Life of Sister Mary St. Peter Carmelite of Tours

by

Marie de Saint Pierre de la Sainte Famille, Sister, 1816-1848
Janvier, Pierre Désiré, b. 1817

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LIFE
OF
SISTER MARY ST. PETER
CARMELITE OF TOURS

Written by Herself.

ARRANGED AND COMPLETED WITH THE AID OF HER LETTERS AND THE ANNALS OF HER MONASTERY

BY M. L'ABBÉ JANVIER,
Director of the Priests of the Holy Face.

WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF TOURS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

REVISED EDITION.

1884
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PREFACE.

The life which we are now about to offer the public, will undoubtedly be acknowledged to be one of the most remarkable that has appeared in our century. A poor, simple seamstress chosen as the mediator between the anger of a justly offended God and the sins of a guilty, ungrateful people: — the heavenly ambassadress to one of the mighty courts of the world: — the recipient of the most astonishing revelations: — and all this in our days! Is it possible that visions, ecstasies and revelations are the lot of mortals of the nineteenth century? Do these not rather belong to the days of the prophets, of the apostles? Sit Nomen Domini benedictum! May the Name of the Lord be blessed! His arm is not shortened, nor his holy spirit mute in our day more than in times gone by. The life of this generous spouse of Christ is only one of the many proofs that his Church is now, as it ever has been,
holy: holy in her doctrine, holy in her ministers and holy in her children.

In obedience to her superiors, Sister Mary St. Peter writes her own life, the charm of which lies in its childlike simplicity. Her humility and her obedience shine forth in every line, producing the most wonderful fruits of generosity and zeal for the salvation of souls. What a heroic mission was hers! To establish Reparation in the Church; to vindicate the honor due to the most Holy Name of God. And with what admirable generosity, untiring zeal and devotedness without reserve, has she not delivered herself to the Spirit of the Most High, to be a docile instrument in his hand for the glory of his Name, and the consolation of his Holy Face!

It is to you, O children of Erin, whom the iron heart of the usurper has driven from your green hills and fertile valleys, to you who have braved the perils of the deep, the dreary exile in the midst of a strange people, to you who, in the midst of trials and dangers, of difficulties and hardships whose name is legion, you who have gloriously surmounted every obstacle and have succeeded in planting the faith from ocean to ocean, from the ice-bound shores of the Canadas, to the zephyr-fanned
PREFACE.

plains of Mexico, it is to you to uphold the glory of the Name of the Most High; to teach your children to honor this most Holy Name, to perform all things in the name of God, the hallowed expression of your ancestors: In the Name of God. It is to you, the Irish American people, worthy children of a St. Patrick and a St. Bridget, to you is this little book affectionately dedicated. May its perusal produce fruit a hundred fold to the glory of the most Holy Name of God!

May 1, 1884.
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Sit Nomen Domini benedictum!
PROTEST OF THE TRANSLATOR.

In obedience to the decrees of Urbain VIII., of holy memory, we protest that we do not intend to attribute any other than purely human authority to all the miracles, revelations, graces and incidents contained in this book, neither to the titles holy or blessed applied to the servants of God not yet canonized, except in cases where these have been confirmed by the Holy Roman Catholic Church and by the Holy Apostolic See; therefore, to their judgment we submit all that is written in this book.

The proceeds of the sale of this book are destined for a charitable purpose.
PROMISES
Made by Our Lord Jesus Christ to Sr. Mary St. Peter in favor of those who honor his most Holy Face.

“By my Holy Face you will work marvels.”
“Y ou will obtain from my Holy Face the salvation of a multitude of sinners.”
“If you could comprehend how agreeable the sight of my Holy Face is to my Heavenly Father!”
“According to the care you take to repair my countenance disfigured by blasphemy, so shall I be animated in the same degree to transform your soul which has been disfigured by sin; I will imprint thereon my own image, and I will render it as beautiful as when it came forth from the baptismal font.”
“My adorable Face is the seal of the Divinity, having the power to imprint itself on the souls of those who apply it to their persons.”
“As in an earthly kingdom, the subjects can procure all they desire by being provided with a piece of money stamped with the effigy of the monarch, so also shall you be able to obtain all that you desire in the kingdom of heaven, on presenting the impress of my sacred humanity, which is my Holy Face.”
LIFE

OF

SISTER MARY ST. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

OUR LITTLE BRETON.

