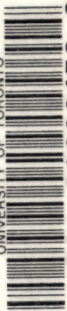


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THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

1957

I

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OLIPHANT SMEATON

Pascal and

The Port Royalists

By William Clark, D.D., LL.D., D.C.L., F.R.S.C.

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8.  
THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

Pascal and  
The Port Royalists

*Robinson*  
By

William<sup>^</sup> Clark, D.D., LL.D., D.C.L., F.R.S.C.  
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## PREFACE



THE question has often been raised as to whether men are greater than their works or the reverse; and a common opinion answers the question in the affirmative. An eminent French writer of our own days<sup>1</sup> declares that the reverse of this is true. Almost all men, he maintains, are worth even less than the little which they do; and this, he says, is proved by the great trouble they take to do it. Pascal, however, he says, is of the small number of those in whom the man infinitely transcends his actions. The writings of Pascal, he continues, are the finest that France possesses; yet they contain nothing of equal value with the Life of Pascal written by his sister in a few pages. It is of such writings and of such a life that we have to speak in this volume; and it is of unspeakable advantage to the student that he should possess a source of information respecting the early days of Pascal of such unquestionable authority.

Nearly all that we know of Pascal is derived from

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Suarès in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1st July 1900.



this Life and from his own writings, and especially from the *Provincial Letters* and the *Thoughts*. These works have been commented upon, controverted, and defended; and there is little to be said on either side which has not been said already. In the present volume Pascal chiefly speaks for himself, and the comments upon his statements are generally brief. It would have been quite easy to expand them to a great length. When we are dealing with such subjects as the Augustinian controversy and the Defence of the Christian Religion, it would be easier to write pages than lines. In this respect the writer has endeavoured to give no more than is necessary for the clearing up of such points as may not be plain to the ordinary reader for whom this book is intended.

Some acknowledgment should be made of the debt owing to previous labourers in the same field, and first to the editors of Pascal's works. I have used several editions of the *Provincials*, but special mention should be made of that of the Abbé Maynard, of the excellent edition of the Rev. John de Soyres, and the final edition of M. Faugère. With regard to the *Thoughts*, the obligations of all students to M. Victor Cousin and M. Faugère are incalculable; but the editions of Molinier and Havet also deserve grateful mention. It was Molinier who first gave the whole work in its complete and perfect form, and Havet has arranged the material thus prepared in the most convenient form. The great work on Port Royal

by M. Sainte Beuve is too well known and too highly esteemed to require more than this mention.

The greatness of Pascal lifts him above all ordinary expressions of praise or admiration. He towers above all save the very greatest of the sons of men. It will be a source of satisfaction to the present writer if he shall have helped to make the immortal writings of this great genius known to some who were previously unacquainted with them.

WILLIAM CLARK.

TRINITY COLLEGE, TORONTO,  
*Michaelmas, 1902.*



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# PASCAL



## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS

BLAISE PASCAL was born at Clermont-Ferrand, on the 19th of June 1623, in what was then the Province of Auvergne, and is now the Department of Puy-de-Dôme. He was the son of Étienne Pascal, second president of the Court of Aids of Montferrand, whose ancestor, bearing the same name, had been ennobled by Louis XI. in 1478, although the family made no use of the rank thus accorded to them. In the year 1618 Étienne Pascal married Antoinette Bégon, a woman distinguished alike by her piety and her intelligence. She bore him four children, three of whom survived, Gilberte, the future Madame Périer, born in 1620; Blaise, three years younger, born in 1623; and Jacqueline (sometimes called Jacquette), born in 1625.

The mother of Pascal, according to Madame Périer, died when he was three years old (1626); and his father, finding himself alone, applied himself more earnestly to the care of his family; and, since he had no other son than Blaise, for this reason, and because

of the evidences of high intelligence which he recognised in him, he could not bring himself to commit his education to any other, but resolved to carry it on himself; which he did, being thoroughly qualified, as a mathematician and a natural philosopher, for such work.

In 1631 Étienne Pascal sold his office, left Clermont, and removed to Paris, in order to give himself up to the education of his children. There he became acquainted with the family of the celebrated advocate, Antoine Arnauld, the deadly enemy of the Jesuits, who had died in 1619. Of Antoine Arnauld's twenty children, ten remained. Of them Arnauld d'Andilly was the eldest, and Antoine Arnauld, the theologian,—known as the great Arnauld,—born in 1612, was the youngest.

Étienne Pascal entered upon the education of his children in the most regular and systematic manner, and with extraordinary devotion. A leading maxim with him, says Madame Périer, was to keep his son well ahead of his work; and it was for this reason that he would not begin to teach him Latin until he was twelve years old. During this interval, however, Blaise did not remain idle, for he was instructed in all the subjects which he could easily master. In particular, his father taught him the nature of languages in general, and pointed out how they had been reduced to grammars and rules; and how these rules had exceptions which had to be noted. By this means his intelligence was exercised, so that he came to understand the principles upon which the rules of grammar were based, so as to facilitate his understanding of them in particular cases.



From these beginnings his father proceeded to instruct him in the phenomena of nature, such as the force of powder in a gun. Pascal took great pleasure in these studies; but he was never satisfied until he could learn the reasons of things; and when these were not known, or his father did not explain them, or when the ordinary explanations seemed to him evasions, he was not satisfied, for he always displayed an admirable keenness of mind in detecting whatever was false; and one might say that always and in everything, truth was the sole object of his inquiries, since nothing short of the knowledge of the truth could yield him satisfaction. Thus from his infancy he could give himself up to nothing which did not seem to him evidently true; so that when others failed to give him good reasons, he sought for them himself; and when he had once taken hold of a thing, he did not let it go until he found an explanation which satisfied him. An example of this is given, when some one struck a plate with a knife on the table. He remarked that the plate emitted a loud sound; but that as soon as a hand was laid upon it, the sound ceased. In examining into the reasons, he was led to make various other experiments on sounds. By this means, when he was only twelve years of age, he discovered many things which he embodied in a treatise which was found to be quite well reasoned. His astonishing genius in geometry made its appearance, when he was only twelve years of age, in a manner so remarkable that his sister dwells upon the incident with peculiar emphasis. Their father, she says, was a man learned in mathematics, and had frequent intercourse with many who were accomplished

in that science. But, as he purposed to instruct Blaise in languages, and as he knew that mathematics is a science which fills and greatly satisfies the mind, he wished that his son should have no knowledge of it, for fear of its leading him to neglect his Latin and other languages in which he wished to perfect him. For this reason he had put away all the books that treated of this subject, and he abstained from referring to it with his friends in his son's presence.

This precaution, however, did not prevent the child's curiosity from being excited, so that he often asked his father to give him instructions in mathematics. His father refused, promising that, when he knew Latin and Greek, he should be taught mathematics as a reward. The boy, noting this resistance, asked him one day what was the nature of this science, and of what it treated. His father told him in general that it was the means of making figures rightly, and of discovering their relative proportions; and at the same time he desired him not to speak or think more of the subject. But the mind of Pascal was one which could not be kept within bounds, having learnt that mathematics determined infallibly the relations of figures; and so, in his hours of recreation, he set himself to meditate on that statement; and being alone in a room in which he had been accustomed to take recreation, he took a piece of charcoal and made some figures on boards, trying, for example, to make a circle perfectly round, a triangle of which the sides and the angles were equal, and other things of the same kind. All this he accomplished by himself alone, and then he examined the proportions of the figures among themselves. But as his father had taken so great care to

conceal all these things from him, he did not know even the names of the figures. He was thus under the necessity of making definitions for himself. He called a circle a round, a line a bar, and so with the others. After these definitions he made axioms, and finally complete demonstrations; and as, in these things, we go from one thing to another, he pushed his researches so far forward that he came to the thirty-second proposition of the first book of Euclid.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst Pascal was occupied in this work, his father came into the room without being heard. In fact, his son was so engrossed in his study that it was some time before he became aware of his father's presence. It would not be easy to say which was the more surprised, the son to see his father, who had forbidden these studies, or the father to see his son engrossed in them. But the surprise of the father was still greater when, after asking the boy what he was doing, he was told that he was engaged in a problem which formed the thirty-second proposition of the first book of Euclid. His father asked him what had led him to these investigations. He said it was because he had discovered certain other things; and when he was asked how he had arrived at these, he told him of certain demonstrations which he had made; and so on, going back and explaining by the names of the "round" and the "bar," he came to his definitions and his axioms.

His father was so startled at the greatness of the genius thus displayed that he left him without saying a word, and went to see M. Le Pailleur, who was his

<sup>1</sup> The exterior angle of a triangle is equal to the two interior and opposite angles; and the three interior angles are together equal to two right angles.

intimate friend, and a man of great learning. When he came to him he remained immovable, like a man in a transport. M. Le Pailleur noting this, and also that he was shedding tears, was alarmed, and implored him no longer to conceal the cause of his trouble. He replied, "I am not weeping from sorrow, but from joy. You know the care that I have taken to keep from my son the knowledge of geometry, for fear of diverting him from his other studies. But see what he has done!" and then he showed him all that he had discovered; so that one might say that, in a certain sense, his son had invented mathematics. M. Le Pailleur was no less surprised than the father of Pascal had been, and told him that he did not think it fair to restrain such a mind further, and to conceal this knowledge from him, and that now he ought to be allowed to see the books without further restraint.

After this his father gave him *Euclid's Elements* to study in his hours of recreation. He read them and understood them entirely by himself, without having any need of explanation. And not only did he continue his studies in private; he also took part in certain conferences, held in the house of Father Mersenne, which formed the nucleus of the Academy of Sciences, established in 1666, four years after the death of Pascal. But before this time it seems to have taken the name of Academy, since Pascal, as early as 1654, presented to it two Latin treatises on mathematics addressed, "*Celeberrimæ Matheseos Academiæ Parisiensi.*" In these conferences Pascal took a leading part, both in criticism and in production. Often there were contributions examined from Italy, Germany, and other foreign countries; and his judgments were carefully



considered by the others as of no less importance than those of his seniors ; for he had such clear insight that he often discovered mistakes which the others had overlooked. Yet he employed in this study of geometry only his hours of recreation, for he learned Latin by the rules which his father had made on purpose for him. But as he found in this science the truth which he had so evidently sought for, he was so satisfied with it, that he gave his whole mind to it ; so that, in spite of his giving but little time to this study, he made such progress in it that at the age of sixteen he composed a treatise on Conic Sections which seemed such a great intellectual effort that it was said to be the most powerful work since the days of Archimedes.

Among those who took part in these conferences were such names as Roberval, Carcavi, Le Pailleur, Mydorge, Hardy, Desargues, all men of high attainments in various branches of natural science, and especially in mathematics. There was a general desire among these savants that Pascal should publish his treatise on Conic Sections, as they wished that so surprising a work by one so young should not be unknown. It is said that the work excited the mingled admiration and incredulity of Descartes. It would seem that the incredulity preponderated, and that Descartes bore somewhat grudging testimony to the achievement of Pascal, and even suggested that he was more indebted to his predecessors than he was willing to confess. His other fellow-workers were more generous, and urged the publication of his treatise. Pascal, however, seems to have cared comparatively little for the fame that might accrue to him. He promised to give certain treatises to the public ; and

after his death some were found ready for publication; but they were not published, and they are now lost. In a paper which was prepared, Pascal declared that the first discoverer of much that he put forth was "M. Desargues, one of the great minds of this time, and one of the most versed in mathematics, and particularly in conic sections. . . . I must confess," he goes on, "that I owe the little which I have discovered on this subject to his writings; and that I have endeavoured, as far as I could, to imitate his method on this subject." If the appreciation of Descartes was grudging, it was otherwise with Leibnitz, who perused Pascal's manuscript in 1676, and expressed an enthusiastic admiration of the ability there displayed.

It has been mentioned that Pascal's father removed to Paris when his son was seven years of age. Some years after settling there, the family were called to endure a great misfortune. Étienne Pascal had invested his savings in bonds of the Hôtel de Ville. In order to provide for the necessities of the Government, Richelieu reduced the interest on these bonds, which led to earnest protests from the investors, Pascal's father among the rest. The meeting at which they assembled was declared to be seditious; and, to escape the Bastille, he first went into concealment in Paris, and subsequently fled into the country. He was thus cut off from his friends, and from his family, whom he was able to see only at intervals. By what might seem a strange accident the family recovered the favour of the great Cardinal. In the year 1639 he determined to have Scudéry's play of *L'Amour Tyrannique* acted by girls. Among those who were induced to take part in the performance was Pascal's younger sister

Jacqueline, then thirteen years of age, who seems to have possessed considerable dramatic gifts. The Cardinal was so charmed by her acting, that he allowed her to present a petition on behalf of her father. The incident is described in a letter from Jacqueline to her father, in which she mentions that the Cardinal had been made acquainted with the truth of the matter, and had learnt that her father had been guilty of no offence against the Government; and she goes on to describe her interview with Richelieu, and his decision that her father might return. The appeal of Jacqueline, she tells her father, was enforced by Madame d'Aiguillon, who not only spoke in high terms of her father, but informed the Cardinal of the great gifts of her brother.

This letter was written on 4th April 1639, and it shows us that the gifts of her brother were already widely recognised. The father availed himself at once of the permission to return, immediately presented himself to Richelieu, and received from him the assurance that something should be done for him without delay. This promise was kept, since shortly afterwards he was appointed Intendant of Rouen, and settled in that city in 1641. In this same year his elder daughter, Gilberte, was married to her cousin, Florin Périer; and two years afterwards removed with him to Clermont, where he had been appointed a counsellor in the Court of Aids. At Rouen the family became intimate with Corneille, who was a native of that city, and had recently returned thither. Everything appears to have now gone well with the family, except that Blaise, through the closeness of his devotion to his studies, seems already to have seriously injured his



health, which was never robust. His sister says that he developed infirmities about this time which never left him, so that he used to say that, from the age of eighteen, he had not passed a single day without pain. These infirmities, however, she adds, were not always equally painful, and whenever he had a short respite from pain, his mind ever turned to new investigations. It was at this time, when he was twenty-three years of age, that he took up and carried on the experiments of Torricelli, of which more hereafter. It has been remarked that his mathematical and scientific studies were carried on mostly in his hours of recreation, and his literary education was certainly not neglected. He obtained a sufficient acquaintance with Latin, which he could read and write without difficulty, whilst his knowledge of Greek enabled him at least to verify the translations from that language. He could also read Italian. It would appear that his father did not assist him in the study of ancient and modern literature, of which, however, he obtained a considerable knowledge by his subsequent studies, although he was never an extensive reader. With theology and philosophy he had only a very general acquaintance.

It would seem that religion formed no part of the system of education planned for Pascal by his father. It was not that he differed from the doctrines of the Church. In habit and in practice he was a devout believer. But he seems to have shrunk from anything like philosophising in religion, from the introduction of metaphysic into theology. In a practical way he united, and taught his children to unite, the common life of persons living in the world with the practice of religion.

During his time as Intendant at Rouen, Étienne Pascal discharged faithfully the duties of his office, and gained the friendship and respect of those around him. His work was by no means an easy one, in consequence of recent troubles in Normandy ; but his integrity and devotion commanded confidence and respect, whilst he advanced the fortunes of his family by all legitimate means. It was in such an environment that young Pascal grew up to manhood.

## CHAPTER II

### SCIENTIFIC WORK

It may be convenient here to bring together some brief notes on the work of Pascal in mathematics and physical science, which, although inadequate and incomplete, may suffice for our present purpose. It was during the residence of the family at Rouen that the principal part of Pascal's work in science was accomplished. Reference has already been made to his discovery of the thirty-two propositions of the first book of Euclid at the age of twelve, and to his treatise on Conic Sections when he was sixteen. We have also mentioned the part which he took in the discussions of the "Academy."

We have mentioned that Pascal did not publish his treatise on Conic Sections; but an abstract of this treatise, bearing the date 1640, when Pascal was seventeen, still exists. With his usual modesty he explains that he keeps back several of his discoveries until they have been examined by men of ability. "The method which he followed was that introduced by his contemporary Desargues, namely, the transformation of geometrical figures by conical or optical projection. In this way he established the famous theorem, that the intersections of the three pairs of opposite sides

of a hexagon inscribed in a conic are collinear. This proposition, which he called the mystic hexagram, he made the keystone of his theory; from it alone he deduced more than four hundred corollaries, embracing, according to his own account, the conics of Apollonius, and other results innumerable.”<sup>1</sup> Not long after this he invented a calculating machine; but the practical difficulties connected with the construction of the machine prevented its coming to be of any practical use; and this seems to have been the fate of all similar inventions, however promising.

By that which appeared an accident the attention of Pascal was drawn to a matter of greater importance. In October 1646 the family received a visit from M. Petit, a disciple of Descartes, who gave them an account of experiments recently made in Italy on the maxim that “Nature abhors a vacuum.” It was a subject which had seriously occupied the attention of Galileo and his pupil Torricelli. It was by the latter that the suggestion was made which it was left for Pascal to verify by experiment. In order to ascertain what might be learnt from nature, he tried experiments with different kinds of liquids, water, oil, wine, etc., and with tubes of different sizes; and he performed the experiments in presence of many persons in order to call forth criticisms and objections. Pascal was satisfied with the result of his experiments as far as they went, and drew certain conclusions from them. He mentions that among the four or five hundred people of all classes who witnessed them, there were five or six Jesuit fathers of the College of Rouen.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Chrystal in *Ency. Brit.* (ed. 9), vol. xviii. p. 338.

Naturally the scientific world became greatly excited over these experiments, some recognising their importance, and others denying to Pascal all credit in connection with them. In order to show clearly his own share in the investigation, Pascal put forth, 4th October 1647, a narrative under the title of *Nouvelles expériences touchant le Vide*. He concluded—(1) that Nature abhors a vacuum, although it is false to say that it cannot tolerate a vacuum in any degree; (2) this abhorrence is not as strong for a great vacuum as for a small; (3) the power of this vacuum is limited. Pascal at that time went no further in regard to the conclusions which he drew from his experiments. These conclusions, however, were not unimportant, seeing that they establish the fact, declared impossible by Aristotle, that a void was actually found; a doctrine unpleasant to believers, because atheists frequently had recourse to it in order to explain the fact of movement without having recourse to God.

With regard to the claims of Pascal in connection with these experiments two things are to be said: first, that he laid no claim to the origination of these experiments, which, he explains, had been made in Italy four years before. Moreover, he was so far from either denying the claims of Torricelli, or owing anything to his investigations, that he was actually unacquainted with the explanation which he had suggested. Pascal's conclusions speedily found critics and objectors; and prominent among them was Father Noël, the Jesuit. We have here probably an explanation of two circumstances in the life of Pascal, his coldness with Descartes, and his lifelong opposition to the Company of Jesus. Father Noël in his criticism had drawn arguments



from Descartes in support of his positions; and Pascal, without naming the great philosopher, criticised some of his methods. On the other hand, it has been suggested, with some probability, that the Jesuits may in after days have remembered that Pascal was an old adversary, and that he may have learnt in this controversy something of the contempt which he showed for them in his letters.

In his reply to Father Noël, Pascal defines the limits of science and faith. "In that which concerns the sciences, he says, we believe only our senses and our reason. We reserve for the mysteries of the faith which the Holy Spirit has revealed that submission which asks for no sensible or rational proof. But you, in your fancy, imagine a matter of which you suppose the qualities, a subtle air which has inclinations. And if you are asked to show it, you answer that it is not visible. Your hypotheses satisfy you; and we are to take that for demonstration. You give, too, terms which you employ, and definitions of which the term to be defined supplies all the contents.<sup>1</sup> It is in this way that you define *Light*: 'A luminary movement of rays composed of lucid bodies, that is to say, luminous.' That is a definition to which, having regard to the conditions of a true definition, I should find a difficulty in accustoming myself. Such, father, are my sentiments, which I shall always submit to yours."

The controversy was continued for some time without much result, with delicate irony on the part of Pascal, with something like insolence on the part of Father Noël. At last Étienne Pascal comes in and

<sup>1</sup> What we should call verbal or analytical definitions.

administers to the good father a brotherly admonition. "When you are at a loss for argument," he says, "you have recourse to insult. Now, you must know that it is a general maxim of civilised society that neither age, nor condition, nor position, nor office can give a man the right to hurl invectives at anyone."

By degrees Pascal came to see further into the question under discussion, and in the month of November 1647—he was then only twenty-four—he began to discern a new meaning in the experiment of Torricelli. He began to ask himself not merely whether the space above the mercury is really void, but what is the cause that keeps the column of mercury in suspense. Galileo had demonstrated that the air is heavy. Torricelli had suggested the idea that the weight of the air might be the cause of the phenomenon which he had discovered. Pascal had now become acquainted with this idea of Torricelli, and pointed out that it was only an idea, a possible explanation, an hypothesis, whilst the experiment had not proved that another explanation was impossible. It was therefore necessary to try another experiment, in order to show that the weight of the air was the sole admissible cause of the suspension of the mercury in the tube.

5 Pascal saw clearly what must be the nature of the experiment that should settle this controversy. The experiment must be repeated several times in one day with the same quicksilver, in the same tube, at one time at the foot, at another at the top of a high mountain. If it should happen that the quicksilver should stand lower at the top than at the foot of the mountain, it would follow necessarily that the



weight and pressure of the air is the sole cause of this suspension of the quicksilver, and not the abhorrence of the vacuum, since it is quite certain that there is much more weight of air at the foot of the mountain than at the summit, whilst it could not be contended that Nature abhors a vacuum at the foot of a mountain more than at the top.

Pascal saw no opportunity of testing the principle in Normandy, and naturally thought of the Puy-de-Dôme, which rises, near his old birthplace in Auvergne, to the height of 3000 feet. Being unable, through the state of his health, to conduct the experiment personally, he wrote to his brother-in-law, M. Périer, 16th November 1647, asking him to carry it out, and explaining to him the necessary process. Various circumstances intervened to hinder compliance with his request; but at last the experiment was tried 19th September 1648, and with completely satisfactory results, which were immediately communicated to Pascal. Pascal tried the same experiment at the base and at the top of the tower of St. Jacques in Paris, and then in a private house, and always with the same results. It was found in each case, in Auvergne and in Paris, that the column of quicksilver fell in proportion as they rose from the ground.

