

The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIVES
OF
ST. CATHERINE OF RICCI,

OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. DOMINICK;

ST. AGNES OF MONTEPULCIANO;

B. BENVENUTA OF BOJAN;

AND

B. CATHERINE OF RACONIGI,

OF THE ORDER OF ST. DOMINICK.

**"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in
universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.***

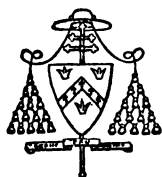


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M.DCCC.LII.**

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We hereby approve and sanction the Series of Lives of the Canonized and Beatified Saints, the Servants of God declared Venerable, and others commonly reputed to have died in the odour of sanctity, now in course of publication by the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and we cordially recommend it to the Faithful, as calculated to promote the glory of God and of His Saints, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Westminster, the Feast of the Nativity of our B. Lady, A.D. 1851.

N. Card. Wiseman

TO
THE NUNS OF ENGLAND,
WHO SHIELD THEIR COUNTRY BY THEIR PRAYERS,
AND BY THEIR MEEK AUSTERITIES
MAKE REPARATION FOR ITS SINS;
AND TO
THE SISTERS OF MERCY,
WHOSE CHARITY IS THEIR INCLOSURE,
WHILE FOR THE LOVE OF THEIR HEAVENLY SPOUSE
IN HIS POOR AND SUFFERING MEMBERS
THEY DENY THEMSELVES
THE PEACE AND PROTECTION OF THE CLOISTER.

Daughters of Mary! in retreats obscure,
Lost to man's thought and eye, amid the trees
And unfrequented fields, on bended knees
Sneing for England's pardon, lives so pure
Mingle in heaven and God's approval share
With that uncloistered love, whose willing feet
Are borne through jeering crowd and gazing street
To scenes of lonely want and pining care.
For you the holy past is now unfurled,
That with its bright examples you may feed
The spirit of devotion. While the world
Honours your goodness with its hatred, you,
Still to your high and calm vocation true,
May win fresh light and strength from what you read.

F. W. FABER.

ST. WILFRID'S,
FEAST OF OUR LADY OF REDEMPTION,
M.DCCC.XLVII.

PREFACE.

The present volume contains the Lives of four Saints of the Order of S. Dominick. The Life of S. Catherine of Ricci, the friend and contemporary of S. Philip Neri, is from the Italian Life, anonymous, but announced as *cavata de' Sommarj de' Processi*, published in Rome, 1746, with the usual permissions. The Life of S. Agnes of Montepulciano is from the Italian "*Istoria composta da un Academico Intrigato*," published at Sienna 1779. The Life of Benvenuta is translated from the original of "*Frater Joannes Franciscus Bernardus Maria de Rubeis, Ordinis Prædicatorum*," printed at Venice in 1757. It was principally composed from a manuscript in the convent at Friuli, which bore signs of having been written by "*Frater Conradus de Castellerio*," confessor to the Blessed Benvenuta. It has the imprimatur of "*Frater Joannes Thomas de Boxadors*," general of the order of preach-

ers, and that of the "Reformatori dello Studio di Padova."

The Life of B. Catherine of Raconigi is from the collection of Dominican Lives by Father Serafino Razzi, well known from his numerous biographies of the Saints.

Some readers may be startled at the story which is told in the Life of the B. Catherine of Raconigi, that S. Peter Martyr heard her confession and gave her absolution. There may of course be a difference of opinion as to whether this absolution was sacramental or not. Without determining this question, we subjoin the opinions of theologians. Suarez (De Sacr. Disp. 13. Sect. 1.) and Billuart (De Sacr. Diss. 5. Art. 2.) after S. Thomas, (Summa. 3. Qu. 66. 7. 2.) hold that blessed souls in heaven, supposing that they were reunited to their bodies, could minister the sacraments, and that, without any extraordinary dispensation on the part of God, on the ground that the state of a viator is not necessary for their administration. They add, however, that a blessed soul in the state of

separation from the body would require a special commission, even if it were that of a priest; because the sacraments require the presence of the senses. The conclusion of the whole we give in De Lugo's words: "We allow with S. Thomas and others, that supposing an angel or a blessed soul, whether in or out of a glorious body, were to administer a sacrament, it should be considered as valid; because in such a case it would in every way be right to believe that it happened by a peculiar dispensation of God, the sovereign Lord of grace and of the sacraments," (De Sacr. Disp. 8. Sect. 1.)

Something remains to be said in answer to the queries and suggestions of our kind correspondents. Some of our subscribers wish to see explanatory notes attached to each volume. It is undoubtedly true that this would be a very useful work, and that much interesting illustration might be brought to bear upon the difficulties of the Lives of the Saints. But it should be remembered, not only that to do such a work well would have to

be a man's sole occupation, but also that it is quite contrary to the very *idea* of our undertaking, as put forward in the original Prospectus, and upon which we obtained the sanction of superiors. We are not putting forward, rather studiously avoiding to put forward, our own work, or becoming the champions of any peculiar views. Our task was to be a humble one, though we trusted great fruits were to come of it. We were to be merely the editors of translations, to give to the Catholic public fair specimens, and in time a moderately good collection, of a certain literature which forms the spiritual reading of Catholic countries, and on which the spiritual life of Italy, Spain, and France is moulded. The works from which we translate have received the approval of superiors in the countries where they were published, and consequently, if the translations be faithful, they come to the reader at least with a respectable amount of authority, such as the comments of the editors would not have. The original question was, whether the publication of such translations was dis-

creet or seasonable in England; upon that head there was formerly a difference of opinion, which we are led to believe is now much less than it was, if, indeed, it exists at all. But for us,—superiors settled it, and the series was begun. To publish these Lives now with commentaries and explanations would be to start a new work on a different principle from the present series, not to continue it; and if we believed at starting that the idea we put forward was the safest and would work best, much more are we satisfied of it now that the series has had the experience of nearly six years upon its head; so far as ourselves are concerned, it is the only principle on which other duties and avocations would permit us to continue the work at all. The fact is, some of our friends will persist in looking out for a literary or theological work, which would be more to their taste, in spite of all our asseverations that we are aiming at no more than to supply “edifying reading for families, schools, and religious refectories.” When we have done more than this, it has only been in defence of

the series as it is. Yet our friends should not be disappointed at our not giving what we never promised. We have nothing to do with promoting literature or intellectual culture by means of Saints' Lives; but to furnish spiritual reading to those whose spiritual directors have made it part of their daily devout life. Perhaps it may answer that end none the worse because the intellectual interest is so little. All we have to regret is that even, as translations, the Lives are often below the standard which we had once aspired to reach. This literary defect has not, we trust, gone to the length of injuring the success of the volumes as spiritual reading.

Others of our friends wish that we would publish fewer of the "Mystical" Saints, and confine ourselves more to the saints of active beneficence and philanthropy. We fear we must first of all join issue on the facts. Up to the present volume, 30 volumes of Lives have been published, of which the following, it is presumed, can in no sense be called "Mystical:"

	VOLS.
1. Of S. Philip, and the Fathers of the Oratory	6
2. Of S. Alphonso and his Companions	6
3. Of S. Ignatius and Jesuit Fathers ...	5
4. S. Camillus, S. Joseph Calasanctius, B. Leonard of Port Maurice, S. Thomas Villanova, and B. Sebastian	6
5. S. Jane Frances de Chantal	1½
6. V. Margaret Mary.....	2
	<hr/> 26½

This leaves S. Rose, S. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, V. Benedict Joseph, and about half the second volume of S. Jane Frances, that is at most $3\frac{1}{2}$ volumes to $26\frac{1}{2}$; and if the series is to be a fair representation of the body of Christian literature it professes to represent, no one will say this is an unfair proportion of "extraordinary" to "practical" saints. "But bring out those which will please Protestants most." This is not the object; the series is meant for a spiritual, not a controversial, end; though, as we expected, and indeed foretold in the Prospectus, the instances have not been few in which God has been pleased

to bless it to the latter use. If we were first to bring out all the most practical saints together, and then all the most extraordinary ones together, it is hardly necessary to say that we should never get the latter volumes in circulation, and so make no fair representation of modern hagiology; besides causing a great deal more prejudice and offence than by the present arrangement. The series, like all other "serials," and specially such as take in a wide range, must necessarily look unequal and irregular at first, and will gain symmetry as it gains bulk. Every one has his favourite volumes in a series, and people seldom agree in their favourites. A series seems to be tolerably well answering its end, when opposite charges are brought against it, and the charges on both sides equally kind and equally witnessing to the sympathy and interest taken in the work.

The Oratory. London,
Feast of St. Wilfrid.
1852.

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THE LIFE
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B. CATHERINE OF RACONIGI,
OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS.

THE LIFE
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B. CATHERINE OF RACONIGI,
OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS.

RACONIGI, a city of Piedmont, was the birth-place of the blessed Catherine, whose glorious life we hope with the aid of God, to relate. This virgin was born in the month of June, in the year of our redemption, 1486. Her father was called George Mattei, and her mother's name was Biblia de Ferrari. When she was born, her mother found herself unable to give her suck, and as she could not afford to pay a nurse, she used to make one of her little brothers carry her about the town to her most intimate friends and neighbours, to see if they would give her some milk. The reason of her parents' poverty and distress, was that their country had been recently sacked and plundered, because the lord of it had allied himself with the Marquis of Saluzzo, against whom the Duke of Savoy was waging a cruel war.

Not to mention other painful misfortunes, the roof of their house had been destroyed, so that the

rain, the snow, and the cold, entered at all times into this poor habitation. The blessed child was thus brought up in poverty, and often suffered from want, but she bore all with patience, and although she was so young, showed signs of her future sanctity. When she had attained the age of five years, it came to pass one Sunday, that a white dove descended into her room, and flew straight to her right shoulder, at which she was startled, and fearing some deceit of the enemy of mankind, made the sign of the holy cross and invoked the name of Jesus; and at that moment a ray of wondrous splendour issued from the mouth of the dove, which fell on her mouth, and she heard a voice say to her, "My daughter, receive and drink this wine, and by its power thou shalt never hunger or thirst after anything in the world, but thou shalt, on the contrary, have a growing hunger and a great thirst for the honour of God, and for the salvation of the souls which have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and thou shalt renounce thine own will."

As soon as she was fourteen years old, seeing that many snares were prepared for her, and that many would seek to make her lose the flower of her virginity, she perceived that she stood in great need of particular assistance. For this reason she frequently had recourse to the help of the saints, and especially of those whose feasts were being celebrated, that she might more easily obtain what she desired. In order to find consolation in her troubles, on St. Stephen's day, the blessed Catherine rose before dawn to pray, and

while she implored the holy protomartyr to preserve her virginity, and represented to him that the apostles had given him the charge and the care of women, and she was of that sex, and a frail virgin, the holy Martyr appeared to her, his face beaming with great joy, and said, "My daughter, be of good courage, for thy prayers are heard, and thou shalt be free from temptations of the flesh. Nothing now is wanting but that thou shouldst prepare thyself well for receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit." When he had finished speaking, an immense and admirable light, with three rays, descended visibly upon her, and communicated a sweet fervour to her soul, and it seemed as if her interior boiled like a vessel in a furnace. She heard a loud voice, which sounded like a trumpet, say, "I am come to dwell in thee, and to purge, illuminate, enkindle, and animate thy soul." She was so terrified by this, that she fell motionless on the ground, but as soon as her strength was restored to her, she felt full of joy of soul, and she returned special thanks to God, and to her advocate St. Stephen, the protomartyr. Ever afterwards she bore on her face a certain white splendour, mingled with red, so that her neighbours wondered at it, and thinking that she used paint or other artifices, asked her how she made herself so beautiful, and she used to answer, smiling, that she only used bread, but her secret meaning was that the brightness and glory of her face proceeded from the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and the grace of the Holy Ghost.

