were born in it.

It will be their duty, then, to persuade on their turn their children, with affectionate words, with prudent firmness when needed, and above all with personal example. This will not hinder them from directing them to a state different from the one to which they seemed to be destined, when such a choice is reasonably supported by the evident inclinations of the youth, and by a substantial paternal patrimony. Likewise, one who is in such a privileged condition, will not have any obligation to work, if health, age or some other circumstance persuade him to enjoy a well-earned rest, with the prosperity gained. But since he must persevere in practising the virtues which are required in his state of life, he must not think that he can remain completely idle, abandoning himself to absolute laziness. He will remember the divine precept which we have explained from the beginning and he will find different ways to observe it without too much difficulty.

One of the best ways to practise this precept is to dedicate oneself to those acts of charity or benevolence which always offer an infallible way for working meritoriously in God's sight, as well as for the benefit of the brethren. In fact, when we reflect that almsgiving which is purely material, i.e. money, although it be worthy of praise, is not enough, especially for one who has time and health, to use for the needs of the poor, it will be easy to convince himself that by dedicating his time and health, as well as his intelligence and all his God-given faculties, plus his riches, name, or his high social position, which make his good example even more effective, this is certainly the surest way of fulfilling as much as possible, the debt we owe

Divine Providence for the gracious favour He has bestowed on us from our birth, and for the efficacious protection he will have experienced all through his laudable and laborious life.

There is no better way to bring joy to the last phase of such a life. Thus, while he enjoys his rest, not idle but mixed with some useful and religious activities, he will spend his life sweetly, accompanied by the blessings of the poor and by a well founded trust in the promises of their and our common Supreme Father. There is no greater blessing than this, with which we could ask the Lord to favour those young people who will listen to our humble words. Now it only remains for us to offer them, together with our heartfelt wishes, our ardent prayers for their happiness, in this world and the next, and the most sincere desire that they would contribute much to our happiness, if the good God grants us one day to see our efforts and intentions fully rewarded.

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“*Called to Happiness*” is the guiding thread of the writings of Carlo Tancredi di Barolo that are published in this volume. *God created man so that he might be happy*: this is the opening sentence of one of his spiritual writings.

Man has reason to hope, in spite of sin; because of the promise of that happiness which was historically accomplished with the incarnation and redemption of Jesus Christ. That promise is, for each of us, an already and a not yet, and pushes all who have had only a glimpse or a taste of it, to communicate it to the others, so that all may arrive at the common destiny, which is happiness.

From the two spiritual works, *The first Man and the Man-God* and *Jesus, Mary and the Angels*, emerge first of all the faith of the Author, simple but robust, frank and deep, anchored on the Word of God.

The other two, *On the Education of Early Childhood among the Poor Class* and *Very Brief Instructions Directed to the Youth*, by confronting, in concrete terms, the problems regarding the education of children and youth, show the specific form that his love for mankind takes in Carlo Tancredi, a strong love born out of his contemplation of the humanity of Christ. In that way, his concern for the little ones and the youth, expressed in a thousand details, manifests not only his vision of man, but above all, the urgency, the “deep longing” that animated the life of Carlo Tancredi and his spouse Giulia: that all may be truly happy.

(Captions for the pictures:)

Giulia Colbert, “most beloved consort” and “universal heir” of Carlo Tancredi Falletti, Marquis of Barolo.

Carlo Tancredi, father of the little ones and the poor. Painting by Antonio Lomuscio, Trani (1991).

Child praying. Marble sculpture by Luigi Pampaloni (1825), placed in one of the rooms of the Barolo Palace, Via delle Orfane, in Turin. (Photo by Mariano Dallago)

Entrance of the Barolo Palace, frequented by Ecclesiastics, Politicians, men of Culture, as well as by the “little ones” and the poorest of society. Work of Francesco Baroncelli (17th Cent.), restored by Benedetto Alfieri (18th Cent.). (Photo by Mariano Dallago)

Emblem of Carlo Tancredi and Giulia, Marquis and Marchioness of Barolo. The motto “In Spe” (In Hope) was chosen by the Servants of God as the inspiration and moving force of all they did.

Below: Mother House of the Sisters of Saint Ann, constructed by their Founder Carlo Tancredi. (Photo Fantasy, Turin)

On the facing page: Group in marble symbolically representing the virtues of faith, hope and charity, ordered by Carlo Tancredi for his tomb. (Foto Fantasy, Turin)

Jesus with the children. Painting by Pietro Ayres (1832), commissioned by Carlo Tancredi di Barolo.

Extract from the letter signed by Carlo Tancredi, in which he commissions the painting and explains in detail how he wants it.