Sir David Brewster<sup>1</sup> has given an account of the experiment, taken almost literally from the letter of Périer to Pascal; and some extracts from this letter may suffice: "On the morning of Saturday the 19th September, the day fixed for the interesting observation, the weather was unsettled; but about five o'clock the summit of the Puy-de-Dôme began to appear through the

<sup>1</sup> *North British Review*, August 1844.

clouds, and Périer resolved to proceed with the experiment. . . . He accordingly summoned his friends, and at eight in the morning there assembled in the gardens of the Pères Minimes, about a league below the town, M. Bannier of the Pères Minimes; M. Mosnier, canon of the Cathedral Church; along with Messrs. la Ville and Bégon, counsellors of the Court of Aids, and M. la Porte, doctor and professor of medicine in Clermont. These five individuals were not only distinguished in their respective professions, but also by their scientific acquirements; and M. Périer expresses his delight at having been on this occasion associated with them.

“M. Périer began the experiment by pouring into a vessel 16 lb. of quicksilver, which he had rectified during the three preceding days. He then took two glass tubes, 4 feet long, of the same bore, hermetically sealed at one end and open at the other; and making the ordinary experiment of a vacuum with both, he found that the mercury stood in each of them at the same level, and at the height of 26 inches  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lines. This experiment was repeated twice with the same result. One of these glass tubes, with the mercury standing in it, was left under the care of M. Chastin, one of the religious of the House, who undertook to observe and mark any changes in it that might take place during the day; and the party already named set out with the other tube for the summit of the Puy-de-Dôme, about 3000 feet<sup>1</sup> above their first station. Before arriving there, they found that the mercury stood at the height of 23 inches and 2 lines—no less than 3 inches and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lines lower than it stood at the Minimes. The party ‘were struck with admiration

<sup>1</sup> 500 toises, a toise being about 6 feet.

and astonishment at this result'; and 'so great was their surprise that they resolved to repeat the experiment under various forms.'

"The glass tube, or the barometer, as we may call it, was placed in various positions on the summit of the mountain—sometimes in the small chapel which is there; sometimes in an exposed, and sometimes in a sheltered position; sometimes when the wind blew, and sometimes when it was calm; sometimes in rain, and sometimes in a fog; and under all these various influences, which fortunately took place during the same day, the quicksilver stood at the same height of 23 inches 2 lines. During their descent of the mountain they repeated the experiment at Lafon-de-l'Arbe, an intermediate station, nearer the Minimes than the summit of the Puy, 'and they found the mercury to stand at the height of 25 inches—a result with which the party was greatly pleased,' as indicating the relation between the height of the mercury and the height of the station. Upon reaching the Minimes they found that the mercury had not changed its height, notwithstanding the inconstancy of the weather, which had been alternately clear, windy, rainy, and foggy. M. Périér repeated the experiments with both the glass tubes, and found the height of the mercury to be still 26 inches  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lines. On the following morning M. de la Marc, priest of the Oratory, to whom M. Périér had mentioned the preceding results, proposed to have the experiment repeated at the top and bottom of the towers of Notre Dame in Clermont. He accordingly yielded to his request, and found the difference to be 2 lines.

"When Pascal received these results, all the difficulties

were removed ; and perceiving from the last two observations . . . that 20 toises, or about 120 feet, produce a change of two lines, and 7 toises, or 42 feet, a change of  $\frac{1}{2}$  a line, he made the observation at the top and bottom of the tower of St. Jacques<sup>1</sup> de la Boucherie, which was about 24 or 25 toises, or about 150 feet high, and he found a difference of more than 2 lines in the mercurial column ; and in a private house 90 steps high he found a difference of  $\frac{1}{2}$  a line. . . . After this important experiment was made, Pascal intimated to M. Périer that different states of the weather would occasion differences in the barometer, according as it was cold, hot, dry, or moist ; and in order to put this opinion to the test of experiment, M. Périer instituted a series of observations, which he continued from the beginning of 1649 till March 1651. Corresponding observations were made at the same time at Paris and at Stockholm by the French ambassador, M. Chanut, and Descartes ; and from these it appeared that the mercury rises in weather which is cold, cloudy, and damp, and falls when the weather is hot and dry, and during rain and snow, but still with such irregularities that no general rule could be established. At Clermont the difference between the highest and the lowest state of the mercury was 1 inch  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lines ; at Paris the same, and at Stockholm  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lines."

It is worth while to dwell upon these details, because in this way the question of the rise and fall of the barometer, and the theory of the suspension of water in a tube, was finally settled by experiment, and not

<sup>1</sup> The tower was then part of the Church of St. Jacques which was demolished in 1789. The tower is still a conspicuous object in Paris, and has a statue of Pascal in commemoration of this work.



until then. It had been suggested by Torricelli, who showed the direction in which the solution was to be sought; and Pascal never called in question the claims of Torricelli; but it was he who tried the experiment and proved the truth of the theory. As it has been remarked, Galileo proved that the air was heavy, Torricelli suggested that its weight was the cause of the suspension of water or mercury in a tube; it was left to Pascal to demonstrate the truth of the theory by experiment, and he claimed no more than this.

It need not surprise us to know that the Jesuits did not regard the success of Pascal with satisfaction. Without reference being made to him by name, in certain theses presented at their College of Montferrand he was accused of claiming to be the inventor of a certain experiment of which Torricelli was said to be the author. The theses were addressed to a friend of Pascal, M. Ribeyre, first president in the Court of Aids at Clermont-Ferrand; and it was to him that Pascal addressed his defence, 12th July 1651, in which he explained in detail the history of his experiment, pointing out what had been done in Italy, what the French had learnt from this, and that he had himself failed at first to mention the name of Torricelli simply because he was not then acquainted with it; but that as soon as he knew it, he hastened to express his satisfaction that the suggestion had come from a man of such eminence.

M. de Ribeyre, in reply, told Pascal that he felt these accusations too deeply. He assures him that the remarks of his critic arose not from any personal feeling, but from the eagerness of a man of science. And as for any charges that might be brought against Pascal himself, they were unworthy of notice. "Your

candour and your sincerity," said M. de Ribeyre, "are too well known to me that I should allow myself to believe that you could ever be convicted of having done anything inconsistent with the virtue which you profess, and which appears in all your actions and deportment. I honour and reverence your virtue more than your knowledge."

This controversy has been almost forgotten in the presence of one more serious. Between the time of the experiments at Rouen, in 1646, and that of the letter to M. Périer, Pascal had two interviews with Descartes in Paris, on the 23rd and 24th of September 1647. Of these interviews we possess a very interesting account, written on 25th September, by Jacqueline Pascal to her sister, Madame Périer. Descartes expressed, through some friends, a great desire to see Pascal; and although the latter was in a weak state of health, it was not thought proper to refuse the request of so eminent a man. Besides Descartes' friends, Pascal's friend M. Roberval was present at the interview. From Jacqueline Pascal's report it would appear that Descartes still held that there was some "subtle matter" within the tube which accounted for the phenomena, and it seems probable that Pascal more or less evaded the remark, so that his friend M. Roberval imagined he had some difficulty in speaking. For this reason he interposed in the discussion, which led to some unpleasantness between him and Descartes.<sup>1</sup>

Such is, in substance, what we find in Jacqueline's letter to her sister, 25th September 1647; but subsequently (11th June 1649) Descartes writes from

<sup>1</sup> "Ils se chantèrent goguette," says the latter writer, "un peu plus fort que jeu."

Stockholm, where he was then living, to his friend Carcavi, asking to be made acquainted with the success of Pascal's experiments at the Puy-de-Dôme. "I had the right," he says, "to expect this from him rather than from you, because it was I who recommended him, two years ago, to try this experiment; and I assured him that although I had not tried it, I had no doubt of its success." On the 17th of June, writing to the same correspondent, he declares again, "It is I who entreated M. Pascal, two years ago, to try the experiment; and I assured him of success as being altogether in conformity with my principles, without which he would not have thought of it, since he was of a contrary opinion."

A controversy has arisen as to the significance of these statements, some contending that Pascal concealed the help he obtained from Descartes; others, that Descartes has endeavoured improperly to claim what belongs to Pascal. There seems to be no sufficient ground for either accusation. If we may trust the testimony of Jacqueline Pascal, it would appear that the views of Descartes were far from clear at the time of his interview with Pascal; and it is incredible that Pascal, who acknowledged so freely the work of his predecessors, should make no allusion to Descartes, if he had really gained anything from him. On the other hand, it is quite conceivable that Descartes, in later years, should imagine that his views at this time had been clearer than they were. At least it seems evident that no change took place in the relations of Descartes with the Pascal family; and subsequently they are found exchanging views on the subject of the suspension of the mercury in the tube. It may be



added that posterity has so far settled the controversy as to decide that Pascal is fully entitled to the credit of the experiments on the Puy-de-Dôme, and of the conclusions there established.

This discovery was important in itself, but it was even more so as leading him to a general theory of the equilibrium of liquids, which he set forth in his treatise on the Equilibrium of Fluids, and in his treatise on the Weight of the Mass of the Atmosphere, composed in 1651. Certain points had already been made clear; namely, that the pressure of a fluid on its base is as the product of the base multiplied by the height of the fluid, and that all fluids press equally on all sides of the vessels enclosing them. But it still remained to determine exactly the measure of the pressure, in order to deduce the general condition of equilibrium. "But," says Sir David Brewster, "the most remarkable part of his treatise on the Equilibrium of Fluids, and one which of itself would have immortalised him, is his application of the general principle to the construction of what he calls the 'mechanical machine for multiplying forces,'—an effect which, he says, may be produced to any extent we choose, as one may, by means of this machine, raise a weight of any magnitude. This new machine is the Hydrostatic Press, first introduced by our celebrated countryman, Mr. Bramah.

"Pascal's treatise on the weight of the whole mass of air forms the basis of the modern science of Pneumatics. In order to prove that the mass of air presses by its weight on all the bodies which it surrounds, and also that it is elastic and compressible, a balloon half filled with air was carried to the top of the Puy-de-Dôme.

It gradually inflated itself as it ascended, and when it reached the summit it was quite full and swollen, as if fresh air had been blown into it; or, what is the same thing, it swelled in proportion as the weight of the column of air which pressed upon it diminished. When again brought down it became more and more flaccid, and when it reached the bottom it resumed its original condition. In the nine chapters of which the treatise consists, he shows that all the phenomena or effects hitherto ascribed to the horror of a vacuum arise from the weight of the mass of air; and after explaining the variable pressure of the atmosphere in different localities and in its different states, and the rise of the water in pumps, he calculates that the whole mass of air round our globe weighs 8,983,889,440,000,000,000 French pounds."

After this Pascal returned with renewed zeal to his mathematical studies, and several important essays were the result, *e.g.* his treatise on the Arithmetical Triangle and his problems on the Cycloid. By means of the former he solved a number of theorems which could not easily have been demonstrated in any other way, and "in finding the coefficients of different terms of a binomial raised to an even and positive power." This treatise was printed in the year 1654, but was not published until 1668, after the death of the author.

The treatise on the Cycloid belongs to a somewhat later period. "The Cycloid was a famous curve in those days; it had been discussed by Galileo, Descartes, Fermat, Roberval, and Torricelli, who had in turn exhausted their skill upon it."<sup>1</sup> It was during a severe attack of toothache in 1658, when he found sleep

<sup>1</sup> Chrystal.

impossible, that Pascal concentrated his attention on this subject; and "within eight days, and in the midst of cruel sufferings, he devised a method which embraced all the problems,—a method founded upon the summation of certain series, of which he had given the elements in his writings accompanying his *Traité du Triangle Arithmétique*. From this discovery there was only a step to that of the Differential and Integral Calculus; and it may be confidently presumed that, if Pascal had proceeded with his mathematical studies, he would have anticipated Leibnitz and Newton in the glory of their great discovery."<sup>1</sup>

Pascal may be said to have ended his scientific work by his writings on the Cycloid. But there was an invention to which he gave some attention towards the close of his life—that of which Madame Périer speaks in a letter to one of the Arnaulds as "l'affaire des carrosses." Pascal seems to have suggested the idea of having public cars or omnibuses on certain main routes in Paris, on which persons might be conveyed "à cinq sols"—for five cents. It is at least a fact that a patent was granted to the Duc de Roannez, a friend of Pascal, together with some other noblemen, January 1662. According to Madame Périer, Pascal interested himself in the undertaking, which proved successful, and he asked to have a thousand francs in advance, to send to the poor at Blois, because the need was too pressing to admit of delay. When it was suggested to him that the enterprise might not prove sufficiently successful to bear this charge, he answered that he could pay back the amount out of his own property; by which, says his sister, he showed them the truth of

<sup>1</sup> Bossut.

what he had often said to them, that he had no wish to have "money except for the relief of the poor."

A short essay written by Pascal about the time of the experiments on the Puy-de-Dôme, in the year 1647, entitled, *Préface sur le Traité du Vide*, should here be noticed. There are, he says, two kinds of things, those which depend only on the memory, namely, matters of fact or of institution, whether divine or human; and those which fall under the senses or under the reason, namely, truths to be discovered, the object of mathematical and physical sciences.

Those two domains, he says, are entirely separated the one from the other. In the first, authority alone is admitted. In fact, this alone can make us acquainted with past events. In theology particularly it is sovereign, sufficing to raise into truths things the most incomprehensible, as well as to render uncertain the most probable. But in the domain of physics and mathematics authority has no force. This will be conceded without difficulty in regard to mathematics. In physics the problem is to find the laws of nature, that is to say, the constant relations of phenomena. Now authority is of no use in making us acquainted with the facts which pass under our eyes, and it could not prove that those facts are explained by such or such a natural cause. Nor is it more useful in mathematics; for the definitions which we might form in that subject, in order to derive our arguments from them, could be only fictions of our mind to which Nature is in no way bound to conform herself. Experience and reasoning, the former as point of departure and verification of the latter, such is the only method.

From this difference of method between theology and



physics there results a fundamental difference of character. Theology is unchangeable. Physics is submitted to a continual progress. It is necessary to confound the insolence of those false sages who claim for Aristotle the inviolable respect which is due to God alone. The progress which the physical sciences demand is a consequence of their double principle. On the one side, experiments multiply continually, each of them bringing new knowledge, whether positive or negative. On the other side, it is not with human reason as with the instinct of animals. The latter have no other destiny than to maintain themselves in a state of limited perfection; an instinct always the same suffices for them. But man is produced for infinity; his intelligence, therefore, goes on perfecting itself without ceasing. He begins with ignorance. The experience which he acquires urges him to reason, and the effects of his reasonings increase indefinitely. Then, thanks to memory, thanks to the means which men possess for preserving their knowledge, not only does each one of them advance from day to day in the sciences, but all of them unitedly make continual progress in them, so that all the succession of men, during the course of so many centuries, ought to be considered as one man who is always living and who learns continually.

What then, he asks, is our true relation to antiquity? Words cheat us. Those whom we call ancients were new in all things, and formed properly the infancy of humanity. It is we who are the ancients; and if antiquity could be a title to respect, it is we who should be respectable. But nothing is, in fact, respectable but truth, which is neither young nor old, but eternal. If any of the ancients have been great,

it is because, in their efforts to attain greatness, they have used the discoveries of their predecessors only as means by which to excel them. By what right are we to be hindered from making the same use of what they have done?

There was here no disparagement of antiquity. The discoveries of the ancients were steps by which we have risen to more complete knowledge. We see further than they did, because we have begun where they ended. The scientific principles here enunciated by Pascal are now regarded as a matter of course; but it was otherwise in his time. To these principles he was constantly loyal. The treatise to which we have been referring belongs to the period of his experiments on the Puy-de-Dôme, and it was some little time before this that his religious character assumed a new complexion. How he adjusted the claims of God and those of science we shall endeavour to see in the sequel.

## CHAPTER III

### SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE Pascal family were always eminently respectable: not only all of them of great and recognised ability, but people who were well known for the discharge of all their social and religious duties; but apparently without a touch of fanaticism or asceticism. Without being in the least degree chargeable with lukewarmness, it could still perhaps be said of them that they knew "how to make the best of both worlds." They certainly believed that "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." But a great change was impending.

In the beginning of 1646 Étienne Pascal, then about fifty years of age, having gone out on some affair of charity, slipped on the ice and dislocated his thigh. During his illness he was attended by two gentlemen, living near Rouen, who had a great reputation for the treatment of this kind of injuries. These gentlemen were brothers, and their names were M. de la Bouteillerie and M. des Landes. They were men of property, and had devoted themselves to these studies from an interest in them, and from the desire to benefit their fellow-men.



Impressed by the preaching of M. Guillebert, curé of Rouville, a devoted priest and a follower of the Jansenist St. Cyran, they had placed themselves under his direction, and had been led to give up their whole life to the service of God, to the working out of their own salvation, and to the service of the necessitous around them. One of them built a hospital at the end of his park, and gave his children to the service of the Church; the other, who was childless, provided beds for the hospital and attended on the poor. They passed a certain time in the Pascal family, in order to make sure that the healing of the father was complete. Their deportment and their conversation deeply impressed their hosts; and thus they led them to the consideration of the true nature of religion, and particularly of the question as to whether the pursuit of success in the world could be connected with the practice of religion.

Madame Périer tells us how Blaise Pascal came under these influences. "Immediately after the experiments" of 1646, she says, "and when he was not yet twenty-four years of age, Providence having brought about an occasion which obliged him to read books of piety, God enlightened him by this reading to such an extent, that he came to understand perfectly that the Christian religion obliges us to live only for God, and to have no other object but Him. And this truth appeared to him so evident, so necessary, and so useful, that it put an end to all his researches; so that from this time he renounced all other kinds of knowledge in order to apply himself exclusively to the "one thing" which Jesus Christ calls 'needful.'" How exactly we are to understand this statement, we shall see in the sequel.

“He had been preserved,” she goes on, “up to this time, by a special protection of God, from all the vices of youth; and, what is still more strange, in a mind of this temper and character, he was never carried away to any free thinking in regard to religion, having always limited his curiosity to natural things. He has told me often that he added this obligation to all the others for which he was indebted to my father, who, himself having a great respect for religion, had inspired his son with the same from his infancy, giving him as a maxim, that all which is the object of faith could not be the object of reason, and much less could be made subject to it. These maxims, which were often repeated to him by a father for whom he had the highest esteem, and in whom he discerned great knowledge, accompanied by a power of reasoning both keen and powerful, made so great an impression upon his mind that when he heard some discourses delivered by freethinkers, he remained entirely unmoved by them; and although he was quite young, he regarded them as men who had adopted the false principle, that the human reason is above everything, and who knew nothing of the nature of faith; and thus this mind, so great, so vast, so filled with the desire for knowledge, which sought out with so much care the cause and the reason of everything, was at the same time submissive as a child in all matters of religion; and this simplicity reigned in him throughout his whole life; so that after he had resolved to prosecute no other studies than that of religion, he never applied himself to curious questions of theology, but put forth the whole strength of his mind in attaining the knowledge and the practice of the perfection of Christian morality, to which he

consecrated all the talents that God had given to him, having done nothing else during the whole remainder of his life than meditate on the law of God day and night."

Pascal and the other members of the family now came under Jansenist influence, studying the books recommended to them by their physicians, such as the *Reformation of the Inner Man*, by Jansenius, the tract on *Frequent Communion*, by Arnauld, and the *Spiritual Letters*, and other works of St. Cyran. Of the teachings of this school we shall have much to say hereafter. At present it may suffice to remark that they were almost Calvinistic, and, as we must judge, essentially Augustinian, and therefore bitterly opposed by the Semi-Pelagianism which was the prevailing form of doctrine in the Gallican Church of the period. One can easily understand how a character like that of Pascal, earnest, intense, sad, should be attracted by such teaching. His was a nature which found it difficult to do things by halves, to whom the attempt to serve God and Mammon at once was an impossibility; and thus he formed the purpose of henceforth living for God alone, and of making His will the supreme law of his life. In particular, he resolved, as his sister has told us, to put an end to those curious inquiries to which he had hitherto devoted himself, and undertook the serious study no longer of science, but of religion.

The whole of the Pascal family came under the Jansenist influence; but Blaise, who had now undergone what is known as his "first conversion," was specially concerned about the conversion of his younger sister Jacqueline, who was now twenty years of age, and was sought in marriage by a counsellor in the parlia- | ✓

ment of Rouen. Her brother pointed out to her that such a life as then opened before her would be a robbing of God of a part of that which belonged to Him; and by degrees he brought her to the same opinion. Separating herself from all earthly interests, she gave herself up to the service of God alone, exhibiting to her brother much gratitude for his guidance, and henceforth regarding herself as his daughter.

This was followed by the conversion of their father, who then entered upon the same manner of life, and persevered in it until the time of his death in September 1651. Finally, in this same year, 1646, M. and Madame Périer, having come to Rouen, and finding the other members of the family thus wholly consecrated to the service of God, resolved to join them; and they, too, were in like manner converted, Madame Périer being twenty-six years of age.

An incident occurred about this time with respect to which widely different opinions have been entertained. It was an illustration of the zeal of a new convert in behalf of the purity of the faith, and it may be well to tell the story in the words of Madame Périer. Although, she says, her brother had not made a special study of theology, "he was not ignorant of the decisions of the Church against the heresies which have been invented by human subtlety, and his liveliest opposition was directed against these tendencies; and God gave him, at this time, an opportunity of showing the zeal which he had for religion.

"He was then at Rouen, where my father was employed in the service of the king; and there was there also, at the same time, a man<sup>1</sup> who taught a new

<sup>1</sup> His name was Jacques Forton, called Brother St. Ange.




philosophy which attracted all the curious. My brother having been pressed to be present by two young men who were friends of his, went with them ; but they were much surprised, in the interview which they had with this man, to find that, in setting forth to them the principles of his philosophy, he drew from them consequences, on points of faith, which were contrary to the decisions of the Church. He professed to prove by his arguments that the body of Jesus Christ was not formed of the blood of the Holy Virgin, but of another matter created on purpose, and several other similar things. They opposed these opinions, but he remained firm in his conviction. Having then considered with themselves the danger of allowing the liberty of instructing youth to a man who had such erroneous sentiments, they resolved first to warn him, and then to denounce him, if he resisted the advice which they gave him. So it turned out, for he despised their advice, in consequence of which they thought it their duty to denounce him to M. du Bellay, who then discharged episcopal functions in the diocese of Rouen by commission from the archbishop.<sup>1</sup> M. du Bellay sent for the man, and, having interrogated him, was deceived by an equivocal confession of faith which he wrote to him and signed with his hand, the bishop taking little account of a warning given by three young men.