"I weep over my sins."

(Words of the Sister when but a child.)

It is to Catholic Brittany, that ground so fruitful in virtuous and heroic characters, that we are indebted for Sister Mary of St. Peter. She was born at Rennes, in 1816, of worthy and honest parents of whom but little is known. Her father, whose name was Peter Eluere, was a locksmith by trade, and married Frances Portier, a lady worthy by her piety of such a husband, who, as we shall see, was a Christian of the old school. Some years after their marriage this virtuous woman was carried off by death. Being thus left a widower with twelve children, Peter Eluere had to
endure many privations and sufferings, and to labor assiduously to be able to bring up his children, and provide for them in their sickness which, for the most part, was long and fatal; for he beheld them all, one after the other consigned to the tomb, with the exception of one son and one daughter, who survived him. His glory before God and man was to have given to Carmel and to the Church the child of benediction, whose life we have undertaken to narrate.

When Sister Mary St. Peter had become a religious, she was obliged by obedience to write her own life, even the most minute details of the early years of her childhood. We shall make an extensive use of her letters and other writings during the course of our narrative, preserving as much as possible the simple and unassuming style so natural to her. She thus enters upon the task set before her.

"Notwithstanding the great repugnance I experience in writing of matters concerning myself, I will not hesitate to submit to the orders of obedience. I shall perform what I have been commanded with the assistance of the child Jesus, into whose revered little hand I have placed my pen, entreat ing him to write an account of the precious graces which he has accorded me, and my malice in so often offending Him, that thereby God the Father may be glorified for having by his almighty power produced such abundant fruit for the
glory of his Holy Name,* from such sterile ground covered with the brambles and thorns of sin and imperfection. At the feet of the child Jesus in the manger, I now commence my narrative, in obedience to you, reverend Mother."†

"I was born on the 4th of October 1816, a day rendered memorable by the death of our holy Mother, St. Theresa; it was also the feast of St. Francis of Assissium, whose name my mother bore. I was baptized in the church of St. Germain, at Rennes, receiving for patrons St. Peter and St. Francis of Assisium. My poor, dear mother received on this, her birthday, a sad bouquet, in presenting to the world a little girl who was to cause her so many anxieties, and such solicitude, by her ill health and her wilfulness. She confided me to the care of a nurse, who was a most excellent person. But about a month after my birth, an accident occurred, which would have caused my death, had it not been for the special protection of God. My nurse, having gone out for a moment, left me in my cradle. One of her little girls took me in her arms and carried me to the fireplace to keep me warm; but I fell from her hold into the fire: I have always retained the marks of this accident.

* She alluded to the work of reparation for blasphemies with which our Lord, himself, inspired her, and which really contributed to the glory of his Holy Name.

† The Mother Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery of Tours, Mary of the Incarnation, of whom we shall speak farther on.
even to this day. My mother, much grieved at the occurrence, dismissed this woman from her service.”

“I will now give an account of one of the first acts of malice which I can remember. When I had grown a little older, some one told me of the accident, which had happened to me. To my surprise, my good old nurse came one day to see me. I received her coldly, remarking with much asperity: "You have already burned one of my cheeks, have you come to-day to disfigure the other?" At four years of age, I was attacked with scarlet fever, which brought me to death's door. My parents have often told me that I had been in great danger for nineteen days, having been unable to take nourishment of any kind, save a small glass of cider. The very recollection of this often made my father laugh, when speaking of my illness, during which, a beverage so contrary to my condition, should have been the means of preserving my life."

"From the moment my reason commenced to develop itself, my virtuous parents gave me the advantage of a pious education; but I was naturally very disagreeable and obstinate. My pious mother took me often to church with her, but here I was thoughtless and giddy, and kept turning my head in every direction to see what was going on around me. After manifesting such a want of reverence and decorum in the House of God, and failing in fidelity to my mother's counsels, I was severely
punished on my return home. When I was a little over six years of age, I was taken to confession to accuse myself of all my faults. I was so jealous of my little sister that my parents were obliged to separate us and send her away for some time. Besides these exterior defects, which rendered me so disagreeable to others, my heart was filled with pride and self-love. On one occasion my mother said to me in the presence of my father, for the purpose of mortifying me: 'Surely, this is not our little girl; if so, she must have been transformed by her nurse; it is impossible that our child could be as perverse as this little one.' Such reflections coming from the lips of my mother, were not very flattering. But I soon gained quite a victory over my pride. Every day a poor, blind, old man, shabbily dressed, passed our door. On approaching the corner of the street he required the assistance of some kindly hand to conduct him to the right path. My kind-hearted parents frequently requested me to render him this necessary assistance; but I was so excessively proud, and manifested so much repugnance that they did not insist. Finally, one day I determined to overcome my pride. I ran from the house and took the poor old man gently by the hand, and led him to the right path. It seemed to me then that I had performed a most heroic act. Whenever I was reprehended for my misbehavior by my parents, I did not rebel against their authority for I perceived
that it was for my benefit they corrected me, and my wayward heart was touched at times by the voice of God, which reproached me for my ingratitude."