On the feast of Pentecost, in her twenty-first

year, when she was praying in her cell with the door closed, the Holy Spirit descended upon her in the form of a very bright cloud. It was then that the fervour of Divine charity indeed increased in her, and zeal for the honour of God, and the salvation of souls; and a greater and clearer knowledge of divine things was supernaturally planted in her soul. Two years after this day, which was so happy for her, on the same feast of Pentecost, this spouse of Christ was shut up in her oratory at the hour of tierce, contemplating the great gift which had been given on that day to the apostles, and the wonderful effects which it produced, and considering while she thanked God for His mercy, that every soul which is come to years of reason, may, by serving God in purity and innocence, make itself worthy of so great a grace, as it happened to the apostles, who, by their own testimony and confession, were the refuse and the outcasts of the world, and who on this day were ennobled and raised to such dignity, that they are called with reason the princes of the earth.

While the blessed Catherine was occupied with these thoughts, two angels, and with them St. Peter Martyr and St. Catherine of Sienna, all of whom were her guardians, appeared, and exhorted her to prepare herself to receive a more abundant grace from the Holy Spirit. She made her confession to St. Peter Martyr, as no other confessor was then at hand, and as soon as he had given her absolution, a loud noise was heard, and the oratory was filled with such a shining light, that it seemed as if everything would be burnt. The

virgin fell on the ground from sudden fear, but St. Catherine of Sienna lifted her up, and raising her eyes, she beheld a large globe of fire from which proceeded seven tongues, which penetrated to the bottom of her heart. At this moment she saw the Eternal Father in an ineffable manner, and the ardour of her charity grew to such a degree that she was surprised by the desire of suffering torments, and even of dying, if it were necessary, for the glory of God and the salvation of her neighbour. She felt so full of courage after this increase of heavenly grace, that if an opportunity had presented itself, she would have gone to preach and to announce Christ's Name to the heathen and infidels. She, moreover, received on that day great understanding, which enabled her to distinguish true visions from false ones.

We have now related how this blessed Catherine received the Holy Spirit in four different ways, and at different periods. The first time He came in the form of a dove, when she was only five years old; the second time in her fifteenth year, in the form of three resplendent rays; the third when she was twenty, under the figure of a shining cloud; and lastly, when she was twenty-two, with the appearance of tongues of fire.

In order to show more evidently the great holiness of this blessed child, and how wonderfully she was prevented by heaven, we will go back to the period of the first descent of the Holy Spirit, and describe her espousals with Jesus Christ, which followed that event. On the feast

of Pentecost, in the year 1491, when she was five years old, the glorious Virgin Mother of God appeared to her, clothed in a beautiful white robe, and over it a black mantle, ornamented in front with one precious stone resembling a ruby which shone like the sun; she wore a garland on her head which gave forth rays as if it were made of stars, and shone most brightly over her ears. Her salutation was, "The Name of Jesus Christ be engraved on thy heart, my dear daughter." When the timid girl heard these words, she replied, "How did you come in when my door was shut, and who are you?" "I am," answered our glorious Lady, "the Mother of Jesus Christ thy Saviour and thy Redeemer; therefore do not fear. It is my will that thou shouldest give thyself, and all that thou mayest have, to my dear Son." Catherine said, "Where is thy Son, my sweet Saviour and Redeemer?" The Queen of Angels said, "He will come shortly;" and continued, "Thou must know that in the cold winter season the beauty of the plants fades and withers, and no flowers, or fruits, or leaves, can be found on them, for the trees are dry and bare. Such would be thy state without the grace of my dear Son, God and Man, who is the true Sun of Justice. Therefore, I wish thee to be joined to Him by love, and to give thyself to Him with all that thou hast, and so shall all thy works be like so much good fruit which thy tree bears, good and ripe fruit, which shall please the Divine Majesty." Then the virgin Catherine answered, "Alas, my dear Lady, I am very poor, and have nothing

in the world to give to this thy dear Son." The heavenly Queen replied, "My dear child, my Son only wishes for thy heart." "I do not know," said Catherine, "where my heart is; but if you find it for me, I will very willingly make Him a present of it." Then the Queen of Angels, smiling at her simplicity, placed her hand on the heart of Catherine, and said, "This is the place of thy heart, which thou must now give Him for a present, with a ready intention of keeping His holy commandments, and enduring all hardships for the love of Him." Here Jesus Christ appeared in the form of a little child, about Catherine's own age, with a red and white complexion, clothed in a white tunic ornamented with gold round the neck, and an Agnus Dei hanging to it, with an image of our Lady of Compassion upon it. The Divine Child was accompanied by a great many angels and saints, among whom were a seraphim with six wings, St. Jerome, St. Peter Martyr, and St. Catherine of Sienna. Then the Queen of heaven took her Son Jesus and turned towards Catherine, and said, "Here is my dearest Son, thy Lord and thy Redeemer, whom I now wish thee to accept for a dear spouse." The young girl trembled, and said, "My dear Lady, I should never dare to do such a thing;" but the Queen comforted her, saying, "Do not fear, my daughter, for it is my wish; and it shall be my Jesus who will be henceforward the protector and the true guardian of thy sacred virginity." Thus the happy child consented to these spiritual espousals, and our Lady turned to her Son Jesus

Christ, and said, "I desire, my dear Son, that Thou shouldst take and receive Catherine for Thy spouse," to which He gave His consent with great joy, because Catherine was one of the jewels which He bought with His precious blood; and the Virgin of virgins took from the little finger of her left hand a ring of twisted and reddish gold, in which there was a very large and very beautiful pearl, and gave it to her little Jesus; then holding both their hands, she married the happy Catherine to her dear Child Jesus Christ, who placed the ring on her finger with these words, "I take thee for my spouse in faith, hope, and charity." After this He exhorted His bride to study to please Him in all things, and to try to be humble, meek and gentle of heart, persevering in patience, in adversity, as she had done before, and measuring her will in all things and by all things with His, for He was from that hour her legitimate Spouse. He then turned to His Mother, and said, "I wish thee to adopt my bride for thy dear daughter, and to take charge of her." He also commanded the seraphim to watch over her and never to abandon her any more than the angel who was assigned to her from the moment of her birth; lastly, addressing Himself to His dear spouse, he said, "Because thou art yet a tender and delicate girl, and hast no experience, I give thee for masters and teachers, Jerome, Peter Martyr, and Catherine of Sienna, who shall after my dear Mother also be a mother to thee, and Peter Martyr shall be thy father."

Jesus Christ, desiring to unite the Blessed Catherine to Him by a closer bond, espoused her a second time twenty years after this event, on the 10th of September, with a very precious ring, in which was set a stone like a ruby, surrounded by four large pearls, in the form of a cross, and on the stone was engraved *Fides*.* In the same year, on the feast of Christmas, this Blessed Catherine was again espoused for the third and last time, with a gold ring which had a white stone, and these words engraved round it, *Dies regis*.† At this solemnity the most Blessed Virgin assisted, as well as St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Jerome, St. Dominic, St. Peter Martyr, and St. Catherine of Sienna, who, as having particular charge of her, had been present at all these acts. We must not neglect to say how, before her espousal on this Christmas, when Catherine was contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation she was raised in spirit, and conducted by the seraphim, who had been appointed her guardian, to the holy cradle of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, and there she merited to see the Infant Jesus, to take Him in her arms, and to kiss Him with devotion and inexpressible affection, saying these, or similar words, while the sighs and sobs which came from the bottom of her heart, revealed the grief of charity which perpetually burned her interior: "O my hope, O my sweet refreshment, O dear Spouse of my soul, how many marks of love hast

* Viz., Faith.

† Viz., the day of the King.

Thou not shown to me, a miserable creature, full of ignorance and ingratitude."

In the year 1512, on the 3rd of August, at the hour of Prime, while this dear spouse was shedding a flood of tears before God, while she prayed Him to give her a pure and clean heart, Jesus Christ appeared to her, accompanied by several saints, and after He had blessed her and spoken of many great mysteries, which she never would manifest to any one, He took her heart, which was all earthly and drooping, except in one place, where *Jesus spes mea* was inscribed in letters of silver, and after cleansing and purifying it, and changing the silver letters into letters of gold, He replaced it. On the feast of St. Maurice, in the same year, Jesus Christ appeared anew to this virgin under the appearance of a crucifix. His wounds shone brighter than the material sun which gives light to the world, and He spoke these words, "Great is the desire, My spouse, that thou hast of binding and uniting thyself to Me, and of transforming thyself into Me, and behold it is also My intention to dwell in the midst of thy heart," Thus in the form of a crucifix He entered her heart, saying, "This is My house, this is My abode; I have chosen it, and I will henceforward live in it." The Blessed Catherine's soul was filled with unspeakable joy and gladness, and at the same time she felt a violent pain.

In 1513, on the day of St. Catherine the Martyr, when our virgin was elevated in spirit and meditating on the constancy that the holy martyrs

of old have showed, and their love for Jesus Christ, and while she piously reflected on her own ingratitude and tepidity, she moreover, on whom such especial graces had been showered, Jesus Christ appeared to her in the company of His holy Mother, St. Catherine Virgin and Martyr, and many other saints, and with His own hands took out her heart for the second time, leaving her as if she were dead, and in great suffering for the space of ten days, at the end of which He restored it to her, cleaner and purer than before. The desire of suffering that she felt from this time was so great for the love that she bore to Jesus that there was no affliction, however great, which she would have thought hard or insupportable. During that period she was led by her guardian seraphim to see a wheel divided into four parts, and she was told that her heart was to be separated into so many portions.

When this virgin was praying the Spouse of her soul, to punish her for the sins of the world, and to put a stop to the ruin of countries and of souls, foreshadowed by the broken wheel which she had seen, Jesus Christ stood before her, and taking out her heart a third time, divided it into four parts, with a knife, describing thus a cross, and on each part was written *Jesus spes mea*.^{*} Catherine remained in great pain and as if she were dead, for her heart had been taken from her. After this, if any questions were put to her, she only answered that they should leave her alone for she

* Jesus my hope.

herself did not know what she said, as she had no heart. After seven days, Jesus Christ reappeared and restored her heart to her, which had been thus divided. She always refused to explain the mystery of the four wounds, and only told her most confidential friends that she would have to endure four great tribulations in the course of time, to purge her soul, from the devils, from her enemies, from the tepid, and from those who murmured against and calumniated her. Some years afterwards at the time that the Church celebrated the festival of our Lord's ascension into heaven, on the 4th day of May, in the year of our salvation, 1516, when Catherine prayed and meditated on the glory of Jesus Christ ascending up to heaven, she began to long that her heart could also ascend with Jesus, and she said, "O sweet Jesus Christ, my hope, O living flame of love, since Thou hast so burnt my heart, grant me also this favour of giving me strength to bear such a furnace of love, and give drink to me, to whom Thou hast given the desire of this thirst, for if Thou dost not, my heart is in danger of fainting, and my courage of failing, for want of strength to persevere." Then Jesus Christ stood before her and took away her heart for the fourth time, and retained it for forty-five days; and all this time the Blessed Catherine lived without a heart, and the wound in her side was so open that the air went and came through it.

On the day of St. John Baptist her two guardian angels came to tell her to prepare herself, for the Saviour of the world was coming to restore

her heart to her. She made this answer : "How is it possible that I should make myself fit for the Divine presence, for I have nothing in me. Alas, blessed angels, I am not anxious that He should restore my heart to me, on the contrary I desire that He should keep it altogether as a thing which belongs to Him, for I have freely made him a gift of it." As soon as she had finished speaking she perceived her Divine Spouse, and she threw herself on the ground with her arms in the form of a cross, and adored Him reverently, and her dear Spouse raised her up, and placing His left hand on her left shoulder, put her heart back in its own place, with His right hand, while He comforted her with these words : "Thou knowest, my dearest Spouse, that I am the Eternal Wisdom, and He who hath made and moulded all things, and it depends on My will and power to make and renew the hearts of My friends and of My elect. Behold I now return to thee this thy heart which thou hast so often given and offered to Me, far purer and more ardent, and entirely reformed." Thenceforward the happy Catherine understood the mystery of the most Holy Trinity, though she was not able to explain it thoroughly, seeing that in her youth she had attended rather to the happy mystery of the Incarnation, since that was the beginning of all our good.