“As soon, however, as they saw this confession of faith, they recognised its defects, so that they felt

<sup>1</sup> “The Archbishop of Rouen mentioned here was François de Harlay, second of that name, uncle of the celebrated Archbishop of Paris. M. du Bellay is M. de Belley, *i.e.* M. the bishop of Belley. Hew as the celebrated Camus, the disciple and friend of St. François de Sales. He had only the title of bishop, having resigned his bishopric in 1629. He received in exchange the abbey of Aulnay.”—Havet.

constrained to have recourse to the Archbishop of Rouen, at Gaillon, who, after having examined the whole affair, found it so important that he wrote a patent to his council, and gave an express order to M. du Bellay to require the man to retract on all the points in regard to which he was accused, and to receive nothing from him except by communication from those who had denounced him. The thing was carried through in this manner. Forton appeared before the council of the archbishop and renounced all his opinions; and it may be said that this was done sincerely, for he never showed any anger against those who had taken part in the affair, which leads to the belief that he was himself deceived by false conclusions which he drew from his false principles. It was quite certain that there was no intention on the part of the complainants to injure him, but only to undeceive him, and to prevent him from leading astray young persons who were incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood in questions of such subtlety. Thus the affair terminated pleasantly."



Various harsh criticisms have been directed against the conduct of Pascal on this occasion; but perhaps it has been too easily forgotten that religious toleration was not a generally accepted doctrine in the time of Pascal. Our own English Puritans were scandalised by the restriction placed upon the "truths" which they held; but they were not quite clear on the point that men should be permitted to propagate "error." There can, at least, be no question as to the consistency of Pascal's conduct in this matter.

The faith and patience of Pascal were sorely tried about this time by the loss of his health, which was

never vigorous; and his sister speaks with great admiration of his endurance of his sufferings. He was afflicted, she says, "with continual maladies which went on increasing. But as now he knew no other science than that of perfection, he found a great difference between this and those which had previously occupied his mind; for instead of his indispositions retarding his progress, those very indispositions tended to increase his perfection through the admirable patience with which he endured them." And then she proceeds to give one example in illustration.

"Among other indispositions," she says, "he suffered from being unable to swallow any liquid which was not warm; and even so only drop by drop. But as, besides this, he had an intolerable pain in the head, and an excessive internal heat, and many other troubles, the physicians ordered him to purge himself once every two days for three months; so that it was necessary to take all these medicines, and besides to have them warmed and to swallow them drop by drop, which was a genuine punishment, and most distressing to all who were near him, without any complaint coming from him."

It was probably about this time that he wrote his "Prayer to ask of God the right use of sickness," of which we may here present the leading thoughts. Granting, he says, that sickness is an evil, and sometimes incurable, the problem is to render it endurable, and even, if possible, to turn it to good by the use that we make of it. Of this problem the Christian doctrine furnishes the solution.

In the first place, it explains the existence of the malady. It teaches that man has sinned, and that



now, in his natural estate, he is under the sway of his fault. Being detached from God so as to turn himself towards perishable things, he is henceforth attached to these objects. Now, God is at once justice and mercy. Just, He imposes upon man suffering as expiation; merciful, He offers it to him as a means of detaching himself from earthly things and of directing himself towards his true end.

But how should suffering have this double effect? Will it suffice that I should undergo it with resignation in the manner of the heathen? If in my manner of using it there is nothing but what I can give myself by myself, my suffering is worth no more than I am, and cannot save me. Shall I ask, then, of God to set me free from sickness and grief? That would be to claim, from the time of the trial, the recompense of the elect and the saints. It is necessary that I should suffer, and that my suffering should be the channel through which grace should enter into me to change me.

Now, since the work of Jesus Christ, who has suffered all the pains which we have merited, suffering is a feature of resemblance, a feature of union between man and God. Moreover, it is the only one in the present life. Thanks, then, to suffering, God may visit the human soul. It suffices that, in His love, He unite the suffering of the sinner with that of the Redeemer. Assumed by Jesus Christ, the soul will acquire this purifying and renovating virtue which the divine action alone can confer upon it.

Thus, the Christian doctrine, with the explanation of evil, brings the remedy of it. It not only renders the malady acceptable; it makes it the chief instrument in our conversion and our sanctification.

In the autumn of 1647 Pascal, finding himself a little better, resolved to come to Paris, where we find him settled with his younger sister in the month of September. It was at this time that he had his two interviews with Descartes, who gave him good advice with respect to the care of his health, which apparently was not followed.

Pascal's father returned to Paris in the month of May 1648; but before that time his son and daughter had come under the influence of M. Singlin, an earnest and powerful preacher who was confessor to the nuns and Solitaries of Port Royal of Paris. It was not long before Jacqueline conceived the desire to enter the monastery, and in this she was sustained by her brother. She was welcomed by the abbess, the Mère Angélique, and by her sister the Mère Agnès; and placed herself under the direction of M. Singlin. By the time of her father's arrival in Paris her resolution was taken, and her brother undertook to open the matter to her father. He, indeed, rejoiced to see his daughter's devotion, but shrank from the sacrifice of giving her up. He was quite willing that she should choose her own way of living under his roof, and in this respect he offered her complete liberty; but he could not at once bring himself to consent to her taking the veil.

It was about this time that Pascal felt himself drawn to the Port Royalists particularly by the study of their works and those of their opponents; and it would appear that some of the lines of thought which he afterwards pursued with such force and brilliancy, were suggested to him during his inquiries into the teaching of Port Royal. It is said, indeed, that one day, when in conversation with M. Rebours, confessor

of Port Royal, he told him that he thought it possible to demonstrate by the mere principles of common sense many of the things by which the freethinkers professed to be scandalised; and he expressed the opinion that reasoning, if well conducted, would lead to the admission of the teachings of religion, although it was the duty of the Christian to receive them without the aid of reasoning.

It is said that M. Rebours was alarmed at this; and remembering Pascal's studies in geometry, he remarked that it was to be feared that such an opinion proceeded from a principle of vanity and from confidence in his powers of reasoning. On this Pascal declared that, in examining himself, he found nothing of the kind which alarmed M. Rebours. That, he allowed, would be a grave error, but he adhered to his opinion.

We have referred to the remarks of Madame Périer, in which she seems to say that her brother abandoned his scientific studies after his conversion. From what has been said in the previous chapter, this is clearly a mistake. Madame Périer would seem to place all his scientific work before his conversion; but this is evidently wrong. Pascal may have conducted these inquiries in a different spirit in his later days; but there is no sufficient reason for believing that he gave them up.

In the month of May 1649 the Pascal family removed to Auvergne. Blaise had been advised by his physicians to abstain from all intellectual exertion, and to take every opportunity for relaxation and entertainment. Their father was also desirous of reviving in Jacqueline a taste for society, in the hope that she might abandon her resolution of entering the convent;

and this was the more likely, as they had many friends and relatives in that region. It would appear that the changed circumstances produced no difference in Jacqueline; but it was otherwise with Blaise, although it is said that he saw the danger of exposing himself to the temptations of the world. For now that he was cut off from his scientific researches he "set himself on the world," but without any approach to what might be called irregularity of life.

On their return to Paris in 1649, or, according to others, in 1650, Pascal seems to have contracted an intimacy with various persons of a character more secular than his own. Chief among these was the young Duke of Roannez, who was younger than Pascal, ~~being only about twenty years of age~~. In his love of science and in other respects he had a deep sympathy with Pascal, and cultivated earnestly his society. Another friend was the Chevalier de Méré, a man of ability and distinction; and a third was a M. Miton of a character akin to what we should now call a pessimist. Besides these, among his acquaintances were des Barreaux, an irreligious voluptuary whom sickness drove to religion, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon who had made Jacqueline Pascal known to Richelieu, and the Marquise de Sablé, who was the centre of a brilliant salon in Paris. A reference should perhaps be made, in this connection, to a young lady with whom Pascal is said to have been very intimate, "who was the Sappho of the country," and greatly admired. According to some, this incident occurred during his residence in Auvergne in 1649; according to others at a later period, after his father's death. It seems that a good deal too much has been made of this incident.



That Pascal should enjoy the society of a highly intellectual and cultivated woman is surely not wonderful; and if for a moment he entertained any warmer sentiments, this will seem unworthy of him only to those who hold the somewhat harsh theories of the Jansenists.

Whilst Pascal was forming these new relations, an event occurred which was to have a deep influence on the family. This was the death of his father on 24th September 1651. Of the impression produced upon Pascal we gain some knowledge from a letter written to M. and Madame Périer in the following month. We seek, he says, for consolation, and, if possible, for the turning of evil into good. This was a favourite thought with Pascal. But whence, he asks, can this consolation come, to be real and solid, but from the truth? (Our business then, knowing what death is, is to make a practical use of it, in our judgments and in our conduct, in conformity with this knowledge.) According to the heathen, death is a natural thing. If that were so, it would necessarily be an evil; for it would then be in reality that which it is in appearance, corruption and annihilation; and no place would be left for hope. (But, according to the truth which we are taught by the Holy Spirit, death is an expiation and a means of delivering us from concupiscence. It has this significance in Jesus Christ; and it has the same in us, if we die with Jesus Christ.)

Still there remains the instinctive dread of death, so difficult to subdue. But we shall become masters of death, if we understand its origin. According to the true Christian doctrine, our present love of life is a corruption of that inclination for eternal life which

God had planted in us. God having withdrawn Himself from our soul as a consequence of sin, the infinite void which He left there has been filled by our Self and by the things of the present life. Henceforth our love, not knowing where to lay hold, has attached itself to these objects. The dread of death which we experience comes from this irregular love, and thus it is, fundamentally, the primitive dread of the death of the soul, turned away from its true end and falsely applied to the death of the body. There can then be no question of abolishing it, that which, besides, would be impossible, but only of restoring it to its true form. In proportion as we dread spiritual death, the death of the body will inspire us with less of terror.

Do we mean, he goes on, that we shall come to regard without pain the death of one who is dear to us? We cannot, and we ought not. For the action of grace, whereby alone we detach ourselves from our natural impressions, necessarily clashes with the opposing effort of our concupiscence; and it is by the pain produced by the latter that we measure the progress of the former. > Let us then weep for our father; that is right. Let us be consoled; that is equally right; and let the consolation of grace prevail over the sentiments of nature.

"I have learnt from a holy man," says Pascal, "that one of the most solid and useful acts of charity towards the dead is to do the thing that they would ask us to do if they were still in the world, and to practise the holy counsels which they would have given us, and to put ourselves for them in the condition in which they now wish us. By such practice we do, in some sort, make them to live again in us, since it

is their counsels which are still living and acting in us."

Notwithstanding these sentiments, which undoubtedly were quite sincere, doubts have been raised as to the reality, or perhaps the depth, of Pascal's spiritual life at this time. It is, in fact, not quite easy for ourselves to assume the point of view of Pascal and his sister. With them monastic life was the "religious" life; whilst we might regard the acceptance of the ordinary Christian life in the world as, in some cases, a really higher and more devoted life than that of the cloister. However this may be, there was at this time a certain separation of Pascal and his sister. He seemed to be living more and more in the world, among worldly men, and for the world; whilst she was entirely separated, from the time of her conversion at Rouen, from her former manner of life.

Permitted by her father to order her life as she pleased, so long as she remained in his family, she adopted a rule hardly different from that of the nun, wearing a peculiar dress, keeping fasts and vigils, giving much time to spiritual reading and meditation, and employing herself in manifold acts of charity and beneficence. Her brother, on the contrary, lived less and less the life of a recluse, became intimate with free thinkers and free livers, and, even according to his own judgment, was living almost without God in the world.

It was therefore not unnatural that he should oppose his sister's entrance to the convent, and do his utmost to put off as long as possible her assumption of the veil. On her part there seems to have been no change and no hesitation. After her father's death (September 1651) she announced her determination.



Her brother implored her to postpone her "entrance into religion" at least for a year or six months. But she thought such delay useless, and prepared to separate from her friends. Her sister gives a very touching account of her last moments with them. "She rose, dressed, and went away, doing this, as everything else, with a tranquillity and equanimity inconceivable. We said no adieu for fear of breaking down. I only turned aside when I saw her ready to go. In this manner she quitted the world on the 4th of January 1652, being then twenty-six years and three months old."

After a year of novitiate, she prepared to make her profession, and informed her brother and sister of her intention of giving to Port Royal that part of the family inheritance which fell to her. This purpose did not give satisfaction to the family, who united in a protest against her alienating to strangers what they regarded as rightly belonging to themselves. But Jacqueline was a thorough Pascal, affectionate and tender as a sister, but firm as a rock in her religious principles. She thought their way of looking at the matter was too secular, and deeply resented the assumption that she was to be received into the Society without a dower. But the authorities were stern as the Pascals. The Mère Agnès treated Jacqueline's scruples almost with contempt. What did it matter to them whether she brought money with her or not? Besides, as she remarked in her lofty manner, they ought not to expect from a worldly man a movement of true charity.

Such arguments may have satisfied her reason, and at last she resolved that there should be no impediment

to her religious profession; but she was unable to conceal her sorrow and chagrin when her brother came to visit her. This, she says, was so unlike her usual manner that he perceived something to be wrong, and speedily guessed the cause; and was so touched by her distress that "he resolved to put the whole affair in order," offering himself to convey a donation to Port Royal. And then there arose difficulties on the part of the Mothers. They could not accept gifts offered unwillingly. One ought to give, they said, by the Spirit of God; if not, they would prefer to have nothing. "We have learnt," said the Mère Angélique, "from M. de St. Cyran to receive nothing for the House of God which does not come from God. <All that is done from any other motive than charity is not a fruit of the Spirit of God> and consequently we ought not to receive it."

The matter was, however, settled satisfactorily by an assurance on the part of Pascal that he gave in the spirit in which they wished to receive, regretting that he could not give more. The profession took place 5th June 1653; and Pascal, now more left to himself, seems to have continued the manner of life into which he had fallen, partly from his inability to carry on his studies. There is no hint of any irregularity in his life, but his associations and his employments seem to have been of a secular character. It is even said that he united mathematical speculations with play. As these statements rest principally upon the testimony of Jacqueline, we must not, in estimating their value, forget the point of view from which her judgments are formed. It is tolerably clear that Pascal had not kept up the ardour of his "first conversion," and that he

had not attained to the higher level of his later spiritual experience. It is quite possible, however, that his immediate friends and relatives may have judged too unfavourably of his actual religious condition. The worst probably that could be said of him was that his associates were not of a high quality. At the same time there is evidence that Pascal saw the true character of some of these men, and perhaps learnt something from them which he afterwards turned to good account, whilst he never really became identified with them. As has been well said, "if his feet touched for a moment the dirt of this dissolute society, his divine wings remained unsoiled."

One instance of his intercourse with men of the world may be referred to. In the year 1652 he made a journey in Poitou along with the Duc de Roannez and M. Méré, who thought of him as a mere mathematician who had little acquaintance with the ways of the world and the tastes of men of rank. These men were much amused at the manner in which Pascal introduced arguments from geometry into their ordinary conversation; and it is said that by degrees Pascal came to see that such conversation was unsuited to his companions.

It would, however, appear that Pascal stimulated thought on the part of some of these men. For example, M. Méré, writing to Pascal, reminded him that his mathematical demonstrations, in which he had so much confidence, are merely ideal, applicable to what he calls fictions, and quite unable to make us understand real things; that, when a man has a lively mind and keen eyes, he remarks at once in objects a quantity of things that a geometrician will never see;

that there are thus two methods, demonstrations and natural sentiment, the latter very superior to the former; and that there are two worlds, the material, which is prescribed to the senses and to calculation, and another invisible, and, in truth, infinite, in which is found the ideal and the true originals of all that we seek to know. One can trace the effect of remarks like these in the subsequent meditations of Pascal.

Under these various influences Pascal entered upon studies of a less abstract character, his favourite authors being Epictetus and Montaigne, whilst the writings of Descartes assumed for him a new significance, and led him to the contemplation of the greatness of human thought and of the spirit of man. It must have been about this time that he composed his striking Discourse on the Passions<sup>1</sup> of Love, which remained unknown until it was discovered by Victor Cousin the philosopher.

There is no doubt that this fragment is from the hand of Pascal, external and internal evidence being alike conclusive on the subject. The very beginning has the note of the great writer: "Man is born to think; he is never for a moment without doing so. But mere thoughts, which would render him happy if he could always sustain them, fatigue and depress him. To such a life he could not accommodate himself, he has need of movement and action; that is to say, he needs to be agitated by the passions of which he feels deep and living sources in his heart. The passions which are most proper to man, and which contain many others, are love and ambition; they have but

<sup>1</sup> "The passions, and not the passion. The passions, that is, the accidents, the symptoms, τὰ πάθη. It is a kind of moral pathology of love."—Havet.



little connection, yet they are frequently united; but they mutually weaken, not to say ruin, each other.

"However spacious the mind may be, it is capable of only one great passion; and so, when love and ambition meet, they are only half as great as they would be if only one were there. Age determines neither the beginning nor the end of these two passions; they are born with our earliest years, and they often subsist to the grave. . . .

"How happy is a life when it begins with love and ends with ambition. If I had to choose my life, I should take that. . . . We are born with a character of love in our hearts, which develops itself in proportion as the mind perfects itself, and which carries us on to love that which seems to us beautiful without anyone having told us what it is. Who doubts after that if we are in the world for any other reason than to love? . . . A man does not like to remain by himself. Yet he loves. He must therefore seek elsewhere for an object of love. He can find it only in beauty; but as he is himself the most beautiful creature that God has ever formed, he must find in himself the pattern of that beauty which he seeks without him. . . . For this reason the beauty which can satisfy a man consists not only in correspondence, but also in resemblance; it is restrained and confirmed in the difference of sex. . . .

"Beauty is shared in a thousand different ways. The most suitable embodiment of beauty is a woman. When she has intelligence, she imparts to it marvellous life and elevation. If a woman wishes to please, and possesses the advantages of beauty, or, at least, a part of them, she will succeed. . . .

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## PASCAL

"Love is of no age; it is always being born. The poets have told us so. That is why they represent love as a child. . . . Man alone is something imperfect. In order to be happy he must find another. This union he usually seeks in equality of condition, because in this he finds greater liberty and facility for the manifestations of affection. Yet sometimes one rises above himself and love burns high, although he does not dare to make it known to her who has caused it. When one loves a lady who is not of one's own rank, ambition may accompany the beginning of love; but in a short time love becomes the master. He is a tyrant who allows of no rival. He wills to be alone; and all other passions must yield to him and obey him. . . .

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"The pleasure of loving without daring to tell it, has its pains, but it has also its sweetnesses. With what transport do we shape all our actions in order to please one for whom we have a boundless esteem! . . . (The first effect of love is to inspire a great respect. We venerate that which we love, and that is quite right. Nothing in the world can be thought so great. . . . In love, silence is more powerful than language. It is good to be silent. In this there is an eloquence which penetrates more deeply than language. . . . (The attachment to that which we love, gives birth to qualities which we did not previously possess. One becomes magnificent without having been so before. Even a miser who loves becomes liberal, and he does not remember having ever been of a different disposition. We understand the reason of this when we consider that there are passions which shut up the soul and render it torpid, while there are others that enlarge it and make it expand. . . .



“At a distance from that which we love we form resolutions to do or to say many things; but when we come near, we become irresolute. How is this? The reason is simple. <At a distance the reason is not so much disturbed, but it is strangely so in the presence of the object of our affection.> Now, for resolution we need firmness, and this is ruined by any disturbance.”

This fragment, obviously incomplete in parts, undoubtedly belongs to the year 1652 or 1653, when Pascal was twenty-nine or thirty years of age. Certain inferences have been drawn from the contents of this “discourse.” It is clear, we are told by some, that a lady of high rank had touched the heart of Pascal; and this does not appear improbable. Assuredly there are sentences here which seem to betray more than a merely speculative acquaintance with the passion of which he speaks; and there are two or three sentences which favour the theory to which we have just referred. Some have gone so far as to identify the object of Pascal’s affection with the sister of his friend, the Duc de Roannez, then a girl of scarcely twenty years of age, whilst others have regarded such a notion as most improbable. The subject has been warmly discussed, as though the character of Pascal were involved in the conclusion. It is not possible, in the present state of our information, to decide either way, and it is of no great importance to do so.

We have already seen that the period following upon the time just described was that of his principal discoveries in mathematics. But it is also clear that his spiritual condition was not satisfactory to his sister, nor even to himself; and he began to ask whether he might not obtain a larger degree of satisfaction from

higher things. The longer he thought on the things of the world, the less satisfaction he found in them. Moreover, he saw in his sister's life at Port Royal an example of steadfast faith and constancy of purpose which contrasted strongly with his own unsettled and unsatisfactory state of mind. In the words of Madame Périer, "God was calling him to a great perfection," and "He made use of my sister for this purpose as He had formerly made use of my brother when He chose to withdraw my sister from the engagements which she had formed in the world. She was then in religion [a nun], and she led a life so holy that she edified the whole house; and being in this state, she was pained to see that he to whom, under God, she was indebted for the graces which she enjoyed, was not himself in possession of these graces; and as my brother often saw her, she often spoke to him on the subject; and finally did so with so much power and sweetness that she persuaded him, as he had first persuaded her, absolutely to leave the world; so that he resolved entirely to abandon all secular intercourse and to cut off all the superfluities of life which might interfere with the work of his salvation, since he believed that salvation was superior to all other things. He was then thirty years of age, and he was always in poor health; and it was from this time that he embraced the manner of life in which he persisted until his death." It is unnecessary here to draw attention to the monastic point of view of the writer, as it meets us continually in Pascal's history.

We learn from a letter of Jacqueline Pascal to her sister, written 25th January 1655, that her brother had paid her a visit in the previous month of September,

and had made known to her the state of his mind; confessing that in the midst of his numerous occupations and among all the things that might contribute to make him love the world, he felt such an aversion for all those objects to which his heart was attached, and experienced such torments of conscience, that he had the strongest desire to leave it all. And assuredly, he said, he had such a longing for this that he would long ago have carried this resolution into effect if God had granted him the same grace as hitherto, and given him the same movements towards Himself. But God seemed to have abandoned him to his weakness.

Such a confession filled his sister with surprise and delight, which she communicated to her sister Mme. Périer, entreating her to help, by her prayers, that God might continue the work which He had manifestly begun. At the same time she commended him to the sympathy and prayers of Port Royal. The work was not brought to completion all at once. Pascal was convinced of the necessity of a change which should lead to undoubting faith. But his heart for a time refused to obey his reason. He strove passionately to create a new habit of mind, a new direction of will, not fully sensible of his dependence upon divine grace for the power that would change the heart. By degrees he learnt that reason and practice by themselves were inadequate. By degrees he learnt not only to despise the world, but to love God; but the victory for a time was incomplete.

Various causes are assigned as having assisted to bring about a decision. A sermon by M. Singlin in November 1654 is said to have produced a great effect upon him. The preacher insisted upon the necessity

of entire surrender to God, and pointed out that the power to effect such a change must come from God. Shortly after this Pascal is said to have fallen into a kind of trance, in which he had a very vivid impression of the presence of God, and seemed to be illuminated by a supernatural fire.