"I received particular instructions concerning the ever Blessed Virgin; most wonderful examples of her protection and power were related to me; my heart was touched, and I commenced to pray fervently to this good mother, and I soon became better. I began to love prayer and no longer received admonitions on my return home from High Mass and the other religious services of the Church, for I had become more sedate. When any thing repugnant to my inclinations occurred, I offered it to God, saying, 'My God, I offer Thee this in expiation of my sins.'"

Let us for an instant interrupt this artless narrative, and insert two incidents which we have learned from another source. These trilling imperfections which she considered as serious faults, were nothing more than the result of that forgetfulness common to childhood, yet which, at so tender an age, had impressed her with the most lively horror. Several times, her eldest sister found her alone, weeping bitterly. When asked the cause of her tears, the dear little one replied, "I am weeping over my sins." She feared even the slightest appearance of sin to such an extent, that at eight years of age, having had some scruples with regard to a book which had been lent her, she repaired to the parish priest
before ever opening it, to ask his opinion
regarding its perusal; when she learned that
the book would do her no injury, yet, that it
was only a frivolous story from the reading of
which nothing profitable could be gleaned,
she returned it to the owner immediately,
without even having read the first page.

"My good parents," said she, "sent me to
catechism with the other little children of the
parish. I enjoyed the instructions greatly,
and my conduct soon becoming more edifying,
flattery succeeded the reproaches which I had
been in the habit of receiving. On one occa-
sion, a lady said to my mother in my presence :
'Madam, your little girl conducts herself in
church like a person of forty years of age!' But
I think that these flattering remarks only
increased my pride and self-love. I commenced
about this time to practice the devotion of the
Holy Way of the Cross. The reflections on the
sufferings of our Divine Lord affected my heart
in a very sensible manner, for I felt that my
sins had been the cause of his sufferings, and
full of contrition, I said: 'Oh! my Saviour,
didst thou not perceive during thy dolorous
Passion that one day I would be converted and
would belong entirely to Thee?' I kissed the
ground, and humbled myself to the earth at
each station. When I returned home, it often
happened that my face was all covered with
dust, and our Lord permitted that this act of
devotion should draw upon me a humiliation,
for whenever my sister was displeased with me
she would taunt me with the appellation: 'dirty nose,' which frequently put my feeble virtue to a severe test."

"The grace of God was attracting me strongly, yet, I was inconstant in the practice of virtue, alternately rising and falling. I know not how it happened, but I remember having heard of a sort of prayer called mental, which was much more agreeable to God than vocal prayer. I had an ardent desire to pray in this manner, and I said to myself: I shall recite no more words in saying my prayers; for the future I shall pray mentally. But when I finished my prayers according to my new method, I was seized with doubts and scruples for not having said my morning and evening prayers as had been my custom. Our Lord, beholding my desire, inspired me to contemplate his sufferings caused by my sins and infidelities, over which I wept sincerely; and He permitted, a little later, that I should hear a sermon treating entirely of meditation. I opened both my ears and my heart to receive this beautiful instruction, for I was so anxious to learn how to make so delightful a prayer."

This attraction for prayer in a child of such tender years, prognosticated the wonders which would result. When the favored child had attained the age of ten and a half years, she prepared herself for her first Communion, by making a good general confession.