Three years after this wonderful event, when the year 1519 had begun, in the month of March, when Catherine was at table, towards the evening, with the person with whom she lodged, who wore the same habit, she was suddenly attacked by

pains of body and trouble of spirit so great that it is impossible to imagine worse. She always desired to suffer for the salvation of souls, and especially at that time which was one of the days of the Carnival, during which Christians become so foolish and senseless. Thus as she sat at table, she saw two angels in robes of the purest white enter the room, girded and armed with knives, whose handles terminated in small crosses. A sudden and vehement desire was kindled in her mind, and in fear and trembling she retired to her own little room, and as soon as she entered it she saw, after the angels who had followed her there, Jesus Christ in a white robe, who spoke in secret for a little while, and then approached nearer to her, and turning aside His face like one who feels compassion for the pains of others, took her heart out of her chest for the fifth time, and gave it to the angels, who made twelve large wounds in it with their knives. The Vicar of the Convent of St. Dominic, her own confessor and some of her most intimate and confidential companions, were in the same room and they all noticed her actions, which showed the pain she was suffering, and heard her lamentations though they saw nothing more. She told one of her familiar friends some time afterwards that her heart bled in large drops under the hands of the angels who wounded it, and that some of these drops fell upon several of the souls in purgatory, and on some other souls who were not yet freed from this earthly prison. She said that she had never felt such intense pain and she did not think that the agonies of death

would be worse. At length Jesus took Catherine's heart from the angels, and after He had perfectly healed it by His Divine power, He put it back in its proper place.

Once, when she was seven years old, she walked through the cloister of the Servite Fathers at Raconigi, and seeing on the wall a picture of St. Peter Martyr, with the wounds which he had borne for the love of Christ, and a palm in his hand, she was pierced with the desire of holy martyrdom which lasted the remainder of her life. So one day when she was praying with this intention to the holy martyr, St. Peter appeared to her in immense splendour with a chalice full of blood in his hand, which he presented to her, saying, "Take this chalice, my daughter, and taste its precious contents, for thou also shalt drink in time the cup of much tribulation." The virgin, fearing the snares of the enemy, committed her cause to her most beloved Spouse Jesus Christ, praying that He would never abandon her nor permit her to be deceived. Then Jesus Christ appeared to her in the form of a child of ten years, with a cross on his shoulders, and spoke to her as follows: "My dear Spouse, do not let what thou hast just seen give the smallest fear, for this is My faithful servant Peter Martyr, whom I have before assigned thee as a master and a teacher. And neither more nor less than he has done, who for the great love which he bore Me, and his great zeal for My faith drank the chalice of My bitter passion, shalt thou for My love and for the zeal of the souls redeemed by My precious blood endure many

great trials and afflictions." He then placed the cross on her left shoulder and said, "It will seem hard and bitter at first, but in the end it will become sweet and pliable, because of My love which makes heavy things seem light."

Another time, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Jesus Christ appeared to her preceded by two angels, who carried a large cross, which He took from the angels in Catherine's presence, and placed it on her left shoulder for the second time, saying, "This is the cross, my dear Spouse, which shall never forsake thee as long as thou livest. I give it thee now, for it becomes a Spouse who loves his dear Spouse very faithfully to make her a present; it will seem rather hard at first, but in the end will be very glorious." When the virgin received this cross she felt excessive pain, and it weighed so heavily on her shoulder that from that time she carried that side considerably lower than the other; but she was nevertheless consoled when she saw another cross of gold enriched with precious pearls and brilliant jewels, which was to succeed to the first, which seemed so heavy and burdensome.

Another time, which was the third, she received the cross in the shape of a staff from the hands of Jesus Christ, with these words, "With this staff thou shalt conquer by thy patience all the troubles and adversities which shall come upon thee in the remainder of thy life." She said, "Alas! my sweet Saviour, my hope and the true comfort of my soul, and the gentle refreshment of my heart, I have borne and I will willingly bear Thy

cross for Thy sole glory, trusting in Thy goodness and Thy aid, for I am very sure that Thou wilt never abandon me." After having received these three crosses, when this virgin was praying on the night of St. Nicholas's feast, two angels sent by God appeared to her, all shining and glorious, and presented her with a stole covered with crosses, with which they girded her shoulders and both her arms.

In the twenty-fourth year of her age, at the dawn of the second day after Easter, when the Blessed Catherine was contemplating the mystery of our Lord's prayer in the garden, full of a very great desire of suffering something for love of Him, her heavenly Spouse appeared to her with a banner in His hands, clothed only in a red robe, but all surrounded by glory. He approached His dear Spouse uttering most loving words, and made her the gift of His holy wounds, in the hands, feet, and side. She saw something that resembled a thorn of blood issue from the hands and feet and side of Jesus Christ, and pierce hers. The great pain which she endured in this action left her fainting and insensible as if she were dead, but when she returned to her senses the importunity of her humble and fervent prayers gained for her the privilege of their being invisible to all. She moreover received the crown of thorns from the top of the head to the nape of the neck which had hollowed such a deep circle in the bone, that it was large enough to hold a child's least finger. Some marks of coagulated blood were visible in some places, which she showed to some of her

familiar companions when they pressed her to do so, and the Count, who wrote her life in Latin, ingenuously confesses that the goodness and affability of Catherine had alone made him worthy to see them.

This blessed virgin was of a middle stature, her face was not remarkable for beauty or for ugliness, her complexion was white and red, her nose was rather long, but that did not spoil her countenance, her eyes were very large, their colour was between brown and black, and she had a black spot on her right cheek. Her beauty pleased many persons whom she avoided because she was averse to earthly love, and she was often urged by several young men with lascivious words to lose her virginity, over which she was victorious, with the help of the sweet breath of the grace of God, who never permitted her to lose the fair flower of her chastity, and the purity of her soul.

In the year of our salvation, 1512, on the 11th of April, in the twenty-eight year of her age, after a war against her spirit and her flesh, which was the most violent that she ever endured, Jesus Christ appeared to her with a joyful and smiling countenance, and spoke to her in the following manner, "Doubt nothing, and fear nothing, my dear spouse, for I shall be always with thee, and will cover thee with the mantle of My protection." She then prostrated herself on the ground before the Majesty of her God, saying, "My dear spouse, why did You abandon me so long in such great labours and afflictions? Alas, I was all alone in a very deep sea, without either oars or sails. I

thought that the wind was contrary, and that I could not reach the harbour of my holy desires. Woe is me, woe is me, unhappy that I am, I fear that I must have fallen in something that offends Thy Divine Majesty." Her beloved Spouse answered, "Do not fear, my gentle spouse, for you have not fallen in anything from My grace; on the contrary, you have fought manfully, and triumphed with glory over all the temptations which seemed to rain on to thy head; and since thou hast elected and chosen Me for thy hope, which I am in truth and deed, I have never forsaken thee, but as I have told thee many times, I was in the closet of thy heart, always strengthening thy desire of preserving inviolate the fair and immortal lily of virginity." As soon as her loved Spouse had spoken these words to her, four most beautiful angels appeared, and two of them girded her waist, saying, "We gird thee in God's Name with the cincture of chastity which shall never be unloosed." She fell down as one dead with the pain which this girdle gave her, but in the same moment she was consoled by the presence of Jesus Christ, who offered her His open side, and from that time forward she lived like one who had drunk of the nectar of God, who was her dear spouse, and was so inebriated with divine love, that she never more felt the ebullitions of carnal temptations; and her purity was so great that it shone and overflowed upon those who had the happiness of knowing her familiarly, or of speaking to her, or even of simply seeing her.

Now it must be known that, besides the good angel whom the Blessed Catherine had from the moment of her birth, a seraphim with six wings was given to her, as we have said. And although it is an ancient opinion of St. Denis, followed by St. Thomas Aquinas, that the four superior orders of angels are never sent on earth, but always remain in the presence of the most Holy Trinity, we can still justify our former assertion by saying that this angel was not one of the supreme hierarchy, but that he represented an angel of this order, and performed the office of a seraphim. This supposition is confirmed by what we read of a seraphim having been sent to Isaias. Besides, if the Lord of the seraphims, the Son of God, does not disdain to descend here below to men, what impropriety would there be in asserting that a seraphim had done the same, by a particular grace and privilege granted to some friend or favourite of God? Therefore whether it was a true seraphim or some inferior angel thus for some reason named, he had particular charge of the spouse of Jesus Christ, and used to converse familiarly with her as one friend will do with another. Her guardian-angel usually wore a white robe when he appeared to her, but the seraphim's clothes were red; and as he belonged to a higher order he had more majesty, and something greater in his appearance.

Once when this blessed virgin was ill she felt a repugnance to eating any kind of meat, and only desired to have some bitter berries. It was in January, when it was naturally impossible to

find any of them in that country and at that season, but she nevertheless obtained all that she desired, as she herself related to Count John Francis Picus, Lord of Mirandole. The seraphim brought a little branch of this plant to her in her room, but the berries were so large and fine that she divided each of them into three pieces, and they were so agreeable and wholesome that they completely restored her health. This virgin was very familiar with many other angels of different orders, but these two were constantly with her, and she saw and heard them, and was instructed by them what she ought to do, or to leave undone.

In the year 1519, on the feast of the holy Apostles Simon and Jude, while this blessed virgin was praying particularly for her enemies, and those who wilfully persecuted her, that God would enlighten them and not permit them to fall into mortal sin, and offend His Divine Majesty, she was overcome by sleep, and when she awoke she found herself repeating the psalm, *Domine Deus meus, in te speravi ; saluum me fac ex omnibus persequentibus me et libera me.*—O Lord, my God, in Thee have I put my trust ; save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. She was surprised at this, and as she considered it pensively, the Royal Prophet David appeared to her, chanting to his lyre so sweetly, that it seemed as if the soul of the Blessed Catherine must separate itself from the body by reason of the harmony of this instru-

ment. After that the Prophet David had sung thus, he spoke to her in the following manner: "Remember, my daughter, that all men who are in this mortal life for the most part are sinners, and it is necessary to do penance in this life, not in that which we look forward to. Therefore you must endure with courage all the troubles which shall come upon you in future; and know that all you have asked of God has been liberally granted you." Thus this blessed virgin had the testimony of the Royal Prophet of the Old Testament.

Once when she was very little, and was going by her mother's commands to some place, she was tormented by a great pain in her head, caused by vertigo, and she feared lest she should fall down in the road, but St. John Baptist appeared to her, and delivered her from her sufferings with the sign of the cross, saying, "Have courage, my daughter, and follow boldly the movements of the Holy Spirit, and serve God with good will, for by His grace thou shalt produce very great fruits in the Church militant." This testimony she had from one whom the infallible truth has pronounced to be more than a prophet, who was the term of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament, and of the Law of grace. This blessed girl was once poisoned, and no human remedy could be found to save her, when St. John the Evangelist appeared to her, holding a silver cup three fingers high in his hand, half full of some liquid, which he gave her to drink, and she was in that instant miraculously cured,

when her life was despaired of. She was very familiar with several of the saints of Paradise, and spoke with such openness and simplicity of their actions, their martyrdoms, and their glorious qualities, that it seemed as if she had been brought up with them, and had seen with her own eyes what their heroic deeds had done for posterity.

She drew most beautiful pictures with her wise words, of the appearance of the Mother of Jesus Christ, and said in what she did not resemble her dear Son. She said that the blessed St. Mary Magdalen was very beautiful, while, on the contrary, St. Martin was naturally ugly, although his soul was beautiful because of the grace which resided there. She said that the martyr, St. Agatha, was beautiful, having a full and very pleasing face, of a rather dark colour. She maintained that St. Agnes was beautiful, but very little, her face was plump, and her complexion reddish, and that she had curling hair; St. Margaret was of the middle stature, her eyes were large and black. St. Catherine's beauty was perfect, and no fault could be found in it. St. Cecilia was tall and very slender. She described St. Augustine as being considerably tall, of a dark complexion, and very circumspect in his actions; St. Francis was dark, little, and blear-eyed; St. Anthony was small in stature, with a beautiful expression of the eye; St. Bernard was joyous, and rather little. She used to give similar descriptions of many other saints, but we have omitted them for fear of wearying the

reader. I will only add that she saw one of her spiritual fathers, Brother Jerome of Verona, whose body now lies in our church at Modena.