Another incident is on record as having formed an important turning-point in his spiritual history—an accident by which his life was gravely endangered. It is assigned to the month of October 1654, shortly after his interview with his sister Jacqueline. One day, it is said, he was driving to the bridge of Neuilly in a carriage and four, when the two leading horses became restive, and turning off the road sprang into the Seine. Happily the traces broke, so that the carriage was not dragged after them. In his weak state of health Pascal was so powerfully affected by the accident that he fainted away, and was with difficulty restored, whilst the sense of danger remained with him for long afterwards.

There is no necessary contradiction between these various accounts. Pascal's visit to his sister in September may certainly be reckoned as a turning-point in his history; and as it was at that time that he revealed to her his state of mind, it was quite natural that she should dwell upon it and say nothing of those other incidents of the sermon by M. Singlin, and the accident to the carriage; but we may well believe that these things, happening at the time when Pascal was under deep religious impressions, contributed to his final decision.

When at last he took the decisive step,—known as his second or final conversion,—by his sister's advice he

placed himself under the direction of M. de Saci of Port Royal. His sister, when he hesitated on this point, said: "I saw clearly that this was only a remnant of independence hidden in the depth of his heart, which armed itself with every weapon to ward off a submission which yet in his state of feeling must be perfect."

Pascal first left Paris because the Duc de Roannez was about to return there, and he did not wish to fall again under his influence. Unable to accommodate himself in a country house, he got a chamber or cell among the Solitaries of Port Royal which met all his needs. Speaking of his life there in a letter to Madame Périer, Jacqueline says: "He joins in every office of the Church from Prime to Compline without experiencing the least inconvenience in rising at five o'clock in the morning; and, as if it was the will of God that he should join fasting to watching, in defiance of all the medical prescriptions which had forbidden him both, he found that supper disagreed with him, and was about to give it up."

In this connection it may be of interest to give a paper drawn up by Pascal, probably a memorial of his conversion, and afterwards used for purposes of self-examination and meditation.



Year of Grace 1654.

Monday, November 23, Day of St. Clement, Pope and Martyr,  
and of others in the martyrology.

Eve of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others.

From about half-past ten o'clock in the evening, to about  
half-past twelve.



Fire.

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,  
not of Philosophers and Scholars.

Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joy. Peace.

God of Jesus Christ,

My God and your God.

Thy God will be my God.

Forgetfulness of the world and of all save God.

He is found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Greatness of the human soul.

Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee ;  
but I have known Thee.

Joy, Joy, Joy, tears of joy.

I separated myself from Him.

They have forsaken Me the fountain of living water,

My God, wilt Thou forsake me ?

May I not be separated from Him eternally.

This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only  
true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

I separated myself from Him ; I fled from Him, renounced,  
crucified.

He is retained only by the ways taught in the Gospel,

Renunciation complete and sweet, etc.



## CHAPTER IV

### PORT ROYAL

THE abbey of Port Royal was a convent for women of the Cistercian Order, situated near Chevreuse, about eight miles south-west from Versailles and eighteen miles from Paris. It occupied a marshy site in the valley of the Yvette, near Marly. It was one of the most ancient houses of the Order, having been founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Its name was derived from that of the district, "Porrois," which is said to be a corruption of Porra or Borra, meaning a marshy and woody hollow. According to a late tradition, it has its name from being founded by Philip Augustus; it was, in fact, founded in 1204 by Mathilde de Garlande, wife of Matthieu de Montmorenci-Marli, during his absence on the fourth crusade. The church and monastery were the work of the same architect who built Notre Dame of Amiens. Among other privileges, this monastery had the right to afford a retreat to persons who wished to retire from the world without binding themselves by vows.

It was with Port Royal as with many of the religious houses of the Middle Ages. Noted at first for the strictness of its rule and the devotion of its inmates, it fell into disorder, and became distinguished for its

irregularities. At the beginning of the seventeenth century it numbered twelve nuns "masked and gloved"—women of the world, whilst the abbess was a little girl eleven years old. This girl was Jacqueline Marie Arnauld, afterwards known as La Mère Angélique, who had been appointed to the office at the age of eight. She belonged to a noble family of Provence, already mentioned, who had settled in Auvergne; and her grandfather, Antoine Arnauld, Seigneur de la Mothe, generally known as M. de la Mothe, was procureur-général to Catherine de Medicis. He was a Huguenot, and nearly perished in the massacre of St. Bartholomew. His second son was a man even more distinguished than his father for ability and eloquence. If the Huguenot principles of the father were a kind of prediction of the tendencies of his descendants, no less did the son come into collision with the Order of which the family were to be the steadfast opponents. He was counsel for the University of Paris when it was attempted to expel the Jesuits from France under suspicion of having plotted against the life of Henry iv. This has been called the "original sin" of the Arnaulds, and the Jesuits never forgot it.

Antoine Arnauld married the daughter of Marion the avocat-général, and had twenty children; for two of whom, through the influence of his father-in-law, he found provision in the monastic establishments of the Church. Angélique, the second child, became a nun in Port Royal when only eight years of age, and Agnès in the abbey of St. Cyr, about six miles distant from Port Royal, when only six years of age. The youngest of the children was Antoine, afterwards known as the great Arnauld. The eldest was known as M. d'Andilly.

The two sisters, while very different, were both women of mark. The Mère Agnès shrank from exercising her powers as abbess, more ready to feel her responsibility than to assert her authority. Angélique, on the contrary, who had been installed as abbess at the age of eleven, was ever ready to exercise the powers committed to her as head of her community. Yet neither of them had any very deep sense of the work which they had undertaken.

It was in 1608, when Angélique was about sixteen years of age, that she heard a sermon from a Capuchin friar, strangely, a man of loose character, who happened to be in the neighbourhood, and preached on the happiness of the religious life and the sanctity of the rule of St. Benedict. By this instrumentality it pleased God to touch her heart, and she resolved to reform her abbey. She imposed upon herself and led her nuns to accept the rule of the community of goods, fasting, abstinence, silence, vigils, mortification, in short all the austerities of the rule of St. Benedict. But the principal point in her reform was the absolute exclusion of the world from her monastery.

Acting on this principle, she gave notice that the nuns could, in future, see their relatives only in the parlour, and that no visitor could be allowed to enter the interior of the monastery. A somewhat painful application of the rule occurred before long. On 23rd September 1609 her father and mother presented themselves at the gate with the view of paying a visit to their daughter. The Mère Angélique opened the wicket, and asked her parents to come into the parlour, so that she might, across the grating, explain to them the nature of her resolutions. Then having perceived,

behind the grating, the changed and sorrowful features of her father, she had to listen to a touching remonstrance from his lips, which deprived her of all power of reply, and so profoundly affected her that she fell fainting at his feet. This put an end to the controversy. From that day, called in the annals of Port Royal "the Day of the Wicket" (*la journée du guichet*), the members of her family were her most constant supporters.

In a short time the character of the monastery was entirely changed. Its reputation extended far and wide. When St. François de Sales, the gentle and devout bishop of Geneva, came to visit the Mère Angélique, he was so charmed with the state of the monastery that he spoke of it henceforth as his "dear delight"; and at the request of the abbess he gave those spiritual directions which have guided so many souls since that time.

It was not long before the abbey of Port Royal became too small for its inmates. It had been built for twelve, and the numbers grew to no fewer than eighty. The situation, moreover, being in a swamp and undrained, became most unhealthy. A number of the members were always ill; fevers were constant, and deaths frequent. Fifteen died in two years. Help came from Madame Arnauld, the mother of the Mère Angélique, who had been left a widow in 1619, and in good circumstances. To provide for the community she purchased in 1625 a large house with extensive grounds, called the Hôtel Clagny, in the Faubourg St. Jacques, in Paris. This became known as Port Royal de Paris, whilst the old monastery was called Port Royal des Champs; and both were regarded as parts of one institution. The Mère Angélique now obtained

a royal charter, in accordance with which the abbess, instead of being appointed for life by the king, was to be elected every three years by the nuns. It should here be mentioned that the old monastery was occupied by a number of men who, under the name of Solitaries, became no less famous than the nuns of Port Royal.

One of the most remarkable and influential of those connected with Port Royal was Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, abbot of St. Cyran, commonly known as M. de St. Cyran, who became director of the nuns of Port Royal about ten years after their removal to Paris; and his influence on the destinies of Port Royal was so great that something may here be said of him.

Jean Baptiste du Vergier de Hauranne, latterly known as M. de St. Cyran, was born at Bayonne in 1581, four years before Jansenius. He was educated at Paris and Louvain, and at the latter university he had Jansenius for his fellow-student. Drawn together by a similarity of tastes and pursuits, and being nearly of the same age, they contracted a friendship which was consolidated by a common devotion to the service of God.

Jansenius, by his ardour in his studies, had injured his health; and on leaving college he was recommended to try the air of France. His friend invited him to join him at Bayonne, where they returned to their joint studies of theology, of the Scriptures, of the Fathers, and especially of St. Augustine. This Father, they would have confessed, was more to them than all the Fathers; their adversaries maintained that he was more to them than the Catholic Church; and even that their own interpretation of St. Augustine was more.



When Jansenius was made bishop of Ypres, they continued their correspondence. They were both men of great learning; but their learning was subordinated to their study of the Scriptures. Both obtained the greatest influence from the sanctity of their lives, and in Paris St. Cyran was sought out alike by the religious and by men of the world—among others by the great Cardinal Richelieu. Eight times he was offered a bishopric; but he would accept no higher preferment than that of abbot of St. Cyran.

During his residence in Paris he had formed a close acquaintance with M. Arnauld d'Andilly, the eldest brother of the Mère Angélique, who introduced him to his sister. Soon afterwards he became director of Port Royal, and for a time all went well. But the Jesuits, who had long regarded Jansenius as their foe, on his death, transferred their enmity to St. Cyran. Among other offences, it was reported that he had taught that a mere abstinence from outward sin from a fear of punishment was no certain proof of a real conversion. In such a case, he said, there must be a sorrow for sin arising from a love of God, and from the sense of having offended Him. In theological language St. Cyran had declared for the necessity of contrition and not merely attrition.

Here he touched more than the Jesuits. Richelieu, when bishop of Luçon, had drawn up a catechism for the use of his diocese in which he maintained the doctrine which St. Cyran now assailed. The Cardinal was as jealous of his theology as of his political power, and was incensed at St. Cyran's teaching the necessity of contrition as well as attrition. Moreover, Richelieu had hoped to gain the support of the saintly abbot of



St. Cyran in another matter of doubtful propriety; but St. Cyran declined to mix in the matter. About this time the Jansenist controversy arose, and Richelieu took the opportunity of expelling St. Cyran's friends from Port Royal, and shutting up their director in the prison of Vincennes, 14th May 1638.

It was a hard discipline to which St. Cyran had to submit. For a time he was deprived of his books, of papers, pens, and ink, cut off from all intercourse with his friends, and even insufficiently provided with food. He bore his imprisonment with the greatest patience and resignation. "I complain of nothing," he said. "I am willing to remain here a hundred years, and die here, if God wills." After a time his books were restored, and some of his most valuable works were written in his prison. Soon his influence was felt within the walls of Vincennes, whilst it was diffused among his disciples without. His imprisonment lasted five years, until the death of Richelieu, December 1642, soon after which event he was released, February 1643, although he never recovered his health; and he survived his relief from captivity only a few months.

So much of St. Cyran personally. We now return to the abbey of Port Royal.

It was the great aim of Jansenius to restore the teaching of Augustine to a place of authority in the Church, in opposition to what he regarded as the Semi-Pelagianism of the Jesuits. St. Cyran had just parted from Jansenius, with whose principles he was in full accord, and M. d'Andilly had lost a spiritual guide in the pious bishop of Geneva; so that a firm friendship sprang up between them.

For some time the Mère Angélique and M. de St.

Cyran were acquainted without attaining to any degree of intimacy. But about ten years after the removal of the nuns to Paris, M. de St. Cyran was appointed rector of an institution in which the Mère Angélique was deeply interested. She is said to have recognised in him a spirit akin to that of St. François de Sales, at the same time that she became impressed with a sense of his great ability. We might say that we have here the introduction of the Jansenist influence which in the future was to be dominant in Port Royal. Deeply conscious of the evils by which the Church was afflicted, St. Cyran's hope for its purification and recovery lay in a purity of teaching and a holiness of life; and he saw in Port Royal a centre from which such a work could be carried on. St. Cyran was succeeded, in 1643, by M. Singlin, who carried on the work for some time and then handed it over to M. de Saci, a nephew of the Mère Angélique.

Another important work of St. Cyran was the establishment of a male community in connection with Port Royal. It began with some members of the Arnauld family who desired to retire from the world and give themselves up to the service of God. Under the influence of St. Cyran, Antoine le Maître, a nephew of the Mère Angélique, in 1637 resolved to give up his profession as an advocate and retire from the world. He was joined by a number of young men; first by his younger brothers, Simon de Sericourt and Louis Isaac, subsequently known under the name of de Saci. They afterwards added to their number Arnauld d'Andilly, Antoine Arnauld (the great Arnauld), and Nicole, author of the *Essays on Morality*. They lived together at first in Paris; but, their house proving too

small, they removed in 1638 to Port Royal des Champs, which had been vacated by the nuns.

If the state of the monastery had been bad before the removal of the nuns, it was much worse now. The marshes were poisonous and infested with reptiles, and part of the buildings had fallen down. But the members of the new society speedily wrought a change in the aspect of things. Order and health soon prevailed where before was disorder and disease. The society had no special rules or vows. Its members had come together to separate themselves from the world, to serve God, and to help their fellow-men. They had no peculiar dress, except that their garments were plain, coarse, and clean. Day and night they met for common prayer in the church.

St. Cyran, although for several years imprisoned in Vincennes, yet continued his guidance of the convent by correspondence with M. Singlin, although the humility and diffidence of the latter made him glad to transmit his office to M. de Saci. The administration of St. Cyran was so careful that everyone was said to be appointed to the office for which he was best qualified; and no one refused the work to which he was called, whether that work was intellectual or physical.

Under this management the reputation of Port Royal spread abroad in all directions, and men of the highest rank requested the "Solitaries" to undertake the education of their children. Neighbouring proprietors made over to them houses and lands to be turned into schoolrooms and playgrounds; and schools under their control were set up in various parts of the country. From these schools came forth men of the highest

eminence in literature. Tillemont was a pupil at the school of Chénét, and is said to have outlined his great histories there when only nineteen years of age. So Racine meditated some of his tragedies as a boy in the woods of Port Royal. Pascal, Arnauld, Nicole, de Saci are names that would shed lustre upon any society, and much of their work was conceived or composed at Port Royal.

One great difference between the schools of Port Royal and those of their rivals, the Jesuits, was found in the greater simplicity and reasonableness of their methods. Everything like ostentation or artifice was discouraged. Routine and habit were supplanted by principles which contained within them reasons for judgment and for conduct, so that the scholars were encouraged to think and to judge for themselves.

We can now understand the nature of the community into which Pascal found admission in January 1655. It was a lay fraternity alongside of a monastery, a place of retreat where men might occupy their time in prayer, in meditation, in the cultivation of the fields, in the instruction of the young, and in the healing of the sick. By this time, however, they had left the buildings which they had occupied in the absence of the nuns. When these returned to Port Royal des Champs in 1648, the Solitaries gave up the renovated buildings to their original owners, and retired to a farm on a neighbouring hill, known as Les Granges, where they were almost as completely separated from the nuns as when they had been in Paris.

It was in Les Granges that Pascal took up his abode with the Solitaries, having resolved to cut himself off from all the attractions and indulgences of the world.



He followed all the customs of the society, however rigorous. He rose at five o'clock in the morning to take part in the services, and, in disregard of all the cautions of his physicians, practised fasts and vigils like the most healthy of the brethren. To his great delight he suffered in no wise from these exercises; and he had the greatest satisfaction in the hardness of his fare and the simplicity of his surroundings. The wooden spoon, the earthen vessel, were to him as gold and precious stones. In self-renunciation he found the secret of happiness.

No less great was the satisfaction of the Solitaries at such an accession to their ranks. It was of the goodness of God that one was added to them so famous and so profound. At the same time, Pascal regarded himself as not completely belonging to the community, and as having a right to absent himself when he thought it necessary. So he often withdrew for a time and lived in Paris, at his own house or elsewhere, under the name of M. de Mons. But although he judged it best to preserve his independence in this manner, he took the greatest interest in all their work—in their studies and in their schools, and he took a special interest in the conferences held with reference to the translation of the New Testament.

It was here that he wrote two of his short treatises, which are still preserved. The first of these is a fragment *On the Conversion of the Sinner*, published for the first time by Bossut. It is, however, assigned by him to a different time. Havet has no doubt that it followed upon his "second conversion." In this brief tract he traces the return of a soul absorbed in the

world to God. He begins: "The first thing that God inspires to the soul which He deigns truly to touch, is an extraordinary knowledge and insight by which the soul considers things and itself in a fashion quite new." And then he goes on to show how a man who has once clearly conceived that God is his end, comes from this to will that God shall be also his way and the principle of all his actions.

The other document is entitled *Conference of Pascal with M. de Saci on Epictetus and Montaigne*. It is said that the brethren of Port Royal were desirous of knowing the thoughts of Pascal on some points of philosophy, and M. de Saci one day questioned him on the subject. The report of the conference was made by M. Fontaine, but it is believed that Pascal had prepared for the conference, perhaps by making notes of what he intended to say. It would appear, then, that while the substance of the report represents the statements of Pascal, we cannot regard it as an exact report of what he said; although we may consider it as a reproduction of Pascal's thought, and largely of his words. This conference is so important not only in itself, but in reference to Pascal's subsequent controversial work, that it demands some attention from us here.

M. Fontaine begins with some preliminary remarks which fix the period of the conference. He says: "M. Pascal came at this time to stay at Port Royal des Champs. I need not stop to tell who this man was whom not only all France but all Europe has admired. His mind always lively, always active, was of an extent, of an elevation, of a certainty, and of a precision beyond what one could believe." M. de Saci,



he says, was accustomed to speak to people on subjects in which they were interested, and therefore he spoke to Pascal on the subject of philosophy. "M. Pascal said that the two books which he had most frequently read were Epictetus and Montaigne, and he pronounced a great eulogium on these two minds. M. de Saci, who had always thought he ought to pay little regard to these authors, besought M. Pascal to give a thorough explanation of his views on the subject."

Pascal declares that he sees in these two writers the chief representatives of the two essential forms of philosophy. Epictetus and Montaigne, he says, are each good on one side and bad on the other. (Epictetus has seen clearly the duty of man; he has seen that man ought to regard God as his principal object, and ought in all things freely to submit himself to Him. But he has wrongly believed that man is able of himself to fulfil this duty. X As for Montaigne, having endeavoured to find out what moral conduct reason would dictate without the light of faith, he has seen clearly that reason thus left to itself could end only in scepticism. But he is wrong in holding that man may rely upon what he can do, neglecting what he ought to do. He is wrong in approving a man's taking for his sole rule the guidance of custom and convenience, and holding that a man might go to sleep on the pillow of sloth.) Thus the one understands duty, but concludes falsely from duty to power; the other knows man's impotence, but falsely makes of it the measure of duty.

How shall we disengage the truth from these doctrines? Will it suffice to bring Epictetus and Montaigne together, so far as each is right, and thus to complete

them by each other? That cannot be. Each of the two philosophies is, from the natural point of view, an indissoluble whole. Man is one. This unity would be broken, if one made to coexist in it the duty of the Stoic and the impotence of the Sceptic. Neither Epictetus nor Montaigne could conclude otherwise than they have done. And thus the two doctrines produce a contradiction which is inevitable, since each of them is necessary and insoluble, since we are dealing with a subject which is indecomposable. It is reason itself engaging in a conflict from which it cannot come out. Neither affirmation nor negation is allowed here. Scepticism is no less excluded than dogmatism.

The solution which reason could not find, is furnished to us by faith. Both parties have failed to discover that the present condition of man differs from the state in which God created him. The Stoic, remarking some trace of his primitive greatness, pretends that his nature is sound and capable, by itself, of drawing near to God. The Sceptic, seeing only our present corruption, treats nature as necessarily frail. Now the misery is in nature and the greatness is in grace, to which it appertains to repair nature; and the coexistence of misery and greatness ceases to be contradictory from the moment that these two qualities are regarded as residing in two different subjects. How is this coexistence possible? It has its explanation in the ineffable union of weakness and power in the unique personality of the God-man. It is an image and effect of the duality and unity of Jesus Christ.

M. de Saci testified his admiration at the manner in which Pascal brought round his argument in defence of his readings, but expressed his fear that people in

general could not make so good a use of them, could not, like Pascal, get medicine out of poison, pearls from rubbish, and therefore it would be better for them to abstain from them.

Pascal replies that he finds in Epictetus an invaluable means of disturbing the repose of those who seek rest in external things, and forcing them to know that they are veritable slaves and miserably blind; that it is impossible for them to find anything else than error and the grief that they flee from, unless they give themselves without reserve to God alone. Montaigne, on the other hand, is incomparable as a means of confounding the pride of those who, without faith, pique themselves on the possession of true righteousness; and of disabusing those who are attached to their own opinions, and who imagine that they find in the sciences immovable truths; and of convincing the reason of the smallness of its light and of its errors, to such an extent that it is difficult, when one makes a good use of those principles, to be tempted to find stumbling-blocks in the mysteries; for the mind is thus so humbled that it is far from wishing to question if the Incarnation or the mystery of the Eucharist is possible, —a matter too frequently agitated by men in general.

But if Epictetus combats sloth, he leads to pride, so that he might be hurtful to those who are not persuaded of the corruption of even the most perfect righteousness which is not of faith. And Montaigne is absolutely pernicious to those who have an inclination to impiety and vice. Therefore they ought to be proportioned with much care, discretion, and regard to the condition and morals of those who are advised to read them. It seems, however, to me that in joining them

together, they would not succeed badly, since the one opposes the evil of the other; not that they are capable of producing virtue, but only of disturbing vice; the soul finding itself combated by these contrary tendencies, the one driving out pride and the other sloth; not being able to rest in either of these vices by its arguments, nor yet to avoid them both.

In short, these two writers, if they cannot produce virtue, can at least disturb vice; and, in particular, they each of them assail one of the two great forms of evil, sloth and pride, which are the obstacles to all good in human life. <Pascal could not be satisfied with gaining a knowledge of truth for himself.> He had been the means of his sister's conversion; and she, in her turn, had aided him in his final decision. So now he influenced the Duc de Roannez to abandon the worldly life, and began to meditate the great apologetic work which he never completed, but of which he has left us fragments so precious in the *Thoughts*.