"By the mercy of God," said she, "my heart was truly touched by grace. I received with
great devotion this Divine Saviour whom I had so often offended in my childhood, and I offered myself entirely to Him. On the same day I received the sacrament of Confirmation, and was invested with the scapular, thereby placing myself under the protection of my tender mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom I owed my conversion. My confessor, observing that I was entirely changed, permitted me to receive holy communion again during the course of the ensuing year. He was surprised at the marvelous change which grace had operated in my soul, and did not hesitate to tell me so; but after saying many fine things on the subject, he commenced to ridicule and humble me. As I was not very humble, I would have much preferred not to have received these flatteries and thus to have avoided the humiliations which followed. Our Lord, who watched over me, sent me at this time spiritual trials, well adapted to humble and purify my soul.

"The devil, seeing that his prey had escaped him, made a last effort to regain an entrance into my soul. Having been driven from his hold he went, as the Gospel relates, to seek seven other spirits more wicked than himself, to aid him to regain his prey. Then I was attacked by a thousand temptations: my mind was enveloped in darkness, my soul tormented with scruples, and I believe that I was committing sin every moment: I had not a minute's peace. If I listened to a sermon the
demon whispered imprecations and blasphemies in my ear, and my mind was harassed with evil thoughts. I was then but twelve years old. The sins of my past life returned to my memory with redoubled force; it seemed that I had never confessed them. Confession appeared to be something impossible for I lost myself in lengthy examinations, and never believed myself sufficiently prepared. When my turn came, I entered the confessional with my soul filled with doubts, sorrow and anxiety; I no longer found any consolation in my prayers, for I feared I recited them without the proper dispositions, and I repeatedly commenced over and over again the same prayer.

"This repetition was as absurd as it was fatiguing. My confessor did all in his power to console me; but being so young, and having had no experience in this kind of temptation, I did not make him sufficiently acquainted with the nature and extent of my sufferings; during this time of trial our Heavenly Father was only purifying my soul. I was then far from entertaining notions of pride and self-love."

"Our Lord afflicted me in a most sensible manner, by depriving me of my good mother, whom I loved most dearly. When she expired, I recalled to my mind that St. Theresa was but twelve years of age when she lost her mother, and like this great saint, I also implored the Blessed Virgin Mary to become a mother to me, and to fill the place of my own dear mother
who had been just taken from me. Our Blessed Lady, indeed, heard my prayer, for I have always experienced, in a very special manner, the effects of her maternal protection."

"I continued to attend the catechism class for several years. The priest in charge of the Sunday School, was a very competent and worthy person. He is now a most zealous Bishop.* I believe he saw clearly the sad condition of my soul, but as he was not my confessor, he could not give me the consolation of which I stood so much in need. However, it was he who taught me the method of making mental prayer by the sermon to which I have already made reference, and later on he rendered 'me great service."

"The fête-day of the Catechism class was approaching. Three little girls had been chosen to recite a piece in the form of a dialogue. I was one of the number; each one received her role to memorize. My two companions were to discuss with me on the pleasures of the world, which they were to laud highly, whilst I was to represent their vanity and nothingness. At the termination of the piece one of the two concluded by saying, that my discourse had convinced her that I had made a vow of poverty, and that perhaps I would become a Carmelite. May our Lord be blessed! for I really received this vocation some time later: the

* Mgr. de la Hailandière, who became Bishop of Vincennes in America. He afterwards returned to Rennes.
other two remained in the world and were married."

"Finally, it pleased God to deliver me in the following manner from the torture of my mental sufferings. A pious young companion of mine, aware of my spiritual condition, had the charity to speak of it to my confessor, who was also hers. One day I entered the confessional after her, but feeling that I was not sufficiently prepared, I arose to retire. What was my astonishment, when I heard my confessor open the door of the confessional and order me to return immediately, and commence my confession without delay. I excused myself saying, that I was not sufficiently prepared, that I had not finished my examination of conscience, and that I felt no contrition for my sins: but he would not listen to my reasoning. I submitted to obedience, made my confession and received absolution; my confessor then said to me: 'My child, be assured that this confession has been one of the best of your life.' He then expressly forbade me to recite my prayers over and over again; and he gave me a rule to follow respecting the scruples which tormented me so terribly. Our Blessed Lord granted me the grace to submit to the counsels of my director, and the devil was overcome by obedience. All my disquietudes vanished like smoke, and a holy peace returned to my weary heart. Then approaching our Divine Lord in the sacrament of his love with a humble confidence and a holy peace of mind, I soon experienced its
marvelous effects; my soul was inundated with consolation. I also received many graces while assisting at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. When the moment of consecration approached it was with difficulty I could conceal my transports of joy from the observation of those present. I kept myself in the Divine Presence continually, and my union with God was uninterrupted."