She very often communicated by the ministry of angels, of many of the saints, and the archangel Michael. She had a cross marked visibly on her breast, which was seen for a long time engraved on the flesh. She, moreover, frequently received the holy Sacrament of the Altar from the hands of Jesus Christ Himself. She received many other favours and small gifts from our Saviour, and from several saints, such as gowns, rosaries, and also money, when she was in need, and could not provide for her minor wants, by knitting, sewing, or spinning, which were the labours of her hands, by which she gained her livelihood.

She was once taken to Jerusalem, and after she had seen and devoutly adored all the mysteries of the Passion of Jesus Christ, her dear Spouse gave her a rich present, namely, two pieces of the wood of the holy cross, one of which she herself gave to the count, John Francis of Mirandole, and the other to one of his daughters, who was the wife of the Duke of Genoa, and Count of Renda. The count testifies to having seen many miracles worked by these relics, when he put them on persons possessed by the devil, who were brought to him.

On one occasion Jesus Christ was visibly present in the blessed Catherine's chamber, and discoursing on spiritual matters, when Catherine was called by a particular friend of hers to come to

do some work of charity. She answered that she could not go then, being otherwise engaged, but her heavenly Spouse commanded her to go where she was asked, and to leave Him alone. She again excused herself by saying, that it was not becoming to leave the Creator for the creature, to which our Lord answered, "Although it seems hard to thee, my dear Spouse, to go away and leave Me, it is very pleasing to Me that thou shouldst deprive thyself of thine own consolations for love of Me, and for the good of thy neighbour. Only go with good will, and fear nothing. Thou wilt not leave Me by that, nor shall I forsake thee, but shall ever be with thee." After these words the virgin received the blessing of her dear Spouse, and learnt for the future to obey simply and quickly, especially in cases of charity.

When she was nine years old, this blessed child was compelled, by the great poverty of her family, to work without taking a moment of rest ; and one day in particular, when she remembered the hunger and want of her poor mother, she was overcome by sadness, and leaning her head on the loom, she wept with many tears, and recommended the poverty and misery of the house to God, who is the Lord and absolute Master of all things. Behold, at that very moment, a young child, apparently nine years old, appeared to her, with no clothes but a simple cotton shirt, and asked for an alms. She answered that she was ready to give him her own blood, and even her life for the love of God, but that she had not then one thing on earth which

she could give him to help his poverty. She would, nevertheless go to seek and look carefully in the house to see if there was not a little bread or something to eat. Then Jesus Christ, who was concealed in the form of this little child, disclosed Himself to her, and consoled her, and giving her a piece of silver money to provide for her necessities, encouraged her to bear with fortitude, after His example, the blows which fortune, usually the enemy of virtuous people, might send her.

Another time, in her early childhood, she broke a certain glass cup, for which her mother whipped her, and threatened to punish her still more severely if she should ever break another. It happened that she shortly afterwards broke another by accident, and remembering her mother's threats, she began to cry in expectation of the blows, so piteously that it would have moved the very animals to compassion, but just at that moment a most beautiful child suddenly appeared in the room, who picked up, as he best could, all the pieces of the broken cup, and gave it back made whole by an evident miracle, to the virgin, who greatly rejoiced thereat, and the child vanished from her eyes.

Another time, on the first day of Lent, when the blessed Catherine was greatly afflicted by a disturbance between her father George and her mother Biblia, occasioned by her desire of taking her meal alone, as she fasted that day on bread and water, her mother had gone away to one of her relations, out of vexation. Catherine began

to cry so violently, that she was all bathed in tears. Then Jesus Christ appeared to her in the form of a boy of fourteen, who comforted her, and foretold that her mother, who was then in some affliction, would enjoy a very happy old age, and be finally saved, and dying in the grace of God, would go to paradise. After this He took her bread, and breaking it into small pieces with His most sacred hands, He blessed it, and graciously invited her to eat. This action made such an impression on her, that she broke her bread without a knife, in memory of it, as long as she lived.

Once when Jesus Christ appeared to her, He taught her to contemplate the joyful mysteries on Sundays and feast days; at other times He cured her, as on the day of our Lady's Nativity, when she had been wounded in one hand, He immediately healed it with the holy sign of the cross. What we are now about to relate is wonderful, and is a privilege granted to few, namely, that she was taught to read by Jesus Christ Himself, whereas before she did not know a single letter, and what is still more surprising is, that she could only read the office of her order.

This blessed spouse of Jesus Christ had the privilege of being frequently carried invisibly to most distant places, to deliver her friends when they found themselves in pressing dangers; so that the common people usually called her the "Masque" of God. In Piedmont, and through the mountains of Savoy, old women are called "masques and sorceresses," and what they infer-

red from this name, was that as the wicked sorceresses are carried through the air by the devils, so the blessed Catherine was sometimes borne by the good angels, wherever it pleased God that she should go for His glory, and therefore they called her "masque" of God, while the others are "masques" of satan.

When the holy virgin was ten, or at most eleven years old, she was carried to a very holy priest to whom God had revealed this young girl's sanctity. There was in a place named Alba Pompea a man who had resolved in his own mind to commit a great crime ; and as his father confessor could not dissuade him from it, he had recourse to the help of the spouse of Christ, who was moved by her charity, and caused herself to be miraculously and invisibly carried to the place in which the young man, who was bent upon his own ruin, was. By the grace of God, and by her holy exhortations, she made him change his determination, and forsake evil, and follow goodness. She also appeared once to another young man who was asleep, and taking hold of his hair she awoke him, and reproved him for some of his sins, which were most scandalous. He begged her pardon, and from that time forward he renounced his evil manner of living.

She once went invisibly in body and soul to the distance of about fifty miles, to reprove a powerful nobleman, who was the principal cause of the continuation of the war in Italy; she found him walking about in a large hall, and com-

manded him in the name of Jesus Christ to lay aside his vices, and especially his bad will, which made him thus keep alive the fire of dissension, and foment it still more by his wicked counsels, thus prolonging the war in Christendom. She admonished him to leave off this violent thirst for earthly and transitory good, otherwise the wrath of the all powerful God would fall upon him when he least expected it.

This great lord was at first troubled by the words of the blessed virgin; however, when he learnt who she was, and her condition, and the reason of her coming, he gave her hopes of his making peace, and doing all she had proposed to him for the glory of God and for the salvation of his neighbour. The Blessed Catherine told Count John Francis Picus with her own mouth, how she had made this journey, which was about the space of one hundred miles, going and returning in four hours.

There was a celebrated preacher, who was opposed to this happy virgin, and believed her to be deceived and deluded by the enemy of nature, and one night she appeared to him while he slept, with another companion of her own order, wearing the same habit, and spoke to him in the following manner, reproving him for his incredulity: "My father, give up the bad will that you bear me, and your endeavours to persuade others against me, for although my life and my actions do not deserve your good opinion, you ought nevertheless to respect God who can do with one of His handmaids whatever pleases His

Divine Majesty." This preacher had never seen the Blessed Catherine, but he described her with his words as if he had spoken to her and had seen her frequently. This circumstance altered his opinion, and he went to see her, and became one of her most confidential friends, when he came to know her sanctity.

She penetrated into the most secret thoughts of the human heart by Divine revelation, and told their thoughts to several persons, giving them an opportunity of correcting themselves by her humble and charitable admonitions. She foretold in the spirit of prophecy many things which came to pass as she predicted; for instance, the death of Pope Julius II., the coming of the French into Italy, and the imprisonment of the most Christian king of France at Pizzighettone near Pavia.

When she was yet a girl of ten or twelve years old, the Queen of Angels told her in an apparition, how she was to take the habit of the Third Order of St. Dominic. This was fulfilled when a convent of Friars Preachers was built in the city of Raconigi, after much opposition from many persons, all which had been foretold long before the building of the convent; and she knew moreover the name of the father at whose hands she was to receive the grace of being clothed with this holy habit.

She once in an ecstasy saw Jesus Christ call three angels, to whom He distributed three lances. The first was clad in white and was to direct his lance against carnal sinners; the second wore

a red robe, and to him was given the office of doing vengeance on the avaricious and parsimonious; the third was clothed in divers colours, and was commanded to punish the proud. Another time when she was in ecstasy, she was led into a church of which all the walls were hung with black, and she wondered very much at seeing herself dressed in the same colour. And behold, before she had recovered from her astonishment, she saw the Mother of God advancing, who came to her, and sitting down, spoke to her as follows: "Do not be the least surprised, my dear daughter, at seeing the church thus attired in mourning, for the sins of the world, and principally of those who should have been her pastors and husbands, have thus darkened and tarnished it. Thou art very properly dressed in black for the great grief and sadness which thou shouldest have in thy soul at seeing the precious blood, and the pains and labours of my dear Son, thy heavenly Spouse, so little valued. Nay, thou seest them so badly received, and quite trampled under foot, because men will not remember such a signal benefit; but it will sadden thee far more to see the scourges and tribulations that God will send down and fulminate on His Church, so disfigured and vilified."

When the Blessed Virgin had finished speaking, two persons presented themselves, and ranged themselves in order for a single combat; one, whose countenance was fearful and terrible, was dressed in black; and the other, who was more graceful and beautiful, was clothed in white and

red, and carried a sword in his hand with an image of Jesus Christ engraved on the hilt ; and he came out victorious from the combat.

In the same year she saw in spirit two great camps, the standard of one was white and red, and a beautiful virgin with her Child Jesus in her arms was painted in the centre, and there was beneath it a cross with another picture. The other standard was black, and there was in it an effigy of a most horrible face. A young man who did not seem yet thirty years old advanced against this camp, and began to fight with such success that he won a glorious victory, though with great loss of his soldiers. It seemed that all who remained alive in the camp of his enemies ran to some place to receive holy baptism.

In the year 1525, on the 4th of March, she saw a great army in the air, and understood that they were all Turks. At the end of April, two months after this vision, she was led in spirit to a vast plain, and she saw on the right hand an encampment which seemed very strongly defended and filled with good soldiers ; and in the midst there was planted a rich banner, surmounted by an image of God holding a figure of the world in his hand, and on the world there was a precious stone about the size of a nut. At the right hand of the standard, which had the name of Jesus engraved and written on it, there was an altar prepared. When she turned to the left she saw another great camp, the captain of which was very handsome, dressed in golden robes, and of most gracious appearance.

On a sudden the two armies engaged in battle, and many soldiers were killed on both sides, whose bodies lay on the ground. At last the captain of the camp which was on the left hand was led with many of his men to the aforesaid altar, and there stood by it one wearing on his head a mitre with three crowns; and then followed a solemn baptism.

In the year 1521 an epidemic broke out in Turin, and the neighbouring parts of Piedmont, and the soul of the Blessed Catherine was much troubled at the misfortune which had fallen on her country. Therefore while she prayed God that He would be pleased to pardon His people and to revenge their sins on herself, two angels appeared to her bearing a dead body on a bier. They said to her, "Thou knowest, O beloved Catherine, that God is so wrath at the great number of wicked men, that unless thou hadst resisted it by offering thy body to blows and torments, His anger would have been already poured forth upon all mankind; but since they show no signs of amendment, nor any desire to correct themselves and leave their evil ways, behold we bring the pestilence shown by this bier." "Alas!" replied the Blessed Catherine, "let not God punish us according to our sins and our deserts, but may He rather inflict His punishment and cast the bitterness of His just anger and His just vengeance upon me." Her prayers were so agreeable to the Divine Majesty, that God withdrew His anger from her country, and regarded it with the eyes of His mercy and

clemency, so that although the contagion ravaged the towns round Raconigi, Raconigi itself, by the merits of this blessed servant of God, was free from all infection. Her raptures were very frequent; and she often had very great revelations from God. She was once taken in spirit up to heaven, where she saw and enjoyed as much as it is lawful for a mortal woman to see, that is to say, the glory of God; another time she was conducted to hell to see with amazement the great torments of the damned; she was sometimes carried to Purgatory, where she conversed with the souls which were afflicted in these pains, whom she exhorted to patience, and consoled by her remonstrances. Once on the feast of the angels she was lifted up in spirit to heaven, where she beheld the glory of the blessed, but it was impossible for her ever to describe it in words. She contented herself with shadowing it vaguely by some comparison taken from the goods and the happiness which God gives to men here below; always veiling her words, and keeping them in the twilight of many similitudes. When she returned from her ecstasies to her mortal body, it seemed to her that a fine palace enriched with all wealth and every imaginable beauty, came to a vile and abject, straw-covered shed of shepherds. She said that the blessed above in Paradise are all united and joined together with the bond of holy love, and wonderful order. To give an example of the great union, and distinction at the same time, of the saints in the heavenly kingdom, she used to say that just as the red

berries within the pomegranate are arranged in wonderful order, closely joined together by nature which produces nothing in vain, so the saints are divinely joined in charity and love, and all united together with most beautiful order in this heavenly glory.