We are now approaching the period of Pascal's great controversy with the Jesuits. He was an inmate of Les Granges, although not strictly a member of the Society of the Solitaries. He passed his time among them or in Paris, as it proved most convenient for him; probably at first the greater part at Port Royal under the direction of M. de Saci, and for a time, at least, in the enjoyment of tolerable health. During the later period of his controversy, which came to an end in 1657, he seems to have spent most of his time in Paris.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PROVINCIAL LETTERS

WE are now approaching the time of the great conflict in which Pascal stood forth as the champion of Port Royal and gained the undying enmity of the Jesuit Order. Before coming to the history of the controversy, a few words should be said on the nature of the dispute. That dispute is at least as old as the days of Augustine and the Pelagians, although the opponents of Pascal would deny that the Jansenists were true Augustinians, or that they were themselves Pelagians.

It is agreed on all hands that man has need of divine grace before he can turn to God or acquire holiness of character. On the other hand, it is undeniable that man must have a certain endowment of freedom before he can be regarded as responsible. The dispute between the two opposing schools has reference to the relations between divine grace and human liberty.

⟨Pelagius taught roundly that man had himself the power of repenting and believing, and made grace play a very subordinate part.⟩ This system was a practical denial of original sin and the need of redemption.

⟨St. Augustine was raised up to defend the doctrine of divine grace against the Pelagians,⟩ as he had maintained the doctrine of human liberty against the Manichæans.



The Schoolmen generally, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, were followers of Augustine; and the Reformers were mostly on the same side, with Luther and Calvin at their head. The latter went beyond Augustine in extending the operation of the divine decrees. These principles became dominant in the University of Louvain, and Baius, one of the professors, teaching a doctrine which was regarded as akin to that of Luther, was condemned by the Constitution of Urban VIII. in 1641. The particular nature of these doctrines in detail will come out in the sequel. The Dominicans, following their great St. Thomas, made themselves the defenders of the doctrines of grace, and accused the Jesuits of Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism, whilst the Jesuits accused the Dominicans of Calvinism. The Universities of Louvain and Douai condemned several propositions put forth by Lessius, an eminent Jesuit theologian. Sixtus V. censured the universities, and imposed silence on both parties.

The controversy was revived by several Spanish theologians; and Molina, a Spanish divine, professor of theology in the Portuguese University of Evora, put forth a work on the Concord of Liberty and Grace, which was immediately assailed and condemned by the Dominicans; and again the papal veto was put upon the controversy by Clement VIII., who declared that each side might hold its own opinions, and that they should not treat each other as heretics. The controversy was continued, but it did not assume considerable proportions until the publication of the great work of Jansenius, the *Augustinus*, which was not put forth until 1640, after the death of the author. This book consisted of three folio volumes—the first devoted to

an historical exposition of the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian heresies, the second to the exposition of the Augustinian doctrine respecting the State of Innocence and the Fallen State, whilst the third treats of the grace of Christ the Saviour, and of the predestination of men and angels.

\* Jansenius in his will declared his submission to the judgment of Rome, as he had also done in the preface to his book. But his opponents declared that his communications with St. Cyran were inconsistent with this submission. Jansenius had laboured for twenty years on this book. He had read the whole works of the great Latin Father ten times, and the Anti-Pelagian treatises thirty times, and he had no doubt of the fidelity of his interpretation. The appearance of the book was the signal for hostilities, one party declaring that here they had the true doctrines of St. Augustine and St. Paul, the other that they found those of Luther and Calvin.<sup>1</sup>) Pope Urban VIII. in 1642 proscribed the *Augustinus* as being published without the papal sanction, and as containing propositions which had already been condemned. Arnauld undertook the defence of Jansenius.

A further step was taken by a member of the theological faculty of Paris, Nicolas Cornet, putting forth a summary of the doctrine of the *Augustinus* in five propositions which he had submitted to the censure of the Sorbonne. The Sorbonne, however, referred

<sup>1</sup> St. Cyran was in his prison at Vincennes when it appeared. But he at once recognised the doctrines which he and Jansenius had worked out together. The *Augustinus*, he said, would last as long as the Church. After St. Paul and St. Augustine, no one had written of grace like Jansenius.

the question to the judgment of the bishops of France who were then assembled at Paris; and the bishops handed it on to Pope Innocent x., who submitted it to a congregation of cardinals and theologians; and after an examination which lasted over two years, the propositions were condemned as heretical, 31st March 1653. In the same year the condemnation pronounced by Innocent x. was adopted by the French bishops under the presidency of Cardinal Mazarin.

↓ It may be convenient in this place to give a copy of these famous five propositions. They are as follows:—1. There are some divine precepts which are impossible to just men, with the strength which they have, notwithstanding the efforts of their will; nor have they the grace which would render them possible to them. 2. In the state of fallen nature, interior grace is never resisted. 3. In order to acquire merit or demerit in the state of fallen nature, liberty of necessity is not indispensable; liberty of coercion suffices [*i.e.* not a liberty which excludes necessity, but a liberty which excludes constraint]. 4. The Semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity of an interior prevenient grace for the performance of all actions, and even for the beginning of faith; they were heretical in that they believed that the will could resist or obey. 5. It is Semi-Pelagian to say that Christ died and shed His blood for all men.

↑ The Jansenists evaded this condemnation by admitting the heretical character of the five propositions, while denying that they were contained in the work of Jansenius. Their adversaries, however, were determined to cut off this way of retreat, and in 1654 the French bishops declared that the five propositions were contained in the book of Jansenius, and that

they had been condemned in the sense of his writing. Their judgment was confirmed by the pope who succeeded Alexander VII., and he declared, 2nd September, 1656, that the condemnation of Innocent x. extended to the teaching of Jansenius and the meaning of his book.

In the meantime, however, something had happened which gave a new direction to the controversy. On 31st January 1655 the parish priest of St. Sulpice deferred the granting of absolution to M. de Liancourt for receiving into his house a heretic, who was a friend of Port Royal, and for having his grandchild educated in the schools of the abbey. On this occasion Antoine Arnauld published a tract entitled *Letter to a Person of Condition*, which was violently attacked by the Jesuits, particularly by Father Annat.<sup>1</sup> Arnauld replied to the Jesuits, 10th July 1655, in a *Second Letter to a Duke and Peer of France*, the Duc de Luynes. Arnauld fell back upon the distinction between the question of right and the question of fact, accepting the papal decision on the former point but not on the latter. He declared his readiness to subscribe the papal bull of 31st May 1653, which condemned the five propositions attributed to Jansenius. But this did not satisfy his opponents. Two points were taken. In the first place, they retorted that he had justified the *Augustinus* of Jansenius, and called in question the statement that the inculpatated propositions

<sup>1</sup> Concerning Antoine Arnauld a few words should here be said. He was the youngest of the twenty children of the great orator of whom we have already spoken, and therefore the uncle of Le Maitre and de Saci. He fell early under the influence of the Jansenists, and subsequently received priest's orders. But he would receive no emolument from the Church, and gave most of his property to the Church. He became a doctor in 1641, and, as already noted, was known as the great Arnauld.



were contained in the book. In the second place, they charged him with the first proposition, according to which the grace necessary is not always accorded to the righteous, saying that the Gospel and the Fathers showed us, in the person of St. Peter denying Christ, a righteous man to whom grace had failed. This second letter was submitted to the Sorbonne, the Faculty of Theology.

The adversaries of Arnauld, who were backed up by the Government of the day, determined to silence Arnauld, and, in order to do so, they added to the Faculty a number of Mendicant friars, all of them Molinists, in opposition to the rules of the Faculty. By this means Molinist commissaries were appointed to examine the case. On 1st December 1655 they presented their report condemning Arnauld on both points, the question of fact and the question of right. It was in vain that Arnauld protested his adhesion to the doctrine of St. Thomas with respect to sufficient grace as distinct from efficacious grace, condemning the five propositions in whatever book they might be found, and asking forgiveness of the pope and of the bishops for having written his letter. He was not even permitted to state his case in person; and on the 14th January 1656 he was condemned on the question of fact by a hundred and twenty-four voices against seventy-one, fifteen remaining neutral. The condemnation was simply a foregone conclusion.

There remained the question of right. The Thomists were disposed to hold Arnauld absolved, if he should acknowledge in the soul of the just the presence of a sufficient as distinct from an efficient grace. But the Molinists endeavoured to stop the discussion. The



Jansenists and the friends of Port Royal had little expectation of securing the acquittal of Arnauld by the Sorbonne; and they began to think of carrying the matter before another tribunal, that of the public. Arnauld was told that he must not suffer himself to be condemned like a child, without making the public acquainted with the merits of the case. He had done something in this way, but without attracting much attention to his defence, or, indeed, satisfying his friends that he could do so.

In this emergency the help of Pascal was invoked; and he, although by no means confident of the result, set himself to the task; and the first Provincial was the result. His friends were astonished and delighted, and herein only anticipated the judgment of the great public to whom the appeal was made. On the 23rd January 1656 this first letter was given to the world; the eighteenth and last, it may here be mentioned, appeared on 24th March 1657.

The question which naturally presents itself to us who read these letters nearly two centuries and a half after the date of their publication, has chiefly reference to their permanent interest and importance. And this question will be answered differently according to the point of view from which we survey the controversy, and perhaps also according to the subjects and aspects of the conflict to which we may direct our attention. According to some, the controversy in which Pascal was engaged was a mere dispute among theologians, which no longer interests the world, or even students of theology themselves. But even if men no longer controvert each other's views on predestination with the ardour of earlier times, it would be a rash assertion

to say that the doctrines of divine grace can ever cease to be a matter of deepest interest to Christian thinkers; and there are other questions of eternal import handled in these letters; and there are principles involved which can never be ignored or put out of sight so long as men speak and think in a rational manner.

“People,” says Alexander Vinet,<sup>1</sup> “speak of the questions agitated in the Provincials as of questions which are extinct; but they are not so, and nothing can extinguish them. We may even say, there is, in the debate into which Pascal cast the weight of his genius and of his conviction, nothing which is not of interest for all ages. The conflict of Doctor Arnauld with the Sorbonne, the play of passions and of intrigue in the bosom of this corporation of theologians, the popular passion which we hear breaking forth in hollow resonance around the sacred enclosure, this minority condemned before being heard, which appeals earnestly and suddenly from the Areopagus of the doctors to the public erected into a court of appeal for the second time since its convocation by the Reformers of the sixteenth century; all this can appear a matter of indifference only to those for whom the Fronde, on the other hand, is a serious event worthy of the most careful study. Let us venture to say it: Nothing greater than this has occurred in the course of the seventeenth century. The preoccupations of the public during this period were, at least, as important as ours. And if we possessed only the three first Provincials, I should not speak otherwise. But how much the field of the debate was enlarged by the illustrious pamphleteer! . . .

“M. Villemain has not said everything, but he has

<sup>1</sup> *Études sur Blaise Pascal*, 3<sup>me</sup> ed. p. 267.

said the truth when he has affirmed that the Solitaries of Port Royal, in seeming to discuss only scholastic subtleties, represented liberty of conscience, the spirit of inquiry, the love of justice and of truth. From the point of view of our age, too exclusively preoccupied with civil liberty, the struggle of Port Royal and of its immortal secretary against an Order and against a party which aspired to govern the State, and which knew how to succeed in the attempt, is even to-day worthy of a lively interest. The tradition of liberty, let us be well assured, is perpetual as that of truth. There is no age in which liberty, which is one of the truths of the social order, has not had its representatives and its witnesses. What matters the form and the applications. The serious thinkers of the seventeenth century did not pursue the same liberty as we do, or, rather, they did not, like us, seek the guarantees of liberty; but, like us, they sought for liberty. . . .

“The seventeenth century at least trained itself and prepared itself for liberty by religion and literature, which are already two liberties, and the pledge of all the rest.” These religious discussions which we find excessive in the seventeenth century, this literary development which to us seems only to have subserved the glory of the nation, have not failed to lead France on towards liberty. Port Royal has advanced the country more in this path than the Fronde; and Louis XIV., in pensioning Racine and Despréaux, was pensioning liberty, of which the germ lies hidden, and develops itself in silence in all the exalted applications of the human mind. All these discussions, all these labours in forming a public, were preparing a people; for the public is the precursor of the people.

5 The interest of the *Provincial Letters* is manifold. Even if the number of those who regard the controversy concerning Divine Grace as pre-eminent has greatly decreased; even if the questions of morality and casuistry excite less concern than in former days, at least these letters must always make a powerful appeal to those who can appreciate the most exquisite products of human literature.

With regard to the contents of the earlier letters in general, we may here notice that there are three principal points on the subject of Divine Grace which are examined. The first was that which was called Proximate Power (*pouvoir prochain*), and is dealt with in the first letter. The second, on Sufficient Grace, is examined in the second. The third, on Actual Grace, is explained in the fourth letter. The fourth letter, which appeared immediately after the Censure, shows the entire conformity of the Proposition of Arnauld with the teaching of the Fathers, so complete, indeed, that the doctors who censured him could point out no difference. These four letters complete the consideration of the case of Arnauld. Pascal then proceeds with his attack on the Jesuits, returning subsequently to the Augustinian doctrines.

The first letter was published, in its original form, under the title, "Letter written to a Provincial by one of his friends"; and it does not seem quite clear whether this heading was Pascal's or the work of his printer. The description, however, was accurate, although it is not certain whether the "friend" was a particular person, and, if he was, whether he was his brother-in-law Périer or another. What is of more importance to us is to appreciate the contents, in sub-



stance and in form, of these wonderful letters. The  
\*writer starts *in medias res*.

SIR, he begins, we were quite imposed upon. It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. Until then I had thought that the subject of the disputes in the Sorbonne were very important and highly momentous for religion. So many meetings of a company so celebrated as the Faculty of Theology of Paris, in which so many things have occurred so extraordinary and unprecedented, make us conceive so high an idea of the proceedings that it is impossible to believe that they did not relate to something quite extraordinary.

However, you will be much surprised when you learn from the account I give you, to what end such a commotion has come. And this is what I will tell you in a few words, after having made myself perfectly acquainted with it.

Two questions were examined, the one a question of fact (*fait*), the other of right (*droit*). The question of fact consists of knowing if M. Arnauld is presumptuous for having said in his second letter that he had read carefully the work of Jansenius, and that he had not found there the propositions condemned by the late pope; but, nevertheless, as he condemns these propositions wherever they are found, he condemns them in Jansenius if they are there.

The question is to know if he could without temerity testify in that manner that he doubted whether these propositions were in Jansenius, after the bishops had declared that they were there.

The matter is brought before the Sorbonne. Seventy-one doctors undertake his defence, and maintain that,



when he read so many writings, and was asked if he held that these propositions were in this book, he could give no other answer than this, that he had not seen them there; and, nevertheless, that he condemned them if they were there.

Some, indeed, went further, declaring that after all the examination that they had made, they had never found them there, and that they had even found propositions quite opposed to them; and urgently requesting that, if any doctor present had seen them, he should show them; that this was a matter so easy, that it could not be refused, especially as it was a sure means of bringing them all over, and even M. Arnauld. But they were always refused. This is what passed on one side.

On the other side were found eighty secular doctors, and some forty mendicant religious, who condemned the proposition of M. Arnauld without caring to examine if what he had said was true or false, and even declared that there was no question of the truth, but only of the temerity of his proposition. Besides these there were fifteen who were not for the censure, and who were called Indifferents. In this manner terminated the question of fact, with regard to which I need not give myself much more trouble; since, indeed, the question of M. Arnauld's temerity does not interest my conscience. And, if I should be curious to know if these propositions are in Jansenius, his book is not so rare or so large that I could not read it from beginning to end so as to enlighten myself without consulting the Sorbonne about it.

But, if I did not fear also to be presumptuous, I should follow, as I think, the way of the majority of

the people whom I see, who, having until now believed on the faith of the public that these propositions are in Jansenius, begin to get rid of the contrary opinion from the strange refusal of people to point them out, and this to such an extent that I have never yet seen a person who could tell me that he had seen them. So that I fear this censure does more harm than good, and that it will give to those who learn its history an idea quite opposed to the decision. For, in truth, the world becomes distrustful, and believes things only when it sees them. But, as I have already said, this point is of small importance, since there is here no question of faith.

As to the question of right, that appears much more considerable, since it touches the faith. I have, besides, taken particular care to inform myself on this point. But you will be quite relieved to see that it is a thing of as little importance as the first.

◀The question is to examine what M. Arnauld said in the same letter: "That the grace without which we can do nothing was wanting to St. Peter in his fall."▶ In regard to which you and I imagined that it was a question of examining the greatest principles of grace, as to whether it was given to all men, or whether it was efficacious by itself. But we were mistaken. I have become a great theologian in a short time, and you are going to see the proofs of it.

In order to know the truth of the matter, I saw Mr. N., a doctor from Navarre, who lives near my house, and, as you know, is one of the most zealous opponents of Jansenists; and, as my curiosity rendered me almost as ardent as he, I asked him whether they would not formally decide that "grace is given to all men," in

order that there should be no further question on this subject. But he repulsed me roughly, and told me that this was not the point; that there were some on his side who held that grace is not given to all; that the examiners had said even in the Sorbonne, that this opinion is problematical, and that he was himself of that opinion; and he confirmed it by what he called a celebrated passage in St. Augustine: "We know that grace is not given to all men."

I apologised to him for not having quite caught his meaning, and I asked him if they would not at least condemn this other opinion of the Jansenists which makes so much noise, "that grace is efficacious, and that it determines our will to be good." But I was no more fortunate in this second question. "You understand nothing of the matter," he said to me; "that is not a heresy: it is an orthodox opinion; all the Thomists hold it; and as for myself, I have maintained it in my thesis for the Sorbonne."

I did not venture to lay my doubts further before him; and, besides, I did not see further where the difficulty was, when, in order to get enlightened on it, I entreated him to tell me wherein consisted the heresy of the proposition of M. Arnauld. "It is," he said, "in this, that he does not recognise that the just have the power to accomplish the commandments of God in the manner in which we understand it." >

I left him after receiving this instruction; and, quite delighted at having got at the heart of the affair, I found Mr. N., who was well enough to take me to his brother-in-law, who is a Jansenist, if ever there was one, but for all that a very good sort of man. In order to obtain a better reception with him, I pretended to be

strongly on his side, and I said to him, was it possible that the Sorbonne should have introduced into the Church this error, "that all the just have always the power to keep the commandments"? "What do you say?" replied my doctor; "do you call that an error which is an opinion so Catholic, and which is opposed only by Lutherans and Calvinists?" "Well then," I said, "is it not your opinion?" "No," he said, "we anathematise it as heretical and impious." Surprised at this reply, I knew well that I had gone too far in playing the Jansenist, as before I had been too much Molinist. But not being able to assure myself of the meaning of his reply, I entreated him to tell me in confidence if he held "that the just had always a real power to keep the commandments." My friend warmed up at this, but with a devout zeal, and he told me that he would never disguise his opinions for any reason; that this was his belief, and that he and all his friends would defend it to the death, as being the pure doctrine of St. Thomas, and of St. Augustine, their master.

He spoke so seriously to me on the subject, that I could not doubt of his meaning. And in this assurance I returned to my first doctor, and told him with great satisfaction that I was sure that there would soon be peace in the Sorbonne; that the Jansenists were in agreement as to the power which the just have to keep the commandments; that I was guarantee for it; that I would make them sign it with their blood. "All very well," he said, "but one must be a theologian to see to the end of the matter. The difference between us is so subtle that we can hardly discern it ourselves; it would be too difficult for you to understand. Be satisfied, then, to know that the Jansenists



will certainly tell you 'that all the just have always the power to keep the commandments'; that is not the point in dispute. But they will not tell you that this power is proximate (*prochain*).<sup>1</sup> That is the point."

This word was new to me and unfamiliar. Up to this time I had understood the controversy; but this term confused me, and I believe it has been invented simply for the purpose of mystification. I asked him therefore an explanation of it; but he made a mystery of it, and sent me away, without further satisfaction, to ask the Jansenists if they admitted this *proximate* power. I charged my memory with this term, for my intelligence had no part in it. And, for fear of forgetting it, I promptly set out to find my Jansenist again, to whom, immediately after the first civilities, I said: "Tell me, I pray you, if you admit the *proximate power*." He began to laugh, and said coldly: "Do you tell me first in what sense you use the term, and then I will tell you what I believe of it." As my knowledge did not go so far, I saw that I was not in a position to answer him; and yet, to prevent my visit being useless, I said at random, "I use it in the sense of the Molinists." To this my friend coldly replied: "To which of the Molinists do you refer me?" I offered him the whole of them together, as making but one body and acting only by one spirit.

But he said: "You are very poorly instructed. They are so little agreed that they hold opinions which are contradictory; but being all united in the design to ruin M. Arnauld, they have agreed to adopt this word *proximate*, which they are all to make use of, although

<sup>1</sup> "That is to say, *relative* and *real*. Yes, *that is the point*." The Abbé Maynard, in his notes on the "Provincials," thus comments.



they understand it differently, in order that they may all speak the same language, and that by this apparent agreement they may be able to form a considerable body, and so compose a majority in order to make sure of crushing him."

This reply surprised me. But without receiving these impressions of the evil designs of the Molinists, which I cannot believe on his word, and in which I have no personal interest, I applied myself simply to know the different senses which they gave to this mysterious word *proximate*. He answered: "I would willingly enlighten you on the subject; but you would see in it so great an opposition and contradiction, that you would have difficulty in believing me. You would suspect me of misrepresentation. You will be more certain of the truth by learning of themselves; and I will give you their addresses. You have only to see separately M. le Moine and Father Nicolai."<sup>1</sup> "I do not know either of them," said I. "Well, then," he said, "see if you do know any of those whom I am about to name to you, for they adopt the opinions of M. le Moine." "I know some of them quite well." Then he said to me: "See if you know some of the Dominicans who are called New Thomists, for they are all of one mind with Father Nicolai." I knew some of those whom he named to me, and resolved to profit by this advice and so finish the business.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Alphonse le Moine, doctor of the Sorbonne, professor in the faculty of theology. He was dismissed from his chair in 1654 and died in 1659. Father Nicolai was a Dominican; but it became clear after his death that he was nothing less than a Thomist, and that he had completely abandoned the doctrine of his Order. Born in 1594, Nicolai died in 1673. He edited the works of St. Thomas Aquinas.—Faugère.

So I left him, and met first one of the disciples of M. le Moine.

I entreated him to tell me what was meant by "having the proximate power to do anything." "That is easy," he answered; "it is to have all that is necessary for doing it, so that nothing is lacking for action."