As she lived at home with her father, her brothers and sisters, Perrine, (feminine for Peter, her baptismal name,) cheerfully joined in all their amusements. Having assisted at Mass and the other offices of the Church on Sundays, they assembled in a party and walked to the country. On these occasions they took with them some little refreshments, and each one diverted himself as he thought proper. Our little Perrine knew well how to pass these hours of pleasant recreation piously, and to the edification of all. We have learned these particulars from one of her cousins of the same age, Jennie Benoit, who generally formed one of the number on these little fêtes. Having arrived at the place where they proposed passing the remainder of the day, Perrine would draw her cousin aside and then they would entertain themselves, conversing on the Blessed Virgin and on the benefits bestowed on them by their heavenly Mother.

The education of our little Breton was exceedingly limited, she having had but two years regular attendance at school: reading,
writing, grammar, and arithmetic, such, at that period, was all the instruction considered necessary for persons in her sphere of life. The daughter of the mechanic Eluere, although naturally gifted, received no further educational advantages than those afforded by the times to persons in her position.

Two of her paternal aunts kept a dressmaking establishment of considerable importance, and to them our little Perrine was confided to learn the business.

"My good aunt," said she, "placed me in a corner near her where I worked as if I were in a little cell, separated from the other young persons employed in the establishment. I was not disturbed by them, nor they by me, for they never for a moment perceived the operations of divine grace which were going on in my soul. Nothing could divert me from the intimate conversations which I held with our Divine Lord. I often made spiritual communions, which so enkindled in my soul the fire of divine love, that in the midst of my occupations I was so transported from this earth, that at times it became difficult to control myself. Our Divine Lord granted me the favor of being admitted into the Congregation of our Blessed Lady, of which one of my good aunts was the directress."

This Association had been established by some holy missionaries in 1817, to maintain and preserve piety and the practice of Christian virtue among the youth of the city. At that
time the association numbered several hundred members, it continued to flourish for many years and was the means of doing much good at Rennes; it still exists, though not so flourishing. The ordinary reunions take place in the same isolated little chapel where but very recently an image of the Holy Face was installed with great devotion and solemnity in honor of the former member whose life we are now narrating.

"After the ordinary period of probation," said she, "I was received as a member by the council, and made my act of consecration. Oh! what a day of consolation! The ceremony recalled to me my first communion. I was, as on that day, attired in white, with a lighted candle in my hand, and kneeling before the director and another ecclesiastic, and in the presence of over five hundred of my new sisters, I renewed my baptismal vows, and I promised faithfully to observe the rules of the association. I then consecrated myself to the most Blessed Virgin, my good mother. This association had been established for the working-classes, who were bound to it by no vow; the rules and regulations were well adapted to preserve a religious spirit and the love of piety in the hearts of the young; every two weeks the director gave an excellent and instructive discourse to the members."

The Divine Master, having nourished his little servant with the spiritual milk of consolation for a sufficiently long period, now
wished to strengthen her soul by more solid and substantial food, that she might be fortified to pass, as she herself expressed it, "from Thabor to Calvary."

"Consolation gave way to aridity and spiritual barrenness, this condition seemed strange to me. What! to feel that I was no longer loving and serving God! Being ignorant of the ways of grace, I imagined that by force of application, I could again taste the ineffable delights of those transports of love with which I had been favored; but these vain efforts only wearied me and made me sick. I spoke of the state of my soul to my confessor, who did not seem to be at all moved by what I related to him. He only said that by degrees I would again enjoy the same consolations. I continued in the same state of aridity, and in my ingratitude to my heavenly benefactor, I relaxed in the path of perfection; my weary, miserable heart turned to creatures for consolation. I had no peace of mind, and although my faults were not grievous yet they were injurious to my soul, for our blessed Lord demanded of me a greater degree of generosity."

In this painful state of mental suffering she took a step which might have compromised her whole future. Imagining that her confessor seemed indifferent to her faults, Perrine, docile and confiding as she had ever been, asked permission of her virtuous father to consult another confessor. Being a discreet person, he doubted the prudence of assenting to his
daughter's request, and before so doing, consulted the same priest whom she wished to leave. This was the curé of the parish for whom he entertained the greatest esteem. Perrine's father represented to him that perhaps she might feel better under the direction of another confessor, who was then held in great repute by the pious. The good curé readily gave his consent to the desired change; but our little penitent soon had cause to repent of her inconstancy.