Another time, on the feast of St. Jerome, her soul penetrated the celestial spheres, and she saw great rejoicings, and heard most harmonious songs in paradise, where it was shown her that many souls were to be saved by her salutary admonitions, and holy and acceptable prayers. Once on the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, she was borne by the angels into the presence of God in paradise, where she saw near the throne of the Divine Majesty a great book, sealed with seven seals, and it was granted her by a particular privilege to read in it the names of her spiritual children. She prayed God most earnestly that they might never mortally offend His goodness, which she obtained for many of them, but not for all, because all were not equally fit. It was promised her that if they should fall into sin at the end of their days they should rise from it, and be saved. She next saw the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the other saints and blessed, one by one, in lovely order, giving eternal thanks to the most Holy Trinity, and after all the others, in company of her seraphim and her angel Guardian, she approached the awful throne of God with all humility and submission, and gave infinite thanks to His glory and majesty for the innumerable favours which He had condescended to shower

upon her, having preserved her from so many misfortunes, and enriched her with so many graces.

On the 25th of September, when the gospel of the marriage feast was read, the Blessed Catherine was raised in a rapture to heaven, and saw the Divine marriage-feast represented. She was clothed in a beautiful robe of purple, and crowned with a very rich crown, though her ornaments were not altogether complete. She heard most exquisite harmony and melody, with most sublime sounds, which gave her soul great delight. Some days after, on the feast of All Saints, she saw them in order, returning eternal thanks to God, for having willed that they should have been thus honoured on earth. She saw Jesus Christ in such an admirable manner, that it was impossible to describe it, Himself serving at this celestial banquet mentioned by the gospel, and asserted that she had never seen a greater triumph, though she had frequently been to paradise in her raptures. She also knew, and saw clearly there, those who by her means were one day to arrive at these heavenly nuptials, and enjoy for ever these infinite delights.

In the year of our salvation 1514, when on All Saints day this Virgin was contemplating the glory of paradise, she was conducted to heaven by the mediation of St. John the Evangelist, by the sublime path of intelligence. She continually advanced, preceded by her two angel Guardians, the seraphim carrying the white and red standard. Seeing by the way that some murmured, others

slandered, others laughed at and insulted her, and others seemed to wish to lay violent hands on her and to fight, she turned to the Apostle and asked him what was the meaning of the difficult and rugged nature of the road to paradise, when the uncreated truth, Jesus Christ, says that His yoke is easy and His burden light? The Apostle answered, "that it is in truth difficult to him who knows not and does not love, but to those who know God and love Him with their whole heart, which is the tribute that the creature owes to its Creator, it is very easy and much desired by them."

When he had said this, he presented a small basket full of roses and flowers to the virgin, which rejoiced her greatly; and they all reached at last a magnificent castle, lying towards the east, into which the virgin Catherine was led by the Apostle, and beheld things that she never could or would relate.

She was once tormented by extraordinary pains, which are like flowers that God gives to His elect in this world, whom He caresses, and she prayed God to comfort her in these insupportable sufferings; and thereupon, an angel dressed in gold presented himself to her, with a musical instrument in his hand. He put it to his mouth and sounded one note, which was so melodious, that if he had repeated it, the virgin's senses would not have been able to endure the sweetness. She went in a rapture to heaven another time in the month of September, and she saw the most Holy Trinity, which caused her such intense

happiness, that she implored her dear spouse, Jesus Christ, for a long time, not to suffer her to return any more to the prison and the stable of this miserable world. Nevertheless, hearing that her crown was not yet completed, she resigned herself entirely to the will of God. The Blessed Catherine was once taken by two angels to hell, to see and consider the great pains and afflictions of the wretched damned souls ; and two fierce and foul demons came up to ask the reason of her coming, what she was going to do, or what she was seeking. She replied, that she had come on purpose to see the power and the justice of God exercised upon them.

“God,” said she, “showed His omnipotence when He drove you from heaven, He now displays His justice by tormenting you in these burning flames.” Then turning to God, she said, “O goodness ! O sovereign mercy ! O infinite charity ! how hast Thou manifested Thyself to human nature. The angels fell, and so did man. Thou hast banished the angels of heaven for ever, and Thou hast exalted man to the heavenly kingdom above. Thou hast prepared seats in hell for the angels of darkness, while to man Thou hast opened the gates of heaven. Thou hast left the angel in his hardhearted obstinacy, and hast given man the means of doing penance. O immense God, how worthy art Thou of love and of glory ! Let man therefore be ashamed, and thou my soul be confounded, for not giving thanks according to thy duty and thy power, to such majestic bounty. O my hope, O my sweet Jesus,

O my most amiable Jesus, my Saviour and Redeemer, when shall I really feel these things and love thee more? Miserable is he who does not serve Thee, wretched and unhappy is he who does not love Thee." When the virgin gave these holy praises to her dear Spouse, in the presence of the demons, and in the midst of hell, they were all amazed and cast down. The virgin went still further into hell, and saw the smoke and the fire, and heard most cruel blasphemies, weeping and gnashing of teeth, that issued from a very deep well into which she cast her eyes, and saw the most dreadful sufferings of the damned souls, among which she recognized one whom she knew, which she could never relate for the great horror she had experienced.

Once when a great prince died, the blessed Catherine knew well, although she was very far from the place where he died, that his soul had been given up into the hands of the devils, to be most grievously tormented. She was taken in a rapture in a moment of time to this unhappy dwelling, in order that she should see the Divine Justice. When she was there, it was granted her to speak to the soul of this great prince. She enquired whether he knew her, and he replied that he did, and that she was Catherine of Racanigi, who had before in past times reproved him, and through charity menaced that he would fall into eternal damnation, unless he would amend his evil and ill-regulated desires. Then the virgin said, "If thou hadst done what I told thee from God, and from the great charity which inspired

me to say these things, thou wouldst now be a member of Jesus Christ, and not as thou now findest thyself, of Satan, nor wouldst thou be condemned to eternal misery, but transported to enjoy on high the happiness of the children of God." That wretched soul answered, that its inordinate love of self, its great greediness of worldly glory, and the neglect of the charitable correction which she made it while it yet lived in the world, had led it miserably into this place of torment, and enrolled it in the book of the condemned, never to see God's Face, nor to enjoy His favour.

This beloved spouse of Jesus Christ, moved by the great charity that had wounded her soul, and who was ever burning in the fire of love, once prayed Him to shut the mouth of hell, and she received in answer that that could not be, because the Divine Justice ought to have its sway, and to show its effects. To this she answered, that she thought the glory of God and His immense bounty, would shine much more if it was praised by a greater number of souls who had not been condemned to these pains; but she was immediately answered, that the glory of the Divine Justice was no less than the glory of His mercy. Then the blessed Virgin said, "Alas, my God, exercise Thy justice upon me if it please Thee; I desire to feel its shafts." Jesus Christ said, "Thou couldst not endure so many torments, nor is it reasonable that thou shouldst do penance for the sins of others." "Why then," said the Virgin, "O my sweet heavenly spouse, hast thou

caused such a great desire of suffering to bud in my heart, if Thou wilt not satisfy my desire of enduring, O sweet heart of my soul." Then Jesus Christ said, "This thy pious desire will be very useful to thee, and by thy means to many others, but not to all; neither does My passion produce the same effects on each and every one, but only on those who prepare themselves with my preventing grace to receive the fruits of it."

She was once in a rapture taken to hell, where she saw three frightful and horrible mouths into which some prelates of the Church and princes of the world who were yet living were entering. She was troubled when she saw this, and full of fear, but the company of the angel who was with her comforted and consoled her very much. After the angel had shown hell to her, he gave her a paper shut up with three seals; when she opened it she found it contained a gold shield, with the face of Jesus Christ wearing the crown upon it, but there was nothing written upon it either within or without. The angel then told her that these three seals signified the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity, by the means of which heaven is opened, and we see Jesus Christ above in His glory, and the white paper signified innocence, candour, and purity, without which we cannot enjoy the vision of God.

One day, when the blessed Catherine was labouring under a violent fever, she set herself to consider the unendurable pains of Purgatory, and said to herself, "What wouldst thou do if thou wert now in Purgatory, suffering those exces-

sive pains?" and that instant she heard a voice, saying, "Thou dost well and holily to ponder on these pains, but in order that thou mayest more fully know their intensity and their severity, thou shalt experience a little of the fire." Immediately afterwards a single spark of fire touched her left cheek, which gave such pain that she stated that in her whole life she had never felt a worse torture.

In the year of our salvation, 1516, on the feast of St. Matthias, all the women who were round her bed saw the spark of fire, and the Blessed Catherine, after having made this trial, despised all the pains and toils which she might endure in this world, in comparison with that which she had suffered for short a time. She once gave all her merits to a soul which had passed from this world to the other, and after five days the aforesaid soul appeared to her freed from its sufferings, and thanked her most humbly, assuring her that the punishments of Purgatory are greater than people think or wish to be believed. She was once in Purgatory during an ecstasy, and a soul earnestly entreated her to give her some help and assistance, and to recommend her to a certain Prior of our friars, whose mother she had been. When Catherine had returned to her former state she communicated to this good Prior the condition of his mother through her confessor, and she herself, touched by charity, would suffer part of the pains which were due to this soul. By these means the soul was delivered from Purgatory in a few days, and appeared to her accompanied by some of the

angels, and blessed saints, to thank her for her charity to her, and as she directed her flight towards heaven, she recommended her son to her. The virgin answered that no one could give him more help and assistance than she who was his own mother, and saw God face to face. "What thou hast said, O blessed one, is true," the soul answered, "nevertheless not being any longer able to gain merit or to suffer, I cannot give him such powerful and efficacious aid as thou canst."

The following year, on the feast of the three kings, this virgin was praying for the soul of the mother of a Prior whom she had known familiarly, and going into an ecstasy, was taken to the place of these torments, where she met this soul, and the soul entreated her to make known her situation and condition to her son. When her soul had returned to the body she fulfilled her promise and described her face, and the condition she was in to her son. Not content with having delivered the message, she would further undergo herself the pains which were due to this soul in order that she might be freed as soon as possible from her miseries. For fifteen days, therefore, Catherine endured excessive pain, and was obliged to remain in bed, which increased and augmented her torment; and she saw the soul all joyful and smiling, who, as she went to Paradise chanting the glory of God, thanked her and again recommended her son to her. Thus Blessed Catherine delivered several souls from Purgatory by her prayers, but we shall not recount them for fear of being prolix. Now, to enter upon a new track we will relate that when

Catherine was only five years old, she was so overcome by the fire of Divine love that she was often taken up to heaven to see her Beloved, and would afterwards descend to these darksome prisons to console the afflicted souls that were there ; and if she knew anything that conduced to the glory of God she would suffer and work continually until she saw it completed, and on the other hand if she knew of anything that would obscure His glory and was contrary to the law of God, she was in trouble until this impediment was removed, fearing lest some scandal should arise from it. Moreover, Satan opposed her in all her good works, and she used to combat him with courage, despise his menaces, and endure his fury and his blows, when such was the will of her beloved Spouse. She endeavoured to make every one love Him who was dearly beloved by her ; for divine love does not preclude rivals and competitors.