"And so," I said to him, "to have *proximate power* to pass a river is to have a boat, boatmen, oars, and the rest, so that nothing is wanting." "Very well," he answered. "And to have the *proximate power* to see," I went on, "is to be in full day and to have good sight." "Learnedly said," he replied. "And by consequence," I continued, "when you say 'that all the just have always the proximate power to observe the commandments,' you mean that they have always all the grace necessary to keep them, so that there is nothing wanting to them on the part of God." "Stop," he said, "they have always all that is necessary to keep them, or at least to ask it of God." "I quite understand," I replied, "they have all that is necessary in order to pray to God to assist them, without its being necessary for them to have from God any new grace to pray." "You understand," he said. "But it is not then necessary that they should have efficacious grace in order to pray to God." "No," he replied, "not according to M. le Moine."<sup>1</sup>

In order not to lose time, I went to the Jacobins, and asked for those whom I knew to be New Thomists.

<sup>1</sup> Doctor le Moine, not to be confounded with Father le Moine, the Jesuit, was the author of a work of a novel character on Grace. He distinguished the grace of action from that of prayer, maintaining that the latter is only sufficient and that the grace of action is always efficient.—Faugère.

I entreated them to tell me the meaning of *proximate power*. "Is it not," I asked, "that to which there is nothing lacking in order to action?" "No," they replied. "But what, Father, if there is something lacking to this power, do you call it *proximate*, and should you say, for example, that a man has in the night and without any light the *proximate power* to see?" "Yes, certainly," he said; "according to us, he would have it if he were not blind." "I quite agree," said I; "but M. le Moine understands it in a different way." "That is true," they said; "but we understand it in this way." "I agree with you," said I; "for I do not quarrel about a word, provided I am told beforehand of the meaning attached to it. But I see by this that when you say, the just have always the proximate power to pray to God, you mean that they have need of further help, without which they will never pray." "That is excellent," replied the Fathers, embracing me, "that is excellent; for they have need besides of efficacious grace which is not given to all, and which determines their will to pray; and it is a heresy to deny the necessity of this efficacious grace in order to prayer."

"That is excellent," said I in my turn; "but according to you the Jansenists are Catholics, and M. le Moine a heretic. For the Jansenists say that the just have the power to pray, but yet that there is a necessity for efficacious grace; and this is what you approve. And M. le Moine says that the just pray without efficacious grace, and that is what you condemn." "Yes," they replied; "but M. le Moine calls this power *proximate power*." "But surely, my Fathers," said I, "this is playing with words, to say that you are

in agreement by reason of the common terms which you employ, when you differ in your meaning." The Fathers made no answer; and thereupon by a stroke of good fortune which I thought extraordinary, my friend, the disciple of M. le Moine, came in. But I have since learnt that they have frequent intercourse, and that they are continually meeting.

I said, therefore, to the disciple of M. le Moine: "I know a man who says that all the just have always the power to pray to God, but that nevertheless they will never pray without efficacious grace to determine them, and which God does not always give to all His elect. Is that heretical?" "Stop!" said my doctor, "you might surprise me. Let us go gently, *Distinguo*: if he calls this power *proximate power*, he will be a Thomist and therefore a Catholic; if not, he will be a Jansenist and therefore a heretic." "He does not call it," I said, "either proximate or not proximate." "He is a heretic then," said he; "ask these good Fathers about it." I did not accept them as judges, for they consented at once to what he said by a movement of the head. But I said to him: "He refuses to accept this word *proximate* because they will not explain it." Upon this one of the Fathers was about to offer a definition; but he was interrupted by the disciple of M. le Moine, who said to him: "Do you want to begin our disagreements over again? Have we not agreed not to explain this word *proximate*, and to use it on both sides without saying what it means?" To which the Jacobins agreed.

In this way I penetrated their design, and said in rising to leave: "In truth, my Fathers, I am greatly afraid that all this is a pure chicanery, and whatever



may result from your meetings, I venture to predict to you that if the censure should be pronounced, peace would not be established. For if it should be decided that we must pronounce the syllables *pro-chain*, who does not see that, as they have not been explained, each one of you will claim the victory? The Jacobins will say that the word must be understood in their sense, M. le Moine will say that it is in his; and so there will be many more disputes over the explanation of the word than over its introduction; for, after all, there would be no great danger in receiving it without any meaning, since it could hurt only by its meaning. But it would be a thing unworthy of the Sorbonne and of theology to use words which are ambiguous and captious without explaining them. For, once more, my Fathers, tell me, I entreat you for the last time, what it is necessary for me to believe in order to be a Catholic." "It is necessary," they answered all together, "to say that all the just have proximate power without attaching a meaning to the words: *Abstrahendo a sensu Thomistarum et a sensu aliorum Theologorum.*"

"That is to say," I remarked in leaving them, "that one must pronounce this word with the lips for fear of bearing the name of heretic. For, in short, is this a scriptural word?" "No," they said. "Is it then in the Fathers, or used by the Councils, or by the Popes?" "No." "Is it then in St. Thomas?" "No." "What necessity is there then to use it, since it has neither authority nor in itself any meaning?" "You are obstinate," they said. "You will use the word, or you will be a heretic, and M. Arnauld also; for we are the majority, and, if it is necessary, we will bring so



many Cordeliers into the field, that we shall carry the day."

I have just left them on this solid reason, in order to write to you this account by which you may see that there is here no question of any of the following points, and that they were not condemned by either side:—1. That grace is not given to all men. 2. That all the just have power to keep the commandments of God. 3. That, nevertheless, in order to keep them and even in order to pray, they have need of efficacious grace which determines the will. 4. That this efficacious grace is not always given to all the just, and that it depends upon the pure mercy of God. So that there is nothing save the word *proximate* that runs any risk, and this without any meaning.

Happy the people who are ignorant of it! Happy those who lived before its birth! For I can see no other remedy but this, that the members of the Academy should, by a stroke of authority, banish from the Sorbonne this barbarous word which causes so many divisions. Without this the censure seems assured; but I can see that it will do no other harm than to render the Sorbonne contemptible by this proceeding, which will deprive it of the authority which is necessary for it in other cases.

I leave you, however, at liberty to hold for the word *proximate* or not. For I love my neighbour too much to persecute him under this pretext. If this relation does not displease you, I will continue to apprise you of all that takes place.—I am, etc.

We have thought it well, in this one case at least, to give the whole letter, that the reader may judge

of the great qualities by which the writer is distinguished. In that which follows, we must be contented with extracts and condensations; and however carefully these may be made, they can do no sort of justice to the author. We have here illustrations of nearly all the leading features by which the Provincials are marked—the clearness of statement, the firm, unbroken chain of logic, the fine irony, sometimes almost sweet and again bitter; and perhaps less than in some of the subsequent letters, of that concentrated scorn which has been spoken of as the very note of the genius and style of Pascal.

It is an obvious remark—although it is more so now than it would have been when the letters were written—that the controversy turns largely on words and phrases which have now, to a large extent, lost their meaning. But what controversy has ever taken place from the beginning of the world that has not turned largely on the ambiguity of speech? Besides, the controversy was none of Pascal's seeking, nor, for that matter, of Port Royal. Nor was it, in fact, the honest attempt to refute a heresy by those who believed themselves to be in possession of the truth. It was partly an attempt to put down liberty of thought, and partly a determination to crush Port Royal. One might almost add, it was an attempt to crush the higher teaching of the gospel, since there can be no question as to the difference of tone and spirit between the laxness of the Jesuit and the severe and lofty tone of men like St. Cyran and Arnauld.

The effect of the first Provincial was immediate, extensive, and profound. It was read everywhere, even in the Sorbonne; even those who detested its

theology were charmed by its wit. Voltaire was no mean judge of French writing, and he declared that Pascal was the true founder of French prose, whilst he considered that the wit of Molière did not equal that of the early Provincials. It is indeed worth while to quote his very words (in his *Age of Louis XIV.*): “The first book of genius which we see in prose is the collection of *Provincial Letters*. All sorts of eloquence are contained in them. There is not a single word which, for a hundred years, has been affected by the changes which so frequently modify living languages.” These letters, indeed, have been said to unite the wit of Molière to the eloquence of Demosthenes; but, whilst Pascal had Demosthenes before him as a model, his letters were published before Molière was known.

One of the Solitaries of Port Royal des Champs has, in his Journal, placed on record some of the consequences of these publications in the tracts to which they gave occasion, he having registered from day to day the information which the friends of “the good cause” transmitted to him. A large part of his Journal has perished, but some fragments remain; and from these we obtain a good deal of information respecting the progress of the controversy.

Under 1st February 1656 he records: “The letter to a Provincial every day produces new marvels, showing clearly and bravely how ridiculous is the opinion—or rather the different opinions—of the Molinists. All of those who have no interest in the matter laugh at it; but the others are furious, especially the Chancellor (Father Ségner), from whom we are expecting some new act of violence on the subject.” And again, under

2nd February, he writes: "To-day (Candlemas), at half-past eleven, they have taken prisoner Savreux, book-seller and bookbinder, a man very much devoted to the good cause, his wife, and two boys from his shop, and put them in the prisons of the officiality (an ecclesiastical office). It is against the law, and unheard of, that a married woman should be imprisoned for such things. . . . The letter to a Provincial is so well done, and shows with so much cleverness the injustice of the authors of the Censure (of Arnauld), that it is most offensive to the adversaries, and especially to the chancellor, who, I hear, has been bled seven times in five or six days." It is said that the reading of the Provincial had brought on something like an apoplectic seizure.

Again, under the date 3rd February, he tells of the examination of Savreux<sup>1</sup> and his wife without results; and then he proceeds to tell the truth about the printing. The first two letters to a Provincial were printed, he says, by the *Sieur Petit*, those letters "which by their agreement and the pure truth which they contain have excited this violence against these three printers (*Savreux*, *Petit*, and *Desprez*). The commissary having come to *Petit's* shop with several guards, and he not being there, his wife went up to the printing office with the forms, although very heavy, in her apron, passed down between the commissary and guards, and carried them into the house of a friend near at hand, where during the night they printed 300 copies of the second letter, and the next day 1200—a thing which more and more enrages the enemies of the truth,

<sup>1</sup> Madame Savreux was set at liberty on this day. Savreux and his two sons, 16th February.



and above all the chancellor, who shoots out fire and flame against M. Arnauld and his friends as the authors of these letters, which in their effect ruin the censure."

It may be mentioned here that, after this, it is believed, Petit did not continue to print the letters. The fifth was printed by Langlois, who was probably also the printer of the third and fourth.

The first letter has different headings in different editions, but in all it is described as being on the present disputes at the Sorbonne, and in none is a more particular enunciation given of the subject. All editions of the second have the same heading, "On sufficient Grace" (*De la Grace suffisante*). The date is 29th January 1656.

This letter is a continuation of the first. Pascal represents himself as applying again to M. N. for information on the subject of sufficient grace, as the doctrine was held by Jansenists, Jesuits, and Dominicans respectively, the aim of the writer being to show that, although the other two parties had joined to crush the Jansenists, the Dominicans were, in reality, more in accord with them than with the Jesuits. These last held that sufficient grace is given to all, and that it is made efficient by the free will of the recipient. The Jansenists held with St. Augustine, that no grace is really sufficient which is not also efficient.

After this, he betook himself to one of his New Thomist friends. "He was delighted to see me. 'Well, Father,' said I, 'it is not enough that all men should have a proximate power by which, however, they never really act; they must also have a sufficient grace, with which they act as little: is not that the



opinion of your school?' 'Yes,' said the good Father; 'and I have said so distinctly at the Sorbonne this morning. I spoke there the whole of my half-hour; and had it not been for the sand-glass, I should have effected a change in the unlucky proverb which already circulates in Paris: "He gives his judgment with his cap, like a monk in the Sorbonne."' 'And what do you mean by your half-hour and your sand-glass?' I asked. 'Do they cut your remarks down to a certain measure?'<sup>1</sup> 'Yes,' he said, 'for some days.' 'And are you obliged to speak for half an hour?' 'No; you may speak as little as you like.' 'But not as much as you like,' I said. 'Oh, what an excellent rule for the ignorant! Oh, the civil pretext for those who have nothing good to say! But at anyrate, Father, this grace which is given to all men is sufficient.' 'Yes,' said he. 'And, nevertheless, it has no effect without efficient grace.' 'That is true,' said he. 'And,' I continued, 'all men have sufficient, but not all efficient grace.' 'True,' said he. 'That is to say,' I answered, 'that all men have grace enough and all have not enough; that is, that this grace suffices, although it does not suffice; that is to say, that it is sufficient in name and insufficient in effect.' 'In good faith, Father, this doctrine is very subtle. Have you forgotten, in leaving the world, that which we understand by the word *sufficient*? Do you not remember that it embraces all that is necessary in order to action? But

<sup>1</sup> A vote to this effect was carried in the Sorbonne, 16th January 1656. Arnauld's friends protested against the restriction, and it was generally neglected. The chancellor, however, announced that the king required conformity to the rule, upon which more than sixty doctors left the assembly.

you have not lost the remembrance of it; for, to use a comparison which will be more obvious to you, if one gave you for dinner only two ounces of bread and a glass of water, should you be contented with your Prior, who should tell you that this would be sufficient to nourish you, under the pretext that, with something else which he would not give you, you would have all that would be necessary for you in order to dine well? How, then, do you allow yourself to say that all men have sufficient grace to act, since you confess that there is another grace necessary in order to act, which all do not possess? Is it that this belief is of little importance, and that you leave men free to believe that efficient grace is necessary or not? Is it, then, a thing indifferent to say that with sufficient grace one acts effectively?' 'How,' said the good man, 'indifferent? It is a heresy, it is a formal heresy; the necessity of efficient grace in order to act effectively is a matter of *faith*; it is a heresy to deny it.'

"'But where in the world have we got to?' I said. 'Which side am I then to take? If I deny sufficient grace, I am a Jansenist. If I admit like the Jesuits, in a way, that efficient grace is not necessary, I shall be a heretic, you tell me. And if I admit like you, in a way, that efficient grace is necessary, I sin against common sense and I am extravagant, say the Jesuits. What then must I do in this unavoidable necessity of being either extravagant, or heretical, or Jansenist? And to what a pass we are come, if it is only Jesuits who do not confound either faith or reason, and who save themselves at once from folly and from error.'"

Pascal goes on to remark that his Jansenist friend took this discourse as of good presage, and then proceeded

to question the Dominican, who, driven into a corner, is forced to confess that they who are monks must vote in accordance with the promises of their superiors. And then he is forced into a similar position to that in which the defenders of proximate power found themselves, namely, that he was standing up for a word, without attaching any definite meaning to it. The Jansenist warns the New Thomist of the end towards which he is tending. "‘Your explanation,’ he says, ‘would be odious in the world. These people speak with sincerity of things less important. The Jesuits will triumph. It will, in fact, be their sufficient grace which will be established, and not yours, which has only the name; and an article of faith will be made which will be the contrary of your beliefs.’ ‘We will all suffer martyrdom,’ said the Father, ‘rather than consent to the establishment of sufficient grace in the sense of the Jesuits; St. Thomas, whom we swear to follow even to the death, being directly opposed to it.’”

The poor man is miserable in his difficulty, but receives no comfort from the Jansenist listener, who is represented as delivering some noble and elevated thoughts on the work which had to be done in defence of the doctrines of the faith.

“‘It is time,’ he says, ‘that other hands should be armed for this quarrel. It is time that God should raise up intrepid disciples to the Doctor of Grace [Aquinas], disciples who, ignoring the engagements of the world, serve God for God’s sake. Grace may indeed no longer have the Dominicans for defenders; but she will never fail of defenders, for she forms them herself by her omnipotent strength. She requires

hearts that are pure and disengaged, and she herself purifies them, and disengages them from the interests of the world which are incompatible with the truths of the gospel. Anticipate these warnings, Father, and take care lest God remove this candlestick out of its place, and leave you in darkness and without a crown.’”

Pascal concludes: “You see then by this that we have here a politic sufficiency, similar to proximate power. However, I can assure you that it seems to me that one may, without danger, doubt of the proximate power and of this sufficient grace, provided he is not a Jacobin, In closing my letter,” he concludes, “I have just learnt that the Censure is pronounced;<sup>1</sup> but I do not yet know in what terms, and it will not be published until the 15th of February.”

It may be worth while to add the words of the Censure pronounced by the Sorbonne: “The first proposition, which is a matter of fact, is presumptuous, scandalous, offensive to the pope and to the bishops of France; and, moreover, gives occasion for the entire removal of the doctrine of Jansenius, which has been already condemned. As for the second, which relates to the question of right, it is presumptuous, impious, blasphemous, smitten with anathema, and heretical.”

Between the second and third letters there comes a “reply from the Provincial to the first two letters of his friend,” which was published at the head of the third letter. Some controversy has arisen as to the authorship of this letter, and of the extracts embodied in it. This is a question which cannot now be settled. If Pascal himself wrote them, they are not unworthy

<sup>1</sup> On 31st January 1656.



of him. Thus he makes a member of the Academy write to him, and speaks of him with charming irony as "one of the most illustrious among those men who are all illustrious," a phrase which has never been forgotten. This academician declares that he would "condemn by authority, banish, proscribe, he had almost said exterminate with all his might, this *proximate power* which makes so much noise about nothing, and without any further knowledge of what it wants. He is sorry, he adds, that the power of the academicians is too limited to allow of their doing this. And then the Provincial quotes from another letter written by one to a lady who had sent him the first of the letters. "You cannot imagine," he says, "how much obliged I am to you for the letter you have sent me. It is immensely ingenious and perfectly well written. It tells you without telling; it clears up the most confused matters possible; its raillery is exquisite; it instructs even those who know but little; it doubles the pleasure of those who do know something. It is, besides, an excellent apology, and, if you like, a delicate and innocent censure. And, in fact, there is so much art, so much intelligence, and so much judgment in this letter, that I should much like to know who wrote it," etc.

Even in English this sounds remarkably like Pascal; and if it is his, he was amply justified in speaking thus of his own work. It is perhaps more probable that it was written by one of his friends; but, if he wrote it, he would certainly derive some pleasure from the increased difficulty of the problem he was furnishing to the foes of Port Royal.

The third letter had reference to the Censure, and



was declared in the superscription, dated 9th February 1656, "to serve as an answer to the preceding," with a second title, which appears in all our present printed editions, but apparently not in all the original ones: "Injustice, absurdity, and nullity of the Censure of M. Arnauld." This, at least, correctly sets forth the contents of the letter. It produced even a greater impression on the public than the first two. So we are informed by the Journal of M. Saint-Gilles under date of 12th February: "The third letter to a Provincial touching the matters of grace, and particularly on the censure of the letter of M. Arnauld by the Molinists, has begun to appear to-day with an *éclat* and an amount of applause still greater than the two preceding ones. The copies have been distributed in Paris and throughout the provinces by dozens, and the success which attends them everywhere is incredible. It is found that these little pieces produce a much greater effect than the other letters, although longer and more important; since in a very short time the truth is conveyed in an agreeable manner to the mind."

Near the beginning of the letter the writer reminds his correspondent of the way in which the Jansenists had been treated. "Remember," he says, "the strange impressions of the Jansenists which we have received so long. Recall in memory the cabals, the mistakes, the factions, the schisms, the outrages, of which they have so long been accused; in what manner they have been decried and blackened in the pulpits and in books; and how this torrent, which has had so much violence and duration, has increased in these later years, in which they have been accused openly and publicly of being not only heretics and schismatics, but apostates

and infidels ; of denying the mystery of transubstantiation, and of renouncing Jesus Christ and the gospel. They have chosen the second letter of M. Arnauld, which, they said, was full of the most detestable errors. For examiners of it they have appointed his most declared enemies. . . . Yet for all this the proposition which they select is such that they can find in it nothing which is not so clearly and formally expressed in the passages of the Fathers which M. Arnauld has adduced in this connection, that I have never seen any one who could understand the difference. Yet it was imagined that there was a terrible difference, since the passages of the Fathers being Catholic, it was necessary that the proposition of M. Arnauld must be horribly contrary to them in order to be heretical.

{ “It was from the Sorbonne that we expected this enlightenment. All Christendom had eyes open in order to see in the censure of these doctors this point which was so imperceptible to the common run of men. However, M. Arnauld makes his defence, and gives in columns his proposition and the passages of the Fathers from which he took it, in order to make the agreement apparent to the least discerning.” \*

This being so, he goes on, every one was in expectation of having the divergences pointed out. “But, alas ! our expectation has been disappointed. Whether, because those good Molinists have not lowered themselves in order to instruct us on the subject, or for some other mysterious reason, they have done nothing but pronounce these words : ‘This proposition is rash, impious, blasphemous, smitten with anathema, and heretical.’”

This being so, the writer makes application to a

doctor of the Sorbonne who has held himself neutral on the question, and asks him to point out the differences between the proposition of Arnauld and the teachings of the Fathers. He was amused at the question, and said : "Do you imagine if there had been any difference, they would not have pointed it out ?"

"'But how,' said I, 'the thing being so, their censure is useless; for what credence can be given to it when it is seen that it is without foundation, and refuted by the answers which are made to it?' 'Ah,' said my doctor, 'if you knew the mind of the people, you would speak in another fashion. Their censure, censurable as it is, will have all its effect for a time; and although, by showing its invalidity, it is quite certain that it will be found out, it is equally true that at first the majority will be as strongly struck by it as by the most just criticism possible. Provided that it is only cried in the streets, "Here is the Censure of M. Arnauld, here is the condemnation of the Jansenists," the Jesuits will have their story. How few there will be who read it! How few of those who read it will understand it! How few who will perceive that it does not meet the objections! Who do you think there will be that will lay the matter to heart, and who will undertake to examine it to the foundation? See then how all this helps the enemies of the Jansenists. They are sure in that way to triumph, for some months at least, although, as usual with them, the triumph is vain. It is much for them. By and by they will find out some new means of subsistence. They live from day to day. It is in that way that they have maintained themselves until now, sometimes by a catechism, where a child condemns their adversaries; sometimes by a procession,

where sufficient grace leads efficient grace in triumph; sometimes by a comedy where the devils carry off Jansenius; or again by an almanac, and now by this censure. . . .”

“M. le Moine, the most ardent of the examiners, said to a doctor who is a friend of mine: ‘This proposition would be catholic in another mouth; it is only in M. Arnauld that the Sorbonne has condemned it.’ And so admire the machines of Molinism, which make such prodigious inversions of things in the Church, that what is Catholic in the Fathers becomes heretical in M. Arnauld; that what was heretical in the Semi-Pelagians becomes orthodox in the writings of the Jesuits; that the ancient doctrine of St. Augustine becomes an intolerable novelty; and that the new inventions which are fashioned every day in our sight pass for the ancient faith of the Church. Then he left me.

