

**THE PRACTICE OF THE
PRESENCE OF GOD THE BEST
RULE OF A HOLY LIFE
being Conversations and Letters of
Brother Lawrence
Illustrated**

Good when He gives, supremely good;
Nor less when He denies:
Afflictions, from His sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise.

AUTHENTIC EDITION

PREFACE

"I believe in the... communion of saints."

SURELY if additional proof of its reality were needed, it might be found in the universal oneness of experimental Christianity in all ages and in all lands. The experiences of Thomas a Kempis, of Tauler and of Madame Guyon, of John Woolman and Hester Ann Rogers, how marvelously they agree, and how perfectly they harmonize! And Nicholas Herman, of Lorraine,

whose letters and converse are here given, testifies to the same truth! In communion with Rome, a lay brother among the Carmelites, for several years a soldier, in an irreligious age, amid a skeptical people, yet in him the practice of the presence of GOD was as much a reality as the "watch" of the early Friends, and the "holy seed" in him and others was the "stock" (Isa. vi. 16) from which grew the household and evangelistic piety of the eighteenth century, of Epworth and of Moorfields.

"When unadorned, adorned the most" is the line which deters from any interpolations or interpretations other than the few "contents" headings which are given. May the "Christ in you" be the "hope of glory" to all who read.

CONVERSATIONS

FIRST CONVERSATION

Conversion and precious employment.
Satisfaction in God's presence. Faith our duty.
Resignation the fruit of watchfulness.

THE first time I saw Brother Lawrence was upon the 3rd of August, 1666. He told me that GOD had done him a singular favor, in his conversion at the age of eighteen.

That in the winter, seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time, the

leaves would be renewed, and after that the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the Providence and Power of GOD, which has never since been effaced from his soul. That this view had perfectly set him loose from the world, and kindled in him such a love for GOD, that he could not tell whether it had increased in above forty years that he had lived since.

That he had been footman to M. Fieubert, the treasurer, and that he was a great awkward fellow who broke everything.

That he had desired to be received into a monastery, thinking that he would there be made to smart for his awkwardness and the faults he should commit, and so he should sacrifice to GOD his life, with its pleasures: but that GOD had disappointed him, he having met with nothing but satisfaction in that state.



That we should establish ourselves in a sense of GOD's Presence, by continually conversing with Him. That it was a shameful thing to quit His conversation, to think of trifles and fooleries.

That we should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of GOD; which would yield us great joy in being devoted to Him.

That we ought to quicken, i.e., to enliven, our faith. That it was lamentable we had so little; and that instead of taking faith for the rule of their conduct, men amused themselves with trivial devotions, which changed daily. That the way of Faith was the spirit of the Church, and that it was sufficient to bring us to a high degree of perfection.

That we ought to give ourselves up to GOD, with regard both to things temporal and spiritual, and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling His will, whether He lead us by suffering or by consolation, for all would be equal to a soul truly resigned. That there needed fidelity in those drynesses, or insensibilities and irksomenesses in prayer, by which GOD tries our love to Him; that then was the time for us to make good and effectual acts of resignation, whereof one alone would oftentimes very much promote our spiritual advancement.

That as for the miseries and sins he heard of daily in the world, he was so far from wondering at them, that, on the contrary, he was surprised there were not

more, considering the malice sinners were capable of: that for his part, he prayed for them; but knowing that GOD could remedy the mischiefs they did, when He pleased, he gave himself no further trouble.

That to arrive at such resignation as GOD requires, we should watch attentively over all the passions which mingle as well in spiritual things as those of a grosser nature: that GOD would give light concerning those passions to those who truly desire to serve Him. That if this was my design, viz., sincerely to serve GOD, I might come to him (Bro. Lawrence) as often as I pleased, without any fear of being troublesome; but if not, that I ought no more to visit him.

SECOND CONVERSATION

Love the motive of all. Once in fear, now in joy. Diligence and love. Simplicity the key to Divine assistance. Business abroad as at home. Times of prayer and selfmortification not essential for the practice. All scruples brought to God.

That he had always been governed by love, without selfish views; and that having resolved to make the love of GOD the end of all his actions, he had found reasons to be well satisfied with his method. That he was pleased when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of GOD, seeking Him only, and