This virgin was always very generous, for although she was poor, the daughter of a poor locksmith, born in the world at a time when her country had been sacked and pillaged, when it was only with great labour that she could by the art of weaving provide for her own necessities, she used, nevertheless, to give to the poor all the bread and clothes that she might have. And when she could not give her clothes entirely to the poor because she had no others than those she wore, she unsewed her sleeves and gave them away without any one perceiving it. If she had none of these temporal things and could not give anything to the poor, she did not fail to assist

them with spiritual riches, which are so much the more precious, as the soul is more precious than the body, undertaking fasts, prayers, and disciplines, and other painful works for their benefit.

When she was but nine years old, as she returned from the oven one Saturday with a little bread which they had sent to be baked for dinner, not being able to endure their fast any longer, St. Catherine of Sienna presented herself to the virgin in the form of a young girl aged twelve years, dressed in white, but poor, who humbly asked her for an alms. The Blessed Catherine, fearing that her mother would be angry and scold her if she gave away the bread which was more than necessary for them, told the poor girl that she should wait a little until all the bread in the oven was baked, and that then her mother would give her some, and she continued her walk.

But she was no sooner arrived at home than she began to feel remorse of conscience, and she said to herself, "O what scanty charity, O what small compassion reigns within thee! wouldst thou, miserable as thou art, like thy humble petition to be so rudely answered? Alas! how can I tell whether this poor girl who asked me for an alms, was not in greater want of it than myself?" She immediately left the house and begged God to grant her the favour of seeing again the poor girl who had asked her for an alms. When she found her she said to her, "Pardon me, my sister, if I have been rude and cruel to you. Here is the bread which you asked me for; another time I will be more civil and charitable." The young girl took

the bread with a smile, and when she had tasted a little of it she gave her back the rest, and telling her to be of good heart, for her alms had been very agreeable before the throne of the divine Majesty, she vanished from her sight, and left her full of consolation and spiritual joy. The Blessed Catherine of Raconigi did not then know that it was St. Catherine of Sienna, but after some years when she had become very familiar with her, St. Catherine revealed to her how the circumstance had happened.

When this holy virgin was thirteen years old she gave her under garment to Jesus Christ who appeared to her in the form of a poor man half clad, at the door of her house, and He clothed her in exchange with a rich and beautiful robe. Another time, when she was a little older, she met a poor woman almost naked in the middle of winter, and moved by compassion she unsewed on the spot the sleeves of her own gown, and gave them to this poor woman. When her heart was grieved at thus seeing her neighbour in extreme poverty, she used to address words like these to her Spouse Jesus Christ, "Alas, my God, I was born very poor in this world, and for love of Thee I desire to live and die in poverty. I had rather be without clothes than without charity." After this alms Jesus Christ appeared to her, at which she rejoiced infinitely; and He encouraged her to pursue the path she had trodden until then, for He would be ever with her. She once saw a little child who was very poor, suffering dreadfully from cold; so, touched by her

charity, she took him into her room, where she warmed him, combed his hair, and dressed him in some of her own apparel. When she had done this, Jesus Christ appeared to her and gave her a wreath of red and white roses, with these words: "Because thou hast done this act of charity to this poor child, I now give thee these roses, and in the next world I will give thee a much greater reward." The servants, and those who frequented her house attested that although it was in time of winter they perceived that day a most delicious smell of roses.

In the year of our salvation, 1520, being in a rapture, she saw St. Peter and St. Paul, and the former laid on her shoulders the keys of infinite mercy, and the latter the sword of divine justice, exhorting her to pray fervently for the necessities of the Church. Another time she beheld Jesus Christ wearing on His head a crown of gold, ornamented with twelve stars, and in the centre of each there was a large ruby and a precious pearl. St. Peter Martyr accompanied our Lord, carrying a cross enriched with precious stones, at the end of which appeared a crown of thorns with two nails, which St. Peter Martyr took and thrust into the heart of the Blessed Catherine, and it gave her such excessive pain that she fell on the ground as if she were dead. She suffered this pain to redeem many souls from the wrath of God.

As she prayed one day for the Church, that God would give it good pastors, our Saviour appeared to her clothed in a black robe, holding a

bloody dagger in His hand, showing great wrath against ungrateful sinners. Seeing this, she threw herself on the ground asking for mercy and pardon, especially for those who minister in sacred things, for she knew that the Lord's anger was principally against them ; and in order that the divine justice should have part of its sway she received in her heart a wound from a knife, which gave her incredible pain for many years. The love and charity which she had for Jesus Christ and for her neighbour, were so great that she willingly endured much labour, not only for the Church but even for some private persons, which might truly be enumerated. She was besides very humble, and this virtue shone with infinite brightness, in her words and all her works. She frequently said that had any other person received from God the gifts and graces which she ingenuously confessed she had received, they would have reaped more fruit, and would have had more perception of heavenly things than her ingratitude and forgetfulness had allowed her to have. When she heard any one praised for holiness of life, she wept over her own tepidity and negligence, and her want of fervour in serving God. She extremely abhorred human praises, and more than once was seen to burn certain writings which described her visions when they were put into her hands, and although after her spiritual fathers had reproved her for so doing she let the writings alone, it was not that any praise might be given to her for them, but she

attributed everything to God, who is the source and the cause of all our good.

When she was a very young girl, she took much delight in solitary places, and avoided the churches where she thought there might be a great concourse of people. This desire of holy solitude so grew in her that in the year of our Lord 1512, and the twenty-seventh of her age, at six o'clock in the night of the 19th of November, when the face of the earth was covered with darkness and snow, as secretly as she could, for fear lest her mother should see her, she took a crucifix in her hand, and kneeling down invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit, to be her guide in passing the Alps in safety, and going to some vast solitude, or else shutting herself up in some monastery where she might consecrate herself to God, and enjoy the fulness of His holy embraces. Upon this she heard a voice which distinctly said these words to her. "And whither wouldst thou go? I do not wish thee to go." She looked all round, and as she could not see any one, she concluded that she had offended the divine Majesty, and with this opinion she laid aside her design, and remained in melancholy until the feast of St. John the Evangelist, when Jesus Christ appeared to her and told her that He had not distributed so many graces to her, nor had heaven poured so many favours on her head, to the end that she might shut herself up in a hermitage, or a monastery of consecrated virgins, but that, living in her father's house, her good

example might be the cause of the salvation of many.

The next year Jesus Christ taught her to raise a spiritual edifice, laying a foundation of humility, and building the walls with afflictions and labours.

Although this virgin was gifted with such elevation of spirit, by the privilege of such frequent raptures, she was notwithstanding very affable and very gentle in all her manners; and while she worked with her hands her mind made pilgrimages to heaven. And if by reason of her poverty she was compelled to practise weaving, she used with her clear and exalted understanding to read in the library of nature, and by the help of visible things she raised herself in an admirable manner to those which are heavenly and invisible. It was her laudable custom before going to sleep to remember how she had spent the day, and such was her humility, that she concluded that she had never done any good, and had been until then a tree without fruit. She no sooner awoke in the morning than she got up, and without taking into account the private prayers which she proposed in the cabinet of her soul to make, she decided everything she intended to do in the course of that day, directing all her actions to the glory of God. Sometimes when she was asking pardon for her sins, she saw a ball of fire descend upon her head, and she thought she saw a hand issue from it which blessed her, and by this she knew that her humble prayers had

been granted. She was well accustomed to meditate on the death of the body, but she feared far more the death which comes of sin, and therefore she used to entreat the Divine Majesty to send her any torment or affliction, rather than allow her to fall into the abyss of sin which would cause her to lose His holy grace. Her rare and prudent counsels were shown by their effects, seeing that many great and learned personages had recourse to her in their perplexities. Claude, the Bishop of Marseilles, on his return from Rome visited the Blessed Catherine with Claude the Lord of Raconigi, although she was then ill in bed; and he went away much edified after having conversed with her for two hours, asserting that he had never met with a man who enjoyed a brighter and clearer intellect, or who was more rich in spiritual light than this virgin, for whom he had a great esteem. This prelate was then Doctor of Laws, and became afterwards Archbishop of Turin. Catherine had not passed the years of her youth before she began to macerate her small and innocent body with incredible austerities and penances. She did not dine with her family more than three times a week, and sometimes only twice. During some years she fasted on bread and water every day except Sunday, from the commencement of November until the Nativity of Jesus Christ. She did the same every day in Lent, and this in a cold and bracing climate, where it is the custom to eat twice or three times in the day; whereas we read that the austerities of the ancient Fathers were endured

in a hot and temperate climate, as Egypt, or in some part of Syria, or of Greece. If she ever partook of wine she mixed such a quantity of water with it, that it entirely lost its flavour, and only retained a little colour. When she heard that the foundations of a convent of Friars Preachers had been laid in Raconigi, she began to loathe meat in order to conform herself to them, who, by their holy constitutions, are forbidden to eat it, unless it is recommended by the physicians in cases of illness. She was accustomed to wear a large girdle of horse-hair round her waist, until she changed it for a belt of iron, which in time broke the skin, and entered deep into the flesh. She desired to have some sickness, that her soul might be more sober and recollected.

As it has been decided by the greatest theologians that every virtuous act made by reason of a vow, is more meritorious and deserving of a greater reward, the Blessed Catherine, after having trained herself for some time in all her austerities, resolved within herself to offer her virginity to God by vow; and having heard the praises of the blessed St. Catherine of Sienna from the mouth of a great preacher, on the day of her feast, as soon as she returned to her own house, she hid herself from her mother, for fear she might prevent her, and going into her little room with the door closed, she consecrated her virginity to Jesus Christ with these words:

“O Eternal Father, I offer my whole self to Thee, to Thy beloved Son Jesus, the Spouse of my soul,

to the Holy Spirit, and thee, O benignant Queen of Angels and of virgins, and I make a firm vow of preserving perpetual virginity, which I dedicate and desire to consecrate to you, O Father, O Son, O blessed Holy Ghost, and to thee immaculate and holy Virgin, trusting in your aid and assistance, for I know that I am very weak, and a most frail creature, unable to keep such a precious treasure without you. I make this vow, and I call all the angels and all the holy spirits of Paradise to witness it, especially my directors and masters St. Jerome, and St. Peter Martyr, and St. Catherine of Sienna, my dear mother." The following night St. Catherine of Sienna appeared to her surrounded by a light which eclipsed in brilliancy all lights that she had before seen, and spoke these words to her: "My dear daughter, thy vow has been very pleasing to thy Spouse, to the Blessed Virgin, and to me; only take courage and be of good will; I promise thee every help and support in the spiritual war, which will henceforward come upon thee, and will not fail to assist thee in thy need. Take now these two roses, one white and the other red, which thy dear Spouse sends thee, which will serve as a sign to wear on thy heart. The red rose will remind thee of the burning charity which Jesus Christ showed to thee and all the human race, in shedding His precious blood so profusely to wash and purify thee therewith; and the white rose will incite thee to think of His great purity and innocence, which thou wilt strive above all things to imitate;" and having said this and

given her her holy benediction, St. Catherine disappeared.

This blessed virgin had several wars and combats with the devils, and was assaulted by many of them, sometimes by two, or five, or even a greater number together. They appeared to her in human forms, sometimes like living men, and sometimes like dead corpses to frighten her still more, and they would occasionally take the form of holy persons, hoping to deceive the blessed Catherine by the veil of sanctity, or else they took the figure of beasts, birds, serpents, and other horrible and frightful monsters. She drove away her enemies by words, or by spitting upon them, or with a stick; frequently by the sign of the holy cross, and sometimes with her wise and prudent answers. Once when she was praying to God for the holy Church, a foul and shapeless demon appeared with a banner in his hand, on which there was represented a crown, and over it the words, *Rex superbiæ*—king of pride. After a long struggle she overcame and confounded him, and he said many injurious things to her, but the prudent virgin answered; "Since with the aid of my sweet Saviour I have this time confounded thy pride, and all thy cunning, it is a small thing to me that thou shouldst despise me, and say these abusive words to me, nor indeed should I approve of a cursed spirit who is eternally damned speaking well of me, and relating my praises." Satan had no words in his mouth to answer this, but filled with wrath he vanished like a shadow.