“This instruction opened my eyes. I learnt that we have here a heresy of a new kind. It is not the sentiments of M. Arnauld which are heretical; it is only his person. It is a personal heresy. He is not a heretic for what he has said or written, but only because he is M. Arnauld. This is all that can be said against him. Whatever he may do, unless he ceases to exist, he will never be a good Catholic. The grace of St. Augustine will never be true whilst he defends it. It will become so, if he should come to attack it. That would be a sure blow, and almost the only means of establishing this doctrine and destroying Molinism; so much misfortune does he bring to the opinions which he embraces. Let us then leave here their disputes. They are disputes of theologians and not of theology.” This letter is signed by the initials:



E. A. A. B. P. A. F. D. E. P., which are generally interpreted to stand for : *Et ancien ami, Blaise Pascal, Auvergnat, fils de Étienne Pascal.*

The fourth Provincial turns right on the Jesuits. They had been referred to before, but now they are to be, for a time, the main object of attack ; and this will be continued throughout the thirteen following letters, which deal mainly with the casuistical system of this Order.

It may be well, however, before entering upon this part of Pascal's work to complete the subject discussed in the first three Provincials,—a subject which is taken up again in the last two letters, so that these five epistles (1, 2, 3, 17, 18) form a complete treatise apart from the intermediate letters.

Whilst Pascal was continuing his attack on the Jesuits, several replies were attempted, and attacks on the author of the letter. Father Annat had spoken of the unknown author of the Provincials as the secretary of Port Royal. Pascal replies to this in the seventeenth Provincial : “ You suppose, in the first place, that the writer of the letters belongs to Port Royal. You further remark that Port Royal is declared heretical, from whence you conclude that the writer of the letters is declared heretical. It is not upon me, Father, that the weight of this accusation falls, but upon Port Royal, and you charge me with heresy only because you suppose I belong to it. So I shall have no great trouble to defend myself from the charge, since I have only to say to you that I do not belong to Port Royal ; and to refer you to my letters, where I have said that I am alone, and in so many terms that I do not belong to Port Royal.”



It is quite understood in what sense Pascal used this language, and that he might with equal truth have spoken of himself as belonging to Port Royal. He was not one of the Solitaries, he therefore did not belong to the community of Port Royal in the exact sense of the words. Moreover, it could hardly be said that he had his regular place of abode at Port Royal, since he had a house in Paris in which he probably wrote most of the letters, although the first two were probably written at Port Royal. Moreover, he is believed to have been in constant communication with the Society of the Solitaries, who furnished him with a good deal of the theological material for his letters.

In the last two letters (17th and 18th) the writer deals with the question of the separation of *right* and *fact*. And he declares that the five propositions were quite properly condemned by the Pope; that this condemnation was received by the so-called Jansenists with entire respect, and that they are quite ready to subscribe this condemnation. The only point of disagreement, and that about which so great a noise was raised, is the question as to whether these propositions, which are condemned by the whole world, are or are not word for word in Jansenius—which, he says, is a question of fact, not of right or of faith; a question of indifference, on which one may have one opinion or another, according as one has read or has not read Jansenius, and as in reading him he has found the propositions or has not found them,—a question, in short, in regard to which one may be in error without having the least heretical opinion; for the Pope and the Church, which are judges of the faith, may themselves make a mistake as to matters of fact.

He then gives examples of popes who have made mistakes in regard to questions of fact, such as Pope Zacharias excommunicating St. Virgilius on the subject of the Antipodes, the decree of Rome which proscribed the opinion of Galileo and the movement of the earth. "But this does not prove," he goes on, "that it stands still; and if by constant observations it is proved that it is the earth that revolves, the whole united human race will not prevent its turning, nor themselves from turning with it. And so," he goes on, "if all the world should agree to condemn the five propositions, and should disagree only on the question as to whether they are contained textually in a certain book, a simple fact appreciable by the senses and the judgment, all this noise which is made in the Church goes for nothing—'*pro nihilo*, Father,' as St. Bernard remarks." And this is his conclusion on the controversy—much noise about nothing.

It would take more space than can here be given to indicate, even in outline, the merits of this discussion of the doctrine of grace, but a few words may here be added on the subject. It will have been remarked that the Jesuits and the opponents of the Jansenists habitually identified the teaching of the latter with that of Luther and Calvin. Such an accusation was certainly not just. There was a distinct and appreciable difference between Augustine and Calvin, although practically it may not seem considerable. Augustine's teaching was sublapsarian; according to him the divine decrees assumed the fact of the Fall. Calvin's teaching was supralapsarian; the divine decrees were said to include the Fall. Augustine taught Election and Preterition, Calvin taught Election and Reprobation. The teach-

ing of Luther differs hardly at all from that of Augustine. As for the Jansenists, instead of their teaching exceeding that of the great Father whom they professed to follow, it seems that on one point they fell short of the contention of Augustine and Calvin, holding that grace might be resisted. Whether their teaching on this subject was perfectly consistent may be doubted; but, at anyrate, it ought to have brought them a step nearer to their antagonists.

The Jesuit side was subsequently advocated by the Abbé Dumas, A.D. 1700, in an anonymous work entitled *History of the Five Propositions of Jansenius*; and the Abbé Maynard, in his excellent edition of the *Provincial Letters*, has appended a set of notes, distinguished by erudition and acumen, which are designed to correct the misrepresentations of the author of the letters. Theologically both of these writers often make good their position; but the genius and brilliancy of their great antagonist remain untouched. As regards theological knowledge, Pascal made no pretensions to extensive reading on this subject, and had to be prepared for some points in the controversy by the men, some of them learned theologians, with whom he co-operated. (A good story is told of the result of an interview between him and Father Thomassin of the Oratory, which will illustrate this point. After a conference of two hours, the worthy Father is reported to have said to himself as he took his leave: "There is a young man of immense intelligence, but who is very ignorant;" whilst Pascal, after turning his back on his instructor, remarked: "There is a good man who is tremendously learned, but who has but little intelligence.")

Leaving these theological questions, we return to the letters which assail the Jesuits, and more particularly the moral theology and casuistry of the Order, the most famous and the most powerful of the Provincials. These extend from the fourth to the sixteenth letter. The questions here discussed, if they cannot be called more important than those relating to divine grace and man's free will, will appear to be of a more practical character, and of such a nature that they can be grasped by thoughtful and intelligent minds without any considerable amount of learning.

At the beginning of the fourth Provincial, Pascal seems to have felt the necessity of continuing the argument on grace, which, as we have seen, was resumed and completed in the last two letters; but his own convictions and the counsels of friends led him to concentrate his attack on the Jesuits, whom he knew to be the relentless foes of Port Royal. They had made the controversy personal rather than theological, he had said. It was not the theology, but the person of Arnauld that they objected to. He would not, indeed, imitate their mode of warfare; but he would carry the war into the enemy's country.

The attack on the morality of the Jesuits did not begin with Pascal. St. Cyran in 1626 had denounced their moral teaching in a criticism of the *Summa* of Father Garasse. Arnauld in 1643 had given a number of extracts from their writings which he had severely criticised. The Faculty of Theology of Paris in 1641 had censured the moral teaching of Father Baunay, and in 1644 the University had condemned that of Father Héreau. But Pascal drew the attention of the



world to the subject, and made it that it should never be forgotten.

"Sir," he begins his fourth letter, "there is nothing like the Jesuits. I have seen Jacobins, doctors, and people of every kind; but my knowledge was incomplete until I made this visit. Others only copy them. If you would understand things, you must go to their source." Here begins the fight with the Jesuits, and it goes on to the end of the tenth letter in the form of "Conversations with the good Father Casuist on Morality, the doctrine of Probability, the direction of the intention, accommodations, the inutility of the love of God, the easiness of Confession, and the political design of the whole. At the close of the eleventh, the author replies to attacks, to pretended refutations, to calumnies; he leaves the ingenious and indirect offensive for the defensive, but for a defensive which is open, showing a broad side, which could give little pleasure to the attackers. The Provincial to whom he addressed his first letters has disappeared. He turns upon the reverend Fathers themselves and addresses them; it is to their face that he proclaims the truth."<sup>1</sup>

Up to the tenth letter he uses the Socratic dialogue. From the eleventh to the sixteenth he adopts the form of the oration, and has been here compared to Demosthenes and Cicero. Voltaire remarks that there are all kinds of eloquence in these compositions.

The fairness of Pascal has been gravely impugned by the defenders of the Jesuits; and even his own friends have acknowledged that occasionally he may have done them a measure of injustice from the manner in which he has presented his arguments against them.

<sup>1</sup> Sainte Beuve.



But there is no reason to think that he wilfully misrepresented them, or that actually there is in his letters anything which gives a false view of their language or their teaching. Indeed, there seems not the least reason to call in question his own profession on this subject, when he declares that he has derived his opinions respecting the teaching of the Jesuits from their own writings. He does not profess, he says, to have read all the books he has quoted; he could not have thought of wasting his time on such bad books; but two things he had done—in the first place, he had read Escobar twice through; and the others he had got his friends to read. Moreover, he had never quoted a passage without carefully examining it in its context, so that he took every possible precaution against misrepresentation. To those who know Pascal in all his writings such an explanation is unnecessary. He was a man incapable of falsehood in any shape or form—a thing which certainly could not be said of his antagonists.

It may be of interest here to quote an important testimony on this subject. Chateaubriand, in his earlier days, had declared not only that the Jesuits were no longer dangerous, but he went so far as to say, "The Provincial Letters have deprived the Company of Jesus of its moral force; and yet Pascal is only a calumniator of genius; he has left us an immortal falsehood."<sup>1</sup> To this, Sainte Beuve tells us, he replied, denying the truth of the accusation, and adding: "The illustrious writer whom we venture to contradict, perhaps in his presence,<sup>2</sup> has misunderstood the conscience

<sup>1</sup> *Analyse raisonnée de l'Histoire de France*, tome v. p. 448, Paris, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> As member of the Academy.

of Pascal, and flattered his genius at the expense of his virtue." But even before these words were uttered Chateaubriand had done more justice to Pascal and his defender. When he was Ambassador from France to the Holy See, and saw the methods adopted by the Company at the election of Pius VIII. to the papacy, in 1829, he got such a view of the Jesuits that he was led to express himself in the following manner: "I ought to confess that the Jesuits had seemed to me to be too badly treated by public opinion. I was formerly their defender, and since they have been attacked in these later times I have neither said nor written a word against them. I had taken Pascal for a calumniator of genius, who had left us an immortal falsehood; I am now forced to acknowledge that he has not exaggerated in the least. The letter of Father Pavani has the appearance of having escaped from Escobar himself; it would fit to a marvel in the *Provincial Letters*. Since it says everything and says nothing. Since all the words of it are so weighed that they may be interpreted as may be necessary;" and more to the same effect. Pascal, then, neither did injustice nor intended to do injustice to the Company of Jesus.

Before passing on to Pascal's attack on Jesuit casuistry,—the part of his Letters which has left the deepest and most permanent impression upon the minds of his readers,—it may be useful to say a few words on the subject of Probabilism, which occupies so prominent a place in these letters. It has been said that the theory of Probabilism was not the invention of the Jesuits; and to a certain extent this is true. But it is equally true that the Jesuit theologians have been principally concerned in the working

out of the theory, and have been the most distinguished defenders of it.

But what is Probabilism? It is a theory of the lawfulness of human action; and it teaches that men may act, and that directors may advise men to act, on a probable opinion, even when they are themselves convinced of another opinion which is more probable. There are, in fact, three theories of action advocated by casuists—Probabilism, Probabiliorism, and Tutorism. A probable opinion is one which has the support of any, even one approved doctor of the Church. A more probable opinion is one which has the support of a greater amount of authority. Probabilism teaches that we may follow the less probable opinion even if our conscience is against it. Probabiliorism, on the contrary, teaches that we are bound to follow that which, on the whole, seems the more probable opinion. Tutorism, again, counsels the adoption of the safer opinion; for example, the opinion that God exists, and that He has revealed Himself, would be safer than the opinion that there is no God, or no God that can be known.

It is perhaps in the fifth letter that we have some of the best examples of Pascal's attacks on the casuistry of the Jesuits in the form of dialogue. He begins this letter by assuring his correspondent that he will now fulfil his promise of making him acquainted with the moral teaching of the "good Jesuit Fathers." He derives his information from his friend, the Jesuit Father, who tells him of the way in which Jesuit confessors make it easy for their penitents. He found it difficult to believe this, because he knew some who were as severe as others were lax, so that it was difficult for

him to believe that both could belong to the same Society. And he asks, "How can the same superiors consent to maxims so different?" "That is what you must be taught," is the answer; and the Father proceeds: "Know then that it is not their object to corrupt men's manners [as some of their enemies had accused them of doing]. That is not their design. But it is not their only aim to reform them. That would be bad policy. <Here is their thought. They have a sufficiently good opinion of themselves to believe that it is useful, and even necessary, for the benefit of religion, that their credit should extend everywhere, and that they should govern all consciences.> And because the severe evangelical maxims are proper for the government of some sorts of persons, they make use of these on such occasions as are favourable to them. But as these maxims are not in agreement with the plan of most persons, they leave them when dealing with such persons, so as to have the means of satisfying everyone. It is for this reason that, having to do with persons of all sorts and conditions, and belonging to different nations, it is necessary to have casuists suited to all this diversity.

"From this principle you can easily judge that, if they had only lax casuists, they would ruin their principal design, which is to embrace everyone, since those who are truly pious want a guidance which is more severe. But, as there are not many of this kind, there is no need of many severe directors to guide them. They have a few for the few, whilst the multitude of lax confessors offer themselves for the multitude of those who want laxity.

"It is by this obliging and accommodating conduct,



as Father Petau calls it, that they hold out their arms to the whole world. For, if anyone presents himself to them who is quite resolved to restore any ill-gained goods, be not afraid that they will turn him away from it. On the contrary, they will praise and confirm a resolution so holy. But let another come who wishes to have absolution without restitution, it will be a very difficult matter indeed if they do not provide the means of evading the duty, for which they will make themselves responsible.

“By this means they preserve all their friends, and defend themselves against all their enemies. For if they are reproached with their extreme laxity, they immediately produce in public their austere directors, and the books which they have composed on the rigour of the Christian life; and the simple people, and those who do not go deeply into things, are satisfied with these proofs.

“Thus they have provision for all sorts of persons, and respond so well to the demands made upon them, that, when they find themselves in a country in which a God crucified passes for ‘foolishness,’ they suppress the scandal of the Cross, and preach only Jesus Christ in glory, and not Jesus Christ suffering; as they have done in the Indies and in China, where they have even allowed idolatry to Christians by the subtle device of permitting them to conceal under their clothes an image of Jesus Christ, to which they teach them to refer mentally all the public worship which they render to the idol Chacim-Choan and to their Confucius, with which the Dominican Gravina reproaches them; and as is testified by the memorial in Spanish presented to King Philip IV. of Spain by the Cordeliers of the



Philippine Islands, related by Thomas Hurtado in his book on the *Martyrdom of the Faith*, p. 427; so that the Congregation of Cardinals, *De propaganda Fide*, were obliged to forbid the Jesuits in particular, on penalty of excommunication, to allow the adoration of idols under any pretext, and to conceal the mystery of the Cross from those whom they instructed in religion; commanding them expressly not to receive any to baptism until they had obtained this knowledge, and to exhibit in their churches the image of the crucifix, —all which is fully set forth in the decree of this Congregation, given on the 9th of July 1646, signed by Cardinal Capponi."

It is but right to mention here that the Abbé Maynard regards this statement as "one of the most odious calumnies of Pascal," and says that he blushes to have to refute it. But what does his refutation amount to? In the first place, he tells us of the heroic and self-sacrificing missionary work of the Jesuits, which certainly demands respect and admiration. Then he minimises the doings in China, but he does not deny that the Dominicans made these accusations. Nor does he deny that the Congregation, surely not without reason, issued such a decree as that of which Pascal speaks. But it was in 1645, not in 1646; and in the month of September, not in the month of July; nor, he says, was it signed by Cardinal Capponi, "who never existed," but by Cardinal Ginetti; and he adds, not unreasonably, that even these slight inaccuracies ought not to have been found in connection with so serious an accusation. Moreover, he says, the decree was not addressed to the Jesuits in particular, but to the missionaries in general.

That Pascal should have made some such slight errors in statement is neither wonderful nor highly reprehensible. The facts remain that complaints had been made against the Jesuits on the grounds stated by Pascal, and that the Congregation had issued a decree against the practices complained of. And even if no distinction was made between the different orders of missionaries, it could hardly be denied that the Jesuits were the most "accommodating."

Pascal's Jansenist informant assured him that he would find in the Jesuit relaxation of morality the cause of their doctrine touching grace. "You will see there," he says, "the Christian virtues unrecognisable and deprived of charity, which is their soul and life. You will see so many crimes so palliated and so many disorders allowed, that you will no longer find it wonderful that they maintain that all men have always enough grace to live in piety as they understand it. As their morality is entirely heathen, nature suffices for its observance. When we maintain the necessity for efficient grace, we give other virtues as its object. . . . Law and reason are graces sufficient for those effects. But to disengage the soul from the love of the world, to detach it from that which it holds most dear, to make it die to itself, to unite it with God, and to carry it up simply and invariably to Him, is the work of nothing else but an omnipotent hand. And it is as little reasonable to pretend that one has always full power to do this, as it would be to deny that those virtues which are destitute of the love of God, which those good Fathers confound with Christian virtues, are not in our own power."

Here we are touching upon a subject which, under different forms, runs through the whole of the letters; and Pascal connects it with his other grievances against the Order. He declares that his informant spoke of the errors of the Jesuits with sorrow, and recommended him to have recourse to "a good casuist of the Society." Having found a kind old friend of this character, he began with some of his difficulties, and first with the trouble he had in obeying the Church's law of fasting. "He exhorted me," says Pascal, "to do violence to myself; but as I continued to complain, he was touched, and tried to find some reason for a dispensation. He offered me several, in fact, which did not suit me, when he advised me to consider with myself whether I had not some difficulty in sleeping without supping. 'Yes,' I said, 'Father, and that frequently obliges me to have a collation at midday and to sup at night.' 'I am very glad,' he said, 'to have found this means of solacing you without sin; go, you are not required to fast. I do not wish you to believe me,' he said; 'come to the library.' We went, and then, taking a book, 'Here is the proof,' he said; 'and God knows what a proof. It is Escobar.' 'Who is Escobar, Father?' I asked. 'What! don't you know who Escobar of our Society is, who has compiled this Moral Theology of our Fathers to the number of twenty-four?' . . . Then, having looked out the passage on fasting, 'Here it is,' he said to me, 'at tr. 1, ex. 13, n. 67: "Is one who cannot sleep if he has not supped under the obligation to fast? By no means." Are you not satisfied?' 'No, not entirely,' I said, 'for I can endure fasting by having a collation in the morning and supping in the evening.' 'But see how it

goes on,' he said. 'They have thought of everything: "And what shall we say if one can dispense with a collation in the morning by supping in the evening?" Now mark! "Still one is not obliged to fast, for no one is obliged to change the order of his meals."' 'Oh, the excellent reason,' said I. 'But tell me,' he went on, 'do you make use of much wine?' 'No, Father,' I said, 'I cannot bear it.' 'I said that to you,' he replied, 'in order to warn you that you could drink of it in the morning, and when you liked, without breaking your fast; and that holds always. Here is the decision of the point in the same place, n. 75: "May one, without breaking his fast, drink wine at any hour that he pleases, and even in large quantity? He may, and even hippocras." I did not remember that hippocras,' he said; 'I must put it in my list.' 'What an excellent man,' I said, 'is Escobar.' 'Everybody loves him,' replied the Father. 'He makes such pretty questions. Mark this one which comes from the same place, n. 38: "If a man doubts whether he is twenty-one years of age, is he obliged to fast? No. But if I am to be twenty-one this night, one hour after midnight, and if to-morrow is a day of fasting, shall I be obliged to fast to-morrow? No. And for this reason, that you might eat as much as you liked, from midnight till one o'clock, since you would then be twenty-one; and thus, having the right to break your fast, you are under no obligation to fast."' 'Oh, how entertaining that is!' I said. 'One cannot get away from it,' he said. 'I spend days and nights in reading it. I do nothing else.'

"Then arose a question as to the occasions of sin. The Jesuit Father said it was not always a duty to



avoid them, and he was asked whether they might be sought. 'That,' he says, 'is sometimes permitted. The celebrated casuist, Basil Ponce, has said in his *Treatise on Penitence*, 9. 4, p. 94; and Father Bauny quotes him with approval: "One may seek an occasion of sin directly and for itself—*primo et per se*—when the spiritual or temporal good of ourselves or our neighbour prompts us to it."' 'Truly,' said I, 'it seems to me that I am dreaming when I hear the religious speak in this fashion. But really, Father, tell me, on your conscience, are you of that opinion?' 'Certainly not,' said the Father. 'You speak then,' I went on, 'against your conscience?' 'Not at all,' said he. 'In that matter I did not speak according to my conscience, but according to that of Ponce and Father Bauny. And you might follow them in safety, for they are able men.' 'What, Father,' said I, 'because they have put these three lines in their book, will it be allowed to seek occasions of sin? I thought that we should take for our rule only the sacred Scriptures and the tradition of the Church, but not your casuists.' 'Oh, good God!' cried the Father, 'you remind me of those Jansenists. Do you think that Father Bauny and Basil Ponce cannot render their opinion probable?' 'I am not contented with the probable,' I said; 'I want the certain.' 'I see well,' said the good Father, 'that you do not know the doctrine of probable opinions. You would speak differently if you did. Truly I must instruct you in it; you will not have wasted your time coming here. Without that you could have understood nothing. It is the foundation and the A B C of our whole morality.'

"I was delighted," says the author, "to see him



caught as I wished; and having testified my satisfaction to him, I entreated him to explain to me what is a probable opinion. 'Our authors will answer you in that matter better than I,' said he. 'Mark how they all speak of it generally, and among others our twenty-four, in *Princ.* ex. 3, n. 8: "An opinion is called probable, when it is founded upon reasons of some consideration. Whence it sometimes happens that a single author of importance and weight may render an opinion probable." And the reason is given in the same place: "For a man specially addicted to study would not adhere to an opinion if he were not drawn to it by a reason good and sufficient." 'And so,' I said, 'a single doctor may turn and upset men's consciences at his will, and always with safety.' 'You must not laugh at this,' he said, 'nor think to combat this doctrine. When the Jansenists have tried to do it, they have wasted their time. It is too well established. Listen to Sanchez, who is one of the most celebrated of our Fathers, *Sum.* l. 1, c. 9, n. 7: "You will perhaps doubt if the authority of a single good and learned doctor renders an opinion probable. To which I answer, Yes. And mark how it is proved. A probable opinion is that which has a considerable foundation. Now, the authority of a learned and pious man is not of small consideration, but rather of great consideration. For"—mark well this reason—"if the testimony of such a man is of great weight in assuring us that a thing has passed, for example, in Rome, why should it not be of the same value in a doubt respecting morality?" 'What a pleasant comparison,' I said to him, 'of things of the world to those of the conscience!' 'Have patience,' said he, 'Sanchez replies

to that in the lines immediately following: "And the restriction which certain authors adduce does not please me, that the authority of such a doctor is sufficient in things of human law, but not in those of divine law. For it is of great weight in both."'"