"Although," said she, "I received the most excellent counsels from my new director, yet I became no better. At the age of seventeen the vain attractions of the world began to entice me, and growing lukewarm in the service of God, I soon gave myself up to the foolish vanities of the world. But what was most disastrous of all at this time, was my neglect of prayer, a means so necessary to the soul in vanquishing her passions, and in strengthening her against the attacks of the Evil One."

"After the death of my mother, the care of the house devolved upon my eldest sister and proud I was not always disposed to submit to her authority, and was thus, often the cause of much trouble and dissention. My conscience often reproached me for my infidelities: I recalled to mind the happy days of my childhood when, faithful to the God of mercy and love, I was filled with ineffable delights; I longed to return to Him, but my soul was, as it were, enchained by my evil propensities;
finally I had recourse to Her who is never invoked in vain, to Mary, my tender mother, to whom I had consecrated myself forever."

The feast of the Purification was approaching, and I prepared myself by a novena. I passed this beautiful day in great devotion, offering a taper to be burned before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. The chains, by which I had been so long bound, were severed, and my heart was entirely changed. Some invisible power seemed to impel me to return to my old confessor. As soon as I beheld him I exclaimed, 'Oh! my good father, virtue fled from my soul when I left your direction. I implore you to number me once more among your many penitents.' He received me as did the father of the Prodigal son, with great charity. Soon after this, I made a retreat of eight days in a religious house where there were missionaries preaching. It was there that divine mercy awaited me. I had most earnestly besought the Blessed Virgin to obtain a happy result to my retreat, and my prayers were heard. The grace of God, together with the instructions of the good missionaries produced the most salutary effects in my soul. I made a general confession, and beholding all my sins and the infinite mercy of God which I had so long despised, and contemplating the wounds of my crucifix, I felt my heart penetrated with contrition, my eyes shed torrents of tears, and I promised for the future an inviolable fidelity to God.'
CHAPTER II.

HER VOCATION.

"Ah! my child, your passions
have been only wounded, they
must be immolated."

(Words of her Confessor.)

Our little Perrine had just completed her seventeenth year: her retreat "entirely converted her," as she herself said. She always attributed this great grace to the most Blessed Virgin, the mother of Jesus, and from that moment united to her past sentiments of filial affection for this tender Mother, a lifelong debt of gratitude.

"I became devoted to the Blessed Virgin," said she, "in a most particular manner; I admired with what mercy this divine Mother withdrew me from the verge of the abyss whither my infidelities were leading me; my confidence in her daily increased and I felt inspired to beg her to obtain for me the grace of becoming a religious. My good Mother heard my prayer, for I soon felt the desire of abandoning the world grow stronger in my soul. But what was I to do? I was afraid to mention the subject to my confessor. One day, when my sufferings were extreme,
and the grace of God was strongly agitating me on the subject of my vocation, I hastened to the altar of my cherished Mother, our Blessed Lady, and deposited in her maternal heart all my fears and anxieties. The Blessed Virgin soon soothed my troubled heart and delivered me from my disquietude. There was in this chapel, opposite her beautiful silver statue, the confessional of one of her zealous servants, the vicar, of whom I have already spoken, who had given me the part of a religious in the catechism conference at which I was asked if I would like to be a Carmelite. I was kneeling before the statue of our Blessed Mother, supplicating her to assist me in my interior combat, when I suddenly perceived that this good priest was about to enter his confessional, and it seemed that he made me a sign to enter. I cannot account for how it happened, as I had never spoken to him of the concerns of my soul, and behold, much to my astonishment, he told me all that was passing in my interior, saying: 'You want to be a religious, my child, but to obtain the object of your desire, you imagine there is a mountain in your way. Am I not right?' Delighted with having so unexpectedly found a consoler who understood me perfectly, I spoke to him very frankly of my spiritual affairs. He examined me minutely and declared that I had a good vocation. Much encouraged by his counsels, I went to find my confessor to whom I had not dared broach the subject of my vocation.'
"When I made known to him my desire of entering the religious state, he replied: 'Your sentiments accord perfectly with mine, for I have always thought that you would be a religious.' This assurance from my confessor filled me with joy. Some days after this, he advised me to defer my departure until spring; but, alas! in the meantime, I had to pass through the hands of another spiritual father who was not so quick to decide religious vocations. For five years he labored incessantly at the destruction of the inward wall of my pride and self-love, with the hammer of mortification, before he considered me worthy of inhabiting the solitude of Carmel."