This king of pride appeared to her another time,

and disputed with her on the most Holy Trinity. The blessed Catherine said that she not only believed this ineffable mystery, but she had also known it clearly, and that there were three Persons in one and the same essence. Satan importuned her to explain this to him, but she gave him this answer. "Thou, O wicked one, hast more time, and art older than I am; it is thy business to explain it to me, it would not be becoming that a young girl like me should teach science to an ancient spirit full of knowledge and science." Satan continued to press her to grant his request, with an evil intention however, but the prudent virgin said, "I should be worse than a beast, if I were in this circumstance to satisfy thee, who art a beast, and speakest without reason or judgment." The proud spirit answered, "I am an intelligent creature, and am not deprived of reason, therefore thou art wrong in calling me a beast." Catherine replied, "Inasmuch as thou art not deficient in reason, thou hast always employed it to pursue and follow after evil, and hast also gone away from the first truth, and dost continually seek to withdraw from its way all those who are in it, which is nevertheless contrary to reason, which always persuades and gently invites us to draw near to good." Thereupon Satan, cursing the virgin, and Him who had created her, and taught her these things, retired in shame and confusion to the dungeons of hell.

Within the octave of the Holy Innocents, in the year 1524, the enemy of our race again ap-

peared to the blessed Catherine, and endeavoured to persuade her with soft and honied words, to give up such an austere manner of life, and enjoy the pleasures of this world, because, said this liar falsely, the soul being mortal she could not have any happiness nor any reward for her works and penances after death ; seeing that of so many thousands of persons who were just and holy, not one ever returned to comfort his friends and to tell them what happens to them in the next world after death, which they would certainly have done if their souls were immortal and adorned with charity. To this the virgin made the following reply. "Accursed beast, how dost thou expect to persuade me of the mortality of the soul, who have so many times seen the holy souls of paradise, and those which are in purgatory, and those too who are in the depths of hell, in thy everlasting prison ? The souls of the departed return to us from the other world, sometimes, but not always, according as God wills, to confirm and strengthen our belief in the resurrection, and to give us joy by their presence ; and thou, wretched monster as thou art, hast seen them." Satan said, "Do not judge by the corporal vision, thy eyes may easily be deceived." "I confess, humbly," replied Catherine, "that my eyes may be deceived, as thou thyself, wicked spirit, hast often endeavoured, with thy companions who are also damned, by transfiguring yourselves into angels of light, to deceive and mislead me if thou couldst. But what do I say ? The eye of my intelligence being enlightened by Divine light,

cannot be deceived in any way by thee, wicked as thou art, and for this reason I give infinite thanks to the sovereign and Eternal Truth, which has granted me this particular grace of being able to discern the good from the evil spirits, to follow after good, and to leave entirely what is perverse."

Once when the blessed Catherine was ill in bed, not satisfied with so many defeats, and the loss of so many great battles, which gave occasion for her to win laurels in proportion to her courageous victories, Satan had the insolence to enter her room, with a great number of his companions, and advised her to end her sufferings by miserably putting an end to her life, and used this argument founded on flesh and blood. "God has revealed to thee that thou art sheltered by His grace, and canst not make shipwreck in thy eternal salvation. It is therefore better, in order to escape from so many labours as those in which thou now art, and which increase every day, to seek death thyself, and so to pass to a happier life, for the divine predestination which promised to save thee, cannot break its promise and prove false to thee." "But," said Catherine, "how dost thou know that I am now in the grace of my God?" Satan answered, "When the Holy Spirit revealed that to thee, I was not very far from thee, and although it was forbidden me to approach, still I heard all thy conversation." To this Catherine answered, "If God sometimes reveals to some one that he will be saved, and is of the number of those who are predestined to eternal life, and is in His grace, it is to be interpreted in the right sense, namely,

so long as one perseveres in good until the end. Therefore if I walk in the true path of God's commandments, I do not doubt that I shall save myself; but if I transgressed the bounds of reason and the commandments of God, as thou hast done, and as, O wicked spirit, thou now exhortest me to do, I should certainly be damned. Now it is contrary to the will of God to kill myself, therefore, wicked spirit, I will not obey nor follow thy counsel." When Satan perceived by this the firmness of her resolution, he vanished like a wind and retired from her presence.

This blessed Catherine was once praying for the soul of a very great sinner, and she offered her body to endure several afflictions, and Satan then appeared to her, and reproved her sharply for having so little regard for her own body, and told her that she deceived herself by thinking that similar macerations made for others, were pleasing. Catherine answered, that God never rejects or despises a contrite and humble heart.

The night before the feast of St. Sebastian the martyr, about eleven o'clock, twenty-five or thirty devils entered visibly into the Saint's room, armed with stout sticks, and two who were bolder than the others, approached her bed to frighten her, but she drove them away with blows of her fist. Then they all rushed upon her, and began to beat her very cruelly, God so permitting it. Then Catherine finding herself in a shower of blows, like another philosopher Anaxarchus, spoke freely in the midst of them to the devils, "Strike boldly and do what you are allowed to do to my body,

for as to the soul, which is the principal part of me, you cannot possibly hurt it, for it is united by grace to God, to Him from whom you miserably separated yourself by your haughty pride." These words incited them still more to redouble their blows, and endeavour to kill her, for they did not know the limits of the power which heaven had given them of attacking this virgin with such fury; but on a sudden, they were all driven away by a most brilliant light which showed itself, in the midst of which was that Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, who dissipated all their wicked efforts. When they were gone, the blessed Catherine, who was half dead, thus addressed her true Spouse: "My Lord and my only hope, where wert Thou when Thy enemies ill-treated me so cruelly?" Jesus replied, "I was with thee, my dear spouse, and I watched thy combat, and gave thee strength whereby thou hast happily gained the victory."

Satan once came in the garb of sanctity to tempt this blessed Catherine, but she immediately recognised him by the particular light she had received from God, and he went away to his greater confusion. The blessed St. Antony immediately appeared to her, and taught her what answer she should make to the enemy of our race, when he should come to tempt her, and try to make her fall into the net of his designs. "Answer him, then, that the victory is thine, and closing thy hand, show him thy fist, and threaten to shut him up in it, because God is on thy side."

A little time before the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, when Catherine was praying, the

king of pride, and a great number of his soldiers presented themselves to her, and as soon as she perceived them, she raised her heart and her mind to heaven, and humbly asked God's help in such peril. And behold, St. Peter Martyr, and St. Catherine of Sienna, at once descended from heaven to help her, and favour her with their countenance, as they had been from her cradle her principal protectors and defenders. The glorious martyr, therefore, spoke to the king of pride, and commanded him not to hurt this blessed virgin in the smallest degree. Satan answered, "I will prove to thee, by several reasons, that thou dost presume too much in commanding me thus." St. Peter said, "I should abase myself too much by disputing with a beast." "Am I a beast?" said Satan, "I am more noble than thou. The angelic nature is more noble than the human nature; I am an angel, and thou art a man; I am of heaven, and thou art of earth." "It is true," said the blessed martyr, "that thou wert noble formerly, but now thou art a base villain, for by thy sin and disobedience thou hast lost this glorious nobility. Thou art indeed an angel, but an angel of darkness. Thou wert all heavenly, but now thou art a citizen and inhabitant of hell, and man, although in the body he is of the earth, yet in the soul he is entirely heavenly and divine, by the grace which God has liberally poured upon him, and he is more noble than thou, wretched one, who hast so fatally lost such an immense good." The mar-

tyr closed his mouth by this answer, which he could not gainsay, and full of confusion he vanished from before them.

One night while Catherine was sleeping in her small bed, two foul and tainted demons who had been the day before driven from the bodies of two men by her prayers, dragged her out of the bed, and throwing her on the floor beat her so severely, that she would in a short time have been found dead, if she had not been helped by some angels who came to deliver her from this danger, and who lifted her up from the ground, and replaced her on her couch. Once while Catherine was earnestly praying for the soul of a sick person who had been a great sinner and was on the verge of death, Satan appeared to her and offered her a large purse filled with gold, on condition that she would leave off praying for this soul, thus hoping to conquer her by avarice, since all other means had failed. But Catherine, who was far removed from the sin of avarice, drove him away in an opprobrious manner by abusive words, and continuing the work she had begun, she gained this sinner for God. This blessed Catherine won by her courage many great victories over the spirits of hell, as the author of her life relates more at length in his eighth book, but we who only aim at brevity must omit them, and refer the reader to the above-mentioned book, only relating this one, which is very remarkable and worthy of notice.

One night when Catherine was praying, and lifted up in spirit, she saw a demon in the air, in

the likeness of a furious dragon, who carried away a miserable woman as his prey; and Catherine, moved to compassion for her, humbly prayed for her deliverance. At first, she found a little difficulty in obtaining this grace for another, nevertheless, by continuing to knock with the hammer of perseverance at the gates of the mercy of God, she obtained what she asked. The fierce dragon descended in proportion as the prayers of the virgin mounted on high to the throne of the Divine Majesty; and, by the command of God, in the semblance of a large calf, it fell with its prey into the chamber of Catherine. She fought with it; and, having easily obtained the mastery, Satan fled away, ashamed and defeated, to hell below, which is his inheritance. The woman remained there half dead, and Catherine succoured her, and exhorted her to change her life and habits; and then, that same night, her angel guardian re-conducted her to her own home. She changed her life in truth, and left her evil ways to attach herself to virtue, and persevered in it until her death, having openly been, until then, the concubine of a priest. These instances will be sufficient to show the noble palms and laurels which this blessed Catherine of Raconigi gained in her vigorous conflicts with the enemy of mankind.

Let us now pass to the testimonies which many illustrious persons, and worthy of credit, have given to this blessed virgin's sanctity. A venerable priest related the following fact to Count John Francis of Mirandola. This priest, being in prayer, was lifted up in spirit by a fervour at which he was

surprised, and his angel guardian called him to see a great wonder. He saw a young girl before him, about ten or eleven years old, shining with brightness, and surrounded by immense splendour. The priest enquired who this young girl was, and how she had come there. And the angel answered that she was Catherine of Raconigi, and that she had been brought to this place in order that he might pray particularly for her ; because, being a young girl, and of a frail condition, she required the prayers of others. And having said this, the angel disappeared.

Claude, the Lord of Raconigi, who much esteemed Catherine's great qualities and virtues, stated that, in the darkest hours of the night, he had often seen, from the windows of his palace, certain splendours and rays from heaven, over the cot or house which she inhabited ; and he learnt afterwards, that at that precise time the saints of paradise had visited her. A priest, who was at the altar saying mass, saw upon the altar a little child clothed in red, who, after walking up and down for a short time, took a particle of the consecrated host, saying, "I want this particle to give to Catherine of Raconigi," and immediately disappeared. This holy priest knew that it had been Jesus Christ, who, that same day, communicated the blessed Catherine with His own hands, and fed her with His own body. Other priests often found particles of the Holy Sacrament taken away by invisible hands without their perceiving it ; and they were carried to this virgin when she was prevented from

otherwise communicating, or going to church to hear mass, and receive communion there.

In the year 1514, the second ring with which Jesus Christ had espoused her, was seen by two priests, one of whom belonged to our Order, and the other to a different Order. When she was praying in her room, a great and resplendent ray, in the form of a beautiful star, was often seen above her head, and her countenance frequently changed, and became more beautiful in the presence of the saints who visited her. A monk of St. Benedict, named Brother Maur, once, during his prayers, seemed to see Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, and the blessed Catherine with her body pierced through, with all the torments which His members endured for our redemption. Although he was about fifty or sixty leagues from Raconigi, he resolved to go and visit this blessed Catherine, and contracted a great intimacy and friendship with her, which was not dissolved by death ; for this good religious, dying after some years, appeared to the virgin, and told her how he had gone to a happier life ; and he often visited and consoled her in her troubles and distresses. Her room was often filled with a most delicious fragrance, although it never contained any perfume ; but this sweet smell was believed to proceed from the bodies which the blessed saints of paradise took in order to visit her. When this virgin was out of her chamber, those who spoke with her experienced a great fragrance. It was, in fact, the sweet odour of her sanctity ; for, keeping God continually present in the ark of her soul, is it

astonishing that she emitted a sweet fragrance when her interior was so sweet? She was once seen going to the church of St. Vincent at Raconigi, in company with three other sisters of the same order, and when her father confessor asked her who these young religious were, because the blessed Catherine was the only person in the whole town who wore the habit of the Third Order, she replied, with a little hesitation, that they were St. Catherine of Sienna, the blessed Sister Hosanna of Mantua, and the blessed Sister Columba of Rieti. In one of her journeys she was visibly accompanied by the Queen of angels, and St. Jerome, St. Peter Martyr, and St. Thomas Aquinas. When she made her public and solemn profession in the Third Order of St. Dominic, many clear signs of her sanctity were observed. In the first place, before going to the church, she endured with fortitude divers assaults and threats of the enemy of mankind, and was recompensed and greatly consoled by several of the angels and saints of paradise. Secondly, she was much honoured even in this world, for the Lord of Raconigi, and the highest nobles of the land, wished to be present at this act. But what ought to be esteemed far more than these witnesses to her holiness was, that by a singular grace, Jesus Christ, His most glorious mother, and all the court of heaven, were present at her profession. A sweet scent, therefore, diffused itself on the way as she went. St. Peter Martyr blessed the habit in which she was clothed; the songs of the angels, who rejoiced wonderfully at her profession, were heard; and a very bright

cloud, as it were of fire, was seen above her head. Many other testimonies of this virgin's sanctity might be advanced, but it is now time to speak of the glorious miracles which the Divine bounty chose to show forth, and to work by her means, while she yet lived in this world, lest the passing of time should obscure their lustre, or bury them in the tomb of oblivion.

She cured, by her prayers, a woman named Veronica, who was at Vigevano, at least twenty leagues from Raconigi, who had suffered from a bloody flux for the space of ten years, and was abandoned by all the doctors who had seen her. Another woman, named Frances, who was noble and renowned, having been troubled for a long time by some pains in her side, trusting in the blessed Catherine's virtue, spoke thus to God : " My sweet Saviour, if those things which are said of Catherine are true, I beseech Thee, for the sake of her merits, to deliver me from this painful illness." And she was in that moment miraculously freed from all her sufferings. A priest of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustin was delivered in the same way from a very violent fever, for which he could find no human remedy. She also cured a young child of a gentleman named Giambullar, who had been ill for two years, and was given up by the physicians because they could not discover the nature of his complaint.

She sent a handkerchief she had worn to a young man who was reduced to great weakness by a disease of the chest, when he experienced the power of Catherine's sanctity, and recovered the

health he so much desired. She also restored to health a woman who had been tormented for a long time by an incurable imposthume on her breast. She recommended herself to the blessed Catherine's prayers ; and though she was at the point of death, she happily recovered. At a hamlet not far from Raconigi, there lived two women, who were so odious to their husbands, that they could not bear to see them, or hear them spoken of. Both these women, without knowing anything of one another, went to confide their affliction to Catherine, who gave them the sound advice of making a good and general confession of all their sins to a priest, with authority to absolve them ; and when this was done, she offered her private prayers for them, and this hatred was immediately changed into mutual friendship, and heavenly graces were multiplied upon them and their husbands ; for she obtained the cure of the husband of the one, whose disease was incurable by its nature, and the grace of having children for the other woman, who had heretofore been barren. And, beside this, one of them was allowed to smell the sweet fragrance which proceeded from the mouth and the person of this holy Catherine.

In the year 1531, Sister Margaret de Biandra, who had worn the habit of the Third Order of St. Dominic, but was a widow, departed this life ; and when her body was taken to be buried, after the praiseworthy customs of Christians, Catherine went to the funeral ; and while she prayed God to give her some token of the condition of her sister in the habit, behold, at that very moment, the dead per-

son raised her right hand, and taking hold of that of Catherine, she pressed it very hard, and then withdrew it by degrees to its original position. Catherine knew by this sign that she had escaped the pains of hell, but that she was then in purgatory. She offered her own merits, and prayed particularly to God for her, and delivered her in five days. John Anthony of Montaperto, being at sea off Pisa, was in danger of being submerged, and drowned. But he recommended himself with faith to the blessed Catherine, whom he knew well, and he saw her miraculously come to his assistance, and by her merits was freed from this danger. The same John Anthony was once with the Genoese galleys, which were labouring so hard in the heavy sea, that all those on board doubted whether their lives would be spared ; but he, remembering the favour he had received from the blessed Catherine off Pisa, invoked her assistance, together with the commander of the galleys ; and, after they had made their prayer, they both saw her appear in the air above their heads to protect them, and, in her presence, the winds and tempests were hushed at once, and the sea became calm, at which they all rejoiced, and gave thanks to God and to the blessed Catherine of Raconigi. The said John Anthony went to visit the virgin, and to thank her two months after he had left the galleys, and he published these two miracles everywhere to the glory of God, and of her who had delivered them by her merits and prayers.

In the year 1516, two religious of our order left the town of Bergamo in the month of November to visit this Blessed Catherine, at an appointed

time. One of them was very familiar with her, and the other who came from a town named Agobbio, had lived a long time at Perugia, and had never seen her before. When they visited her in her room they were much astonished to hear her describe the minute details of the plan and situation of the Convent of Bergamo, and tell many things of the Blessed Columba of Perugia, although she had not seen her or the convent either. Their wonder was greatly increased by observing that on their return from her house to the convent, the clouds miraculously abstained from raining or snowing, as she had promised that they would, for as soon as they set foot within their monastery, the ground was immediately covered with snow. Once, when Catherine was going to Saluzzo with a very honourable company of friends, it began to rain, and night came on, so that they could not, humanly speaking, reach the town that evening, but she had recourse to prayer as she sat on horseback, and was helped by heaven, for although the sun was set, her seraphim appeared, and his splendour lighted up the air all round, until she and all her companions reached the town, from which they were three miles distant when they were overtaken by the night.

On the fifth of June, in the year 1519, the Blessed Catherine having been surprised by a violent fever accompanied with very great pain, left the church in order to return home, and as she crossed the principal square she met a venerable priest who desired to have the spiritual consola-

tion of speaking with her. The pain which she endured made her long to put off the conversation, especially as the rays of the sun were so powerful, and the air so heated that it was difficult to stand upright, but on the other hand this priest being a stranger, she could not bring herself thus to send him back to his own house, so her charity for her neighbour overcame her own convenience. But no sooner did she stop to speak to that venerable priest, and stand still in the sunshine, than the divine bounty provided a light cloud to shelter His beloved Spouse which stood in the air above their heads, and protected them as well as a tent would have done. As soon as their conversation was ended and Catherine went to her home the cloud disappeared, for it had only come there in order to defend her from the burning rays of the sun.

With the sign of the holy cross she often laid the flames of fire, and delivered her own town of Raconigi from them. She often drove from its boundaries both hail showers and storms, and worked many other great miracles during her lifetime, which I cover with the veil of silence for fear of prolixity. If any one desires to know them, let him read them at length in the Latin life which has been written with great elegance by John Francis Picus, lord of Mirandola and Count of Concordia, with the intention of transmitting to posterity the beautiful virtues and great qualities which Heaven abundantly infused into this Blessed Catherine. This nobleman was familiarly acquainted with her, and often in-

duced her to go to Mirandola, and was worthy to see and to hear many of her actions. He has described with great eloquence what we have written here in our rude language, and have related them as the Holy Spirit best suggested to us, for the glory of God, and to fulfil the obligation which we owe to our order for producing such a beautiful flower from its garden, which has given a sweet scent both in heaven and earth, by the bright examples it left to those who shall come after us.

This good man ceased from his work in the year 1532, the sixty-third of his own age, and the forty-seventh of the Blessed Catherine's life, by reason of his old age, and left to another the charge of writing the remainder of her glorious life; we therefore leave his footsteps which we have followed as closely as we were able, when we related how Almighty God condescended to give such a virgin to the world, who possessed the privilege of reading the secrets of human hearts, of foreseeing the future, and beholding and considering the rewards of the blessed, and who saw in a marvellous and unusual manner the pains of the damned, and examined the sufferings of Purgatory. And in every kind of suffering she was very like her Spouse Jesus Christ, as far as a simple creature can be conformed to its Creator, by the particular graces which were profusely bestowed on her. We must now relate her happy passage from this valley of tears to the heavenly mansions, and speak of her death which was so precious

in the sight of God, according to the account which the Reverend Father Peter Martyr, of Garescio, sent me by letter, who knew her very well during her lifetime, and was only a day's journey distant from her at the time of her death, so that he was accurately informed of all that passed during her last moments by the very persons who were present at her decease. He has written the legend of her life at great length in Latin.

This blessed Catherine was exceedingly distressed by the great troubles of her native country, and the frequent murders which were continually committed in these wars, which caused the damnation of many souls ; and she earnestly besought God to point the bow and the arrows of His just indignation at her body, and to grant peace and tranquillity to this poor country thus ruined and wasted. She called so perseveringly, and so importuned God's mercy with her prayers, that soon after the siege of the town of Carignano had been begun, the Divine Majesty heard her prayers, and she received the following answer from God Himself, "I will grant my beloved Catherine the demand which thou hast so earnestly made, but know that it will cost thee dear," which signified that she would lose her life after a long and painful illness. Thereupon a truce was made, and those who had endured the shocks and the violence of wars, and the irruptions of insolent soldiers, obtained some rest, but there was no rest for the blessed spouse of Jesus, who was assailed anew with many persecutions, by those very persons who should have

defended and protected her from those who opposed her. God permitted this to purify her the more, like gold in the crucible, in order that her perfection might be better demonstrated. At last she was assailed by a very grievous malady, and her own confessor having been taken from her, she was deprived of all human consolation, so that on the bed of death she had not one friend belonging to her order to assist her in this dreadful passage. This should not surprise any one, for by this she was more conformed to her true Spouse Jesus Christ, who, in this His bitter Passion, was forsaken and abandoned by almost all His friends. O my God, what patience and what constancy did this Blessed Catherine show by Thy love until her last breath. It seemed as if another and not herself were suffering, so joyful was the expression of her countenance, knowing what was said by St. James the Apostle, "My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations." And although her best friends abandoned her, and all creatures, she never left her Creator, nor was she ever abandoned by Him; for although she desired to go out of the prison of this world, and to go and enjoy the presence, and the sweet embraces of her beloved Spouse Jesus Christ, nevertheless, like the Great St. Martin, she loved her neighbour so much, that she prayed to God, that if she was still necessary for the salvation of souls He would leave her in this valley of tears, and punish her for the sins of the whole world. In these last days she was so inflamed by Divine

love, that her heart seemed to open within her breast, and to contain the red hot coals of a burning furnace. Sometimes she seemed to be dead, by reason of a weakness which often assailed her when she wished to take breath, and which was so difficult that it appeared as if she must have given up the ghost.

At last one Sunday, the 4th of September, in the year 1547, at the hour of Tierce, after receiving all the sacraments of the Church with great sentiments of devotion, and having had the commendation of the soul made by a venerable monk of the Order of St. Benedict, in the presence of many spiritual persons from a small town named Caramagna, in perfect possession of her intellect, she raised her eyes to heaven and gave back her blessed soul to her Creator, with so much peace and tranquillity, that it seemed as if she had fallen asleep. The great beauty which this holy body still possessed after its separation from the soul astonished and surprised every one, and clearly showed that the soul which had animated it had become an inhabitant of Paradise, and was written in the book of life. An exquisite fragrance issued from her sepulchre, and her glory was manifested and revealed to many persons worthy of credit. She appeared to a religious and gave him some good and profitable advice. A soldier who invoked her help was delivered from Satan in that very hour. Many other miracles were wrought by the merits and prayers of this spouse of Christ, which have been more fully described by the above-mentioned

Father Peter Martyr in the Life which he has written of this blessed servant of God.

And thou holy virgin, who like the Queen of Angels, hast lived about sixty-three years in this miserable world, and hast now gained a better and a happier life in the heavenly kingdom above, who art now enjoying an overflowing recompense for the labours thou didst endure on earth for the love of thy most beloved Spouse Jesus Christ, and for the charity thou didst ever show to thy neighbour: remember us who are miserable here below, and are still tossed on the waves of this world; pray for the holy Church, for thy sacred order; aid and favour thy devout and most loving servants, and gain for us by thy merits the grace of reaching the kingdom of heaven. Amen.