The new director, of whom she now speaks, never sent aspirants to religion until they had given ample proof to hope that once entered the convent, they would never return to the world again. From accidental causes, Perrine was led to place herself under the direction of this wise and prudent confessor.

The parish priest, her former director, threatened with loss of sight, was obliged to go to Paris for medical treatment, and knowing that his spiritual child required the direction of a skilful and experienced guide, he recommended her to this holy and venerable ecclesiastic, who at the time rendered valuable services to the various religious communities of the diocese. He was a man of great enlightenment in the ways of grace, and was gifted with peculiar tact in the
discernment of religious vocations; he was so widely known that mothers dreaded to see their daughters going to consult him. This skilful director was l'abbé Panager who, at the time of his death, was pastor of Saint Etienne at Rennes. We have his opinion of our young Perrine, too significant in its brevity to be passed unnoticed:

"I have only known her from the time she chose me as her director, and this simply because she wished to become a religious. Her motive prompted me to receive her kindly, and I immediately undertook to aid her. I always found her very exact, and very docile under my direction. I lent her books, and from time to time gave her some particular advice. She edified me very much, and I decided proposing her as a candidate to the Carmelites."

Perrine, accordingly, presented herself to this man of God, informing him of her desire to become a carmelite. He received her with great charity and encouraged her to persevere in her holy purpose, but was not willing to accept the responsibility of becoming her director without mature reflection. His counsel produced such an effect on our little aspirant that after the return of her previous confessor she entreated l'abbé Panager to continue her direction, but he still insisted on having more time for consideration. Finally, he said to her: "My child, I will undertake your direction for the honor and glory of God, and for the salvation of your soul."
"These words," said the sister, "inspired me with great confidence in this holy man's direction. His first wish was to fathom the depths of my soul, and for this purpose he directed me to give him a written account of the manner in which our Lord had conducted me in the past, and also desired to be informed of my present disposition. I wrote a small notice of these matters and remitted it to him; then he bade me make a rule of life. After some time I requested him to interest himself in reference to my admission to the convent. 'Ah! my child,' said he, 'your passions have been only wounded, they must be immolated.' I had such an ardent desire of becoming a carmelite that I would have passed through fire and water, were it necessary, to accomplish my object; bearing this end in view, I commenced with renewed fervor to labor at my perfection."

The counsels and exhortations of her confessor made a great impression on her mind, and she "took great care not to forget them". We shall quote from the sister's own artless narrative.

"His first care was to caution me against the foolish weaknesses but too common to devotees. 'My child,' said he, 'do not go about consulting different directors. If you wish me to be really your spiritual father, you must be really my child: be simple then, as a child; it is here you must avow your failings, your doubts and temptations, but make no such disclosures"
elsewhere for it would avail you nothing. Never speak of your confessor, nor of the penances imposed on you; go straight to God in the spirit of faith; make no uneasy researches in your soul for these are but fuel for Purgatory. Study to know yourself and to know God; the more you will know him, the more you will love him; be always cheerful and gay; be not like those sad and pensive beings who seem to bear the yoke of the Lord as if it were a heavy burden. Oh! my child, what a beautiful path the Lord has chosen for you! Consider the reward that awaits you if you prove faithful! Prepare yourself for the great designs God has in view over you."

"Such is a glimpse of the wise counsels which I received from this good father. By the grace of God they became fruitful in my soul. He lent me books which treated of prayer, interior life, and also the Lives of the Saints. All these spiritual aids fortified me, and strengthened my desire of embracing the religious life. But when I expressed my earnest wish to leave the world, he would calmly reply: 'My child, the habit does not make the nun.' I saw by this answer that I had still to labor at my perfection. I prayed continually to the Blessed Virgin, my dear protectress, to conduct me as a Carmelite into the house where she was most loved. I also prayed fervently to the glorious St. Joseph, begging him to obtain for me the precious gift of prayer. To obtain this grace, and all the others of which
I stood in need, especially that of becoming a religious, I performed a little pilgrimage in his honor. On Wednesdays, I ate nothing but dry bread for my breakfast, and on Saturdays, I did the same in honor of our Blessed Lady. I had a great devotion to the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph were constantly in my mind. 'Most Holy Family!' I would say to them, 'if I had the happiness of living when you were on this earth I would most surely have gone in quest of you, in whatsoever place you were to be found, that I might have had the honor of serving you as your little domestic.'

"My director lent me the life of St. Theresa. When I read the promise which our Lord made her at the foundation of her first convent, St. Joseph of Avila, that He would dwell therein, the Holy Virgin and St. Joseph guarding the doors, one on either side, oh! how excessive was my joy! I no longer doubted that I would solicit an entrance to Carmel, the abode of the Holy Family. I tormented my confessor from that moment, begging him to interest himself in my behalf: but to try me still longer he gave me evasive answers, such as these: 'I shall see:—God's time has not yet come.' Once he said to me: 'Do you suppose, my child, that I would suffer you to enter a convent hastily, before your vocation has been well tried, and leave it directly as do so many young persons? No, my child, when I send you, you will be well prepared.'"

This was a sore trial for our young aspirant.
In the meantime, Divine Providence furnished her with an occasion of gratifying, at least in part, her ardent desire. An indigent family came to dwell in the neighborhood of her father's house. This poor family consisted of three members: the father, a laboring man, the mother who was blind, and a little son aged about four or five years. They were so very unfortunate, especially during the winter when the husband had no work, that their miserable little hut really bore the appearance of the stable of Bethlehem. They were found without fire or a morsel of bread. "I could not permit to pass such a precious opportunity of honoring the Holy Family in the persons of these poor people, and I did not rest one moment until I had rendered their situation more comfortable. By the grace of God I entertained a great veneration and affection for them, and lavished on them all the care which their indigence demanded. At that time, just previous to my admission as a carmelite, my limited means did not permit me to supply all their necessities: but the Holy Family, whom I served in their persons, rendered me so eloquent in pleading their cause among my acquaintances that nothing was ever refused me."

"All my happiness consisted in visiting and instructing them in their religious duties, from which they had been estranged, no doubt, by their extreme poverty. I persuaded them to go to confession; and I engaged the husband
to make a retreat of eight days in a house destined for that purpose. If I loved this family they reciprocated my affection, and I soon perceived the influence I had acquired over them. When dissensions arose between them, from time to time, I would be called on to settle the difficulty and restore peace."

The Holy Family did not allow their little servant to go unrewarded. Perrine daily progressed in virtue. She was permitted by her director to make the vow of chastity which she renewed on all the feasts of the Blessed Virgin. With the view of preparing herself for the religious life, she endeavored to practice the higher virtues of mortification, humility, obedience and the love of prayer. She also exercised a charitable zeal towards her young companions, assisting them in their spiritual advancement.

Let us listen to her own account of her pious practices of devotion. "I have always had a special attraction for prayer, and believing that I could not be a child of prayer without at the same time having a great love for mortification, I labored courageously to acquire this latter virtue, and also to destroy all my evil propensities. The better to succeed in my purpose, I took note of my daily failures and of the number of my acts of mortification. I kept by my side two little ribbons, on which were strung small beads such as are used for chaplets; one end served to note my failures, the other, the number of my little
sacrifices, or virtuous actions performed during the day. This cord of mortification was composed of fifteen beads in honor of the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary; and I believe that, at night, I often had the blessing of offering the entire chaplet completed to our Blessed Lady. I practiced the mortification of the eyes; whenever anything pleasant or agreeable was presented to my view, I would turn my head away and would not look at it. When I would be just on the point of saying something agreeable or witty, I would remain silent. I made my general and particular examination with the view of overcoming my predominant passion,—pride. But our Blessed Lord himself soon sent me the necessary assistance to vanquish my enemy.”

Almighty God, who never permits himself to be outdone in generosity, beholding this candid and faithful soul thus placing herself unreservedly at his disposal, was pleased to instruct and enlighten her himself.

“Many times,” said she, “in the course of my life, I have experienced the extraordinary operations of grace in my soul, during which, if I may thus express it, our Lord showed me a glimpse of the celestial favors with which he would one day enrich my soul. I had the happiness of receiving holy communion three times a week besides Sundays. It was at this divine banquet that our Blessed Lord united himself intimately to my soul. My director had commanded me to inform