After this Pascal declares that such a doctrine was very convenient and accommodating; for one could never be compelled to answer a question, Yes or No. "'And I see well now,' he goes on, 'how useful are the contradictory opinions which your doctors have on every subject; for the one always serves you and the other never hurts you. If you do not find your account on the one side you go to the other, and always with safety.' 'That is true,' he said, 'and so we can always say with Diana, who found Father Bauny with him when Father Lugo was against him—

"Sæpe premente Deo, fert Deus alter opem."

If one God presses us, another delivers us.'

'I quite understand,' I said, 'but a difficulty occurs to my mind: it is that after having consulted one of your authors, and having taken from him a somewhat liberal opinion, one may be caught if he meets a confessor who is not of that way of thinking, and who refuses absolution unless one changes his opinion. Have you considered this difficulty, Father?' 'Do you doubt of it?' he said. 'They are obliged to absolve their penitents who have probable opinions, on penalty of mortal sin, so that they may not fail here. This is well explained by our Fathers, and among others by Father Bauny, tr. 4, *de Pœnit.* q. 13, p. 93: "When the penitent," he says, "follows a probable opinion, the confessor ought to absolve him, although his own opinion may be contrary

to that of the penitent.” ‘But,’ said I, ‘he does not say that it is a mortal sin to refuse to absolve him.’ ‘How precipitate you are,’ he replied; ‘listen to what follows, he makes an express statement on the subject: “To refuse absolution to a penitent who acts according to a probable opinion is a sin which in its nature is mortal.” And in confirmation of this sentiment he quotes three of the most famous of our Fathers, Suarez, Vasquez, and Sanchez.’

“‘Oh, Father,’ I replied, ‘how prudently all this is arranged! There is no more to fear; a confessor would no longer dare to go wrong. I did not know that you had power to command on pain of damnation. I thought that you could only remove sins; I did not think that you could introduce them. But, from what I see, you have all power.’ ‘You do not speak correctly,’ he said. ‘We do not introduce sins, we only point them out. I have already noted two or three times that you are not a good scholastic.’ ‘However that may be, Father,’ said I, ‘my doubt is resolved satisfactorily.’”

He then made inquiry of the Jesuit Father as to what they would do in case they found the Fathers opposed to any of their casuists, and received for answer that the Fathers were good for their time, but they are too far removed from ourselves to be quite applicable to our case; so that our morality is not regulated by them, but by the new casuists; so that, says Pascal, at the arrival of the Jesuit Company we have seen Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Jerome and the others disappear, as far as the teaching of morality is concerned; and then he asks for the names of the casuists who have supplanted them, and receives

for answer no fewer than forty-five names, including those already mentioned and many others. On hearing this long list, he exclaims in terror, "Oh, Father, were all those people Christians?" "How, Christians!" he answered; "did I not tell you that these are the only men by whom we now govern Christendom?"

Immediately after the publication of the fifth letter there occurred the "miracle" of the Holy Thorn at Port Royal des Champs, in which not only Pascal, but a large proportion of the public at that period firmly believed, and of which we will shortly give an account.

At present, however, it may be as well to carry on and complete our account of the *Provincial Letters*. We have already spoken extensively of the early letters; and in those which immediately follow the same general subject is carried on, and in the same manner, by something like the Socratic method. In the sixth letter the writer takes up the artifices by which the Jesuits endeavour to elude the authority of the gospel, the councils, and the popes, and shows some of the evil consequences which result from their teaching on Probability. In the seventh he takes up the knotty question of intention, which he shows to be subject to manifold abuses; as, for example, in the permission given by some of their casuists to kill another in defending one's honour and his property, a permission which is extended even to priests and religious. Both of these letters were received with great delight, and circulated throughout the whole of France. The seventh even reached the hands of Cardinal Mazarin, who was much diverted with it.

At the time of the publication of the seventh letter Pascal was living at an hotel in the Rue des Poiriers,



under the name of M. de Mons, a name which belonged to a branch of his family. While there he received a visit from his brother-in-law, M. Périer, who announced himself as a gentleman from the provinces, without mentioning his relationship to Pascal. Father Defrelat, a Jesuit, who was related to both, came to see M. Périer, and told him there was a prevalent opinion that his brother-in-law was the author of the *Little Letters*, saying that he had better warn him of this, and advise him to discontinue such dangerous work. Périer thanked him for his advice, informing him at the same time that it was useless; "for," he said, "M. Pascal cannot prevent your suspicions; and even if he should deny that the letters were his, you would not believe him. If, therefore, you will continue to suspect him, I see no remedy for it!" What made the interview more uncomfortable to Périer was the fact that a number of copies of the seventh letter were lying on his bed to dry. Happily the curtains were drawn, so that Father Defrelat saw nothing. Immediately after his departure Périer went upstairs to Pascal, and told him; whereupon they both had a good laugh at the manner in which the Jesuit had been outwitted. The Abbé Maynard remarks that they had already studied at the school of the Society!

The eighth letter on the "corrupt maxims" of the casuists, referring to judges, usurers, bankrupts, etc., has been thought somewhat heavy on account of the number of texts and quotations with which it is laden; and it appears that Pascal had thought of discontinuing the letters at this point. Among his papers the following note is found: "After my eighth, I thought I had made sufficient answer." We should have lost much if he had



adhered to this conviction. The eighth letter was dated 28th May 1656. It was on 3rd July of the same year that he began the ninth, which certainly cannot be charged with any want of liveliness or interest. He begins in the following style: "I will pay you no more compliments than the good Father did to me the last time I saw him. As soon as he perceived me, he came to me and said, looking at a book which he held in his hand: 'Will not he who shall open paradise to you, oblige you perfectly? Would you not give millions of gold to have the key, and to enter whenever it seemed good to you? You need not enter at a very great expense. Here is one key, indeed a hundred at a very low price.' I did not know whether the good Father was reading or speaking of himself; but he put an end to my doubt by saying: 'Those are the first words of a fine book by Father Barry of our Society. The title of this book is *Paradise opened by a Hundred Devotions to the Mother of God easy to practise*;" and Pascal, in his dialogue with the Jesuit Father, shows how the Jesuits have fostered a false devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and further, how they have invented facilities in order to enable Christians to attain salvation without difficulty among the softnesses and conveniences of life. He then proceeds to examine their maxims on ambition, envy, gluttony, equivocation, mental reservations, the liberty allowed to girls, the dresses of women, play, and hearing Mass. In the tenth Provincial, written about a month later, he carries on the same kind of examination of the teaching of the Jesuit casuists on the subjects of Confession, Penitence, Absolution, Contrition, and the Love of God.

It has been said that Pascal calumniated the Jesuits

in representing them as superficially amiable and affectionate, while profoundly cruel and persecuting. But at least the world has justified Pascal. Sainte Beuve speaks of the Jesuit spirit as on the one hand caressing and enervating, and on the other diabolical and calumniating, which at the same time did not hate with an honest and vigorous hatred. It is to this that Pascal refers in the fifth letter (quoted above) when he says, "The good Father gave me a thousand caresses, for he always loves me." An example of this spirit is given in the doings of the Inquisition, in connection with which it is related that between two tortures, after a horrible description of the sufferings, it is added that the judges addressed the victim with benignity (*benigne allocuti sunt*)!

A report had been circulated about this time that Pascal regretted the publication of the Provincials; and by way of confirmation of this rumour, a story was told of the Marquise de Sablé having asked Pascal if he was quite sure of the truth of the contents of his letters, and of his having answered that this was the business of those from whom he received his information. The story in all its details is a pure invention, since we have the clear testimony of Pascal's niece, Marguerite Périer, on the subject. She tells us that Pascal was asked a year before his death if he repented having written the Provincials, and this was his answer: "1. I answer, That, far from regretting, if I had to do it again, I should make them stronger. 2. I have been asked why I have mentioned the names of the authors from whom I have taken all those abominable propositions which I have quoted. I answer, If I was in a town in which there were a

dozen fountains, and I knew certainly that one of them was poisoned, I should be bound to warn everyone not to go and draw water at that fountain; and as it might be thought that this was a pure imagination on my part, I should be under obligation to name the person who had poisoned it, rather than expose the whole city to being poisoned. 3. I have been asked why I employed a style pleasant, bantering, diverting. I answer, If I had written in a dogmatic style, only the learned would have read my letters, and they had no need of them, since they knew at least as much as I did of the subject. So I thought it my duty to write in such a manner that my letters would be read by women and men of the world, so that they might be acquainted with the danger of all these maxims and propositions which were being spread abroad, and which people too readily believed. 4. I have been asked if I have myself read all the books which I have quoted. I answer, No. In that case it would have been necessary for me to have passed a great part of my life in reading very bad books; but I have twice read the whole of Escobar, and, as for the others, I have had them read by some of my friends; but I have not made use of a single passage without having read it myself in the book quoted, or without having examined the matter with reference to which it is brought forward, or without having read that which precedes and follows, so as not to run the danger of quoting an objection for an answer, a thing which would have been reprehensible and unjust." That Pascal did not change his opinion of the Jesuits in his last days is clear enough from some of his utterances in the *Thoughts*. At this place let one suffice: "The Pope is very easily

surprised [misled] by reason of his engagements and the credence which he gives to the Jesuits; and the Jesuits are quite capable of surprising him for the sake of calumny." Throughout his later life Pascal \*cherished, and thought himself bound to cherish, a fervent indignation against this Order. This is well expressed in the words of Sainte Beuve: "When Prometheus first moulded the human clay, and caused to enter into it a portion of each kind of animal, he placed, down in the heart, a spark of the wrath of the lion (*insani leonis vim*). This spark, blind, yet, when moderated and controlled as it ought to be, remaining an essential part of every generous man, and not necessarily dying out in the Christian, belonged to Arnauld. He had something of the lion, it has been said; and something of the lion must be in every true heart. So also Pascal, along with the most brilliant intellectual gifts, possessed intact this frank faculty of moral indignation. There is no longer any trace of this in the human heart, which has been crushed by Jesuitry; and, unfortunately, it has not always been replaced by divine meekness."

It has already been remarked that there is a great difference of tone from the beginning of the eleventh Provincial. The letters are no longer addressed to the Provincial, but to the Jesuit Fathers (*Aux R.R. P.P. Jesuites*); they are no longer dialogues, they are now of the nature of orations. The eleventh begins with a defence of his method, with a contention that raillery is a lawful weapon to employ against folly. Answering the reproaches of the Jesuits that he has turned sacred things into ridicule: "In truth, Fathers," he says, "there is a great deal of difference between laughing at religion, and laughing at those who pro-



fane it by their extravagant opinions. It would be an impiety to fail in respect for the truths which the Spirit of God has revealed; but it would be another impiety to fail in scorn for the falsehoods which the spirit of man opposes to them. For, my Fathers, since you compel me to enter upon this discourse, I pray you to consider that, as the Christian verities are worthy of love and respect, the errors which are contrary to them are worthy of scorn and hatred; because there are two things in the verities of our religion: a divine beauty which renders them lovable, and a sacred majesty which renders them venerable; and that there are also two things in errors: the impiety which renders them horrible, and the impertinence which renders them ridiculous. And it is for this reason that the saints, as they have for truth those two sentiments of love and fear, and as their wisdom is comprehended in the fear which is its principle and the love which is its end, have also for error those two sentiments of hatred and scorn, and their zeal is employed equally in repelling with force the malice of the impious, and confounding with ridicule their errors and their folly." Here already we are sensible of something of that difference of tone to which Madame de Sevigné has drawn attention. Throughout the whole of this letter he defends the use which he had made of ridicule by the practice of other writers, and even of those who are inspired. At the end of the letter he writes: "In finishing this letter I have seen a writing which you have published, in which you accuse me of imposture on the subject of six of your maxims which I have reported, and of correspondence with the heretics. I hope that in a very short time,



my Fathers, you will see an exact reply to this, after which I believe you will have no disposition to continue this sort of accusation."

The twelfth letter, dated 9th September 1656, which professes to be a refutation of the quibbles (*chicanes*) of the Jesuits on Almsgiving and Simony, is no less remarkable. It begins: "I was ready to write to you, my Fathers, on the subject of the insults which you have inflicted upon me, for so long, in your writings, in which you call me 'impious, buffoon, ignorant, joker, impostor, caluminator, knave, heretic, Calvinist in disguise, disciple of Dumoulin, possessed by a legion of devils,' and whatever you please. I wished to make the world understand why you treat me in such a fashion, for I should be sorry that they should believe all that of me; and I had resolved to complain of your calumnies and your impostures when I had seen your answers in which you accuse me of the same," and so forth. After examining their statements throughout the letter, he remarks: "I pity you, my Fathers, for having recourse to such remedies. The insults which you inflict upon me will not explain our differences, and the threats which you utter in so many fashions will not prevent me from defending myself. You think you have power and impunity; but I believe I have truth and innocence. It is a strange and protracted war when violence attempts to oppress the truth. . . . There is this extreme difference, that violence has only a course limited by the command of God, who controls its effects to the glory of the truth which it attacks; whilst truth subsists eternally, and finally triumphs over its enemies, because it is eternal and powerful, even as God." There can be no question

of the sincerity of the man by whom these words were written.

The thirteenth letter, which continues the discussion on homicide, has towards the end a startling reference to the day of judgment, when he says: "Vasquez will condemn Lessius on one point, as Lessius will condemn Vasquez on another; and all your authors will rise in judgment, the one against the other, in mutual condemnation, for their intolerable outrages against the law of Jesus Christ."

The fourteenth letter, which continues the same subject, has a peroration no less striking, with a "comic application" of the doctrine of probability, whilst the fifteenth becomes again keen and mocking, so that it has been said, "Pascal has made sport of the Jesuits through all eternity." An eminent French writer has declared that these closing letters, and especially the fourteenth, might be placed beside the greatest orations of antiquity, whilst the Philippics of Demosthenes and of Cicero had nothing more powerful or more perfect.

The assembly of the French clergy received the Bull of Alexander VII., 17th March 1657. just before the publication of the eighteenth Provincial. This Bull was intended to put an end to all doubts respecting the application of other papal decrees, for example, that of Urban VIII., 1643; and professed to settle the question of fact, specifically declaring that the five propositions contained *de facto* Jansenist error. After receiving the Bull the assembly drew up a formulary condemning Jansenius, and requiring all the clergy to sign it. This was a great blow to Port Royal; and Pascal, taking up his pen to continue his Provincials,

wrote to Father Annat, to whom the last of them had been addressed, beginning: "Be comforted, Father, those whom you hate are afflicted." But he went no further, and these great letters came to an end. We may be assured that the discontinuance of the letters was not the effect of any personal timidity on the part of Pascal; but he may have thought it undesirable further to provoke the enemies of Port Royal, or even to hinder a movement which seemed to promise better for the Jansenists.

A Latin translation of the *Provincial Letters*, made by Nicole, and published in the next year, 1658, made them known throughout the continent of Europe; and by increasing the circle of their readers, diffused the fame of the writer and the extent of their influence. The condemnation of the writer by Rome, by the French bishops, and by the Sorbonne, had effect given to it by the action of the State. A decree of the Council, 23rd September 1660, ordained that the book entitled *Ludovici Montaltii Litteræ Provinciales*, should be torn and burnt by the public executioners. As we have seen, Pascal was moved by none of these things, and declared that, so far from repenting of what he had done, if he had to do it again, he would make it stronger. With regard to the papal censure, he said: "If my letters are condemned at Rome, that which I condemn in them is condemned in heaven"; adding, "*Ad tuum, Domine Jesu, tribunal appello.*"

Much has been written on the strength, the keenness, the brilliancy of these mighty letters; and one may well hesitate to attempt anything new. Several testimonies have already been quoted; and a few words more may be borrowed from Vinet, a great thinker

and writer, and one who was intimately and profoundly acquainted with the literature of France. All the beauties of Pascal's style, he says, are intellectual or moral. His masculine diction suggests the idea rather of steel strongly tempered and perfectly polished than of gold with splendid reflections. With Pascal the force of his style, always measured and natural, is so great that it hardly allows us to regret the partial loss of brilliancy. But never was there less misuse, nor even less use of a figurative style. The honour has been given to the Provincials, by Voltaire and others, of having fixed the French language. If this honour does not belong entirely to Pascal, if Corneille and Balzac may claim a part of it, that of Pascal is certainly the greatest. Pascal was the first to be at once pure and popular in prose. Balzac had been less popular, and Corneille, we should say, less pure. The decisive moment in the history of the language is certainly the moment of the Provincials. To fix a language, be it remembered, is not to arrest its development or limit its acquisitions; it is to reject finally that which it was hesitating to reject, and to sanction with authority all the rest. Many expressions which were still made use of were found condemned without hope of return by the contempt which Pascal poured upon them; others, whose destiny was uncertain, he has, in the words of Madame de Sevigné, "consecrated to immortality." Very few of the words which he made use of have gone out of use. Scarcely three or four could be quoted. As regards the position of the *Little Letters* among the classic works of France, "nothing has effaced the Provincials." Between antiquity and the present moment this book remains

unique and, like itself, alone. Pascal is the incarnation of Polemic. Other writers may excel him in particular qualities; but "it is not to them, it is to Pascal, and this for reasons entirely literary, that I will first send the young minds who wish to learn at once the difficult art of discussing and the no less difficult art of writing."



## CHAPTER VI

### LATER YEARS

V

FOR a moment we must go back to an event of some importance, which has already been referred to as having taken place during the publication of the *Provincial Letters*. It was on the day of the publication of the fifth letter, 20th April 1656, that the Solitaries of Port Royal, in consequence of the condemnation of Arnauld, were obliged to disperse. An event had occurred just after the issuing of the fourth letter which, it was vainly hoped, might engender a better feeling toward the persecuted Society. This was the "Miracle" of the Holy Thorn. 25th March 1656

Without giving any opinion as to the explanation or significance of the phenomena, we find the story of sufficient interest to set forth the details as they are furnished on substantial evidence. The healing took place on Pascal's niece, Marguerite, the daughter of Madame Périer by whom Pascal's life was written. She, with her elder sister, was placed by their mother at Port Royal, in 1653, for the sake of her education. For three years and a half this child was afflicted with a fistula lachrymalis, a disease in the corner of the left eye which was believed to be incurable. This perforation through which the tears poured was large

externally, and had affected the parts within, so that the bones of the nose and the palate became diseased, and the discharge from the wound became offensive, so that she had to be separated from the other children. Every effort was made to obtain relief for the sufferer. All the most famous specialists were consulted, but in vain. It was at this time that the blow was about to fall upon the Society at Port Royal. The king had been made to believe that these pious and deserted women were the supporters of heresy, and that Heaven might be supposed to smile on those who rooted out them and their errors. They heard that things had come to such a pass that a royal council was about to be held, in order to determine on the dispersion of the nuns; and even that the list of their names had been made out, and the place of their banishment determined upon. This intelligence was received on the 20th day of March 1656.

The Mère des Anges, aunt of Nicole, the translator of the Provincials, was then abbess, and she at once gave herself up to earnest prayer on behalf of the threatened community. It was reported to her that among other relics collected by a saintly priest, there was a thorn from the crown of the crucified Saviour that would be brought to the convent. The abbess considered that they were in no condition to receive such a gift, and only on persuasion gave her consent that it should be brought to the convent. These details are recorded and remembered, that it may be seen that there was no enthusiastic reception given to the relic. It was brought into the convent 24th March 1656.

The abbess had remained in prayer night and day.

The nuns had placed the thorn on an altar in the choir; and, after vespers, devotions were used suited to the crown of thorns, after which they all kissed the holy thorn. As Marguerite Périer approached, the mistress of the novices, noting her sad condition, asked her to recommend herself to God, and to touch her eye with the holy thorn. Apparently little was thought of what had taken place, until in the evening Marguerite Périer was heard to say to one of her sisters: "I have no longer anything the matter with me, the holy thorn has cured me." The sisters at first kept silence with wonder at what had happened, and sent for M. Dalencé, the surgeon who had treated the girl and pronounced her malady incurable; and who, on coming to see her, repeated the opinion he had given before. "Look again," they said; and when they had told him all that had happened, he exclaimed: "There never was a miracle, if this is not one." On his report several physicians and surgeons came to see the girl, and attested the "miracle."

Notwithstanding this attestation and the widespread belief in the reality of the miracle, many doubted and still doubt as to the true nature of the incident; and, as M. Sainte Beuve remarks, whether we like it or not, we must do our best to understand it. It is a great disappointment, he says, to find, over against the Provincials, the miracle of the holy thorn; and he adds: "The Jansenists saw in it the triumph of their cause; I see in it, above all, the humiliation of the human spirit."

By those, then, who dispute the miraculous character of that which happened to Marguerite Périer, it is said that she had not exactly a fistula, but a lachrymal tumour caused by the obstruction of the channel of

tears. When this tumour was pressed, a portion of its contents was discharged through the lower orifice of the channel. There is no proof, it is said, that the bone was carious; the natural conduit was stopped by an imperfect obstacle, and this obstacle gave way in part when it was pressed. So, it is said, when the sister applied the relic to the tumour she exercised a sufficient pressure to bring about the emptying of the tumour, so that the explanation of the relief afforded is quite natural. The girl found herself relieved, and told her companions. The surgeon did not see her until the 31st of March, that is, seven days after the time of the miracle, and he then found everything in good condition. The cause of the suffering being removed, the effects speedily disappeared, especially in the case of a child. The surgeon had seen her about two months before the 24th, and he saw her seven days after.

As a matter of fact, however, the fame of the miracle came to be more and more spread abroad. When the physicians, in their certificate of 14th April, declared that such a healing transcended the ordinary powers of nature, the public voice speedily declared on the same side. M. du Saussai, Vicar-General of Paris, who began his visitation of the monastery with doubts as to the propriety of sanctioning its continuance, laid them aside in presence of this healing of which he made record. On 22nd October 1656, M. de Hodencq, another Vicar-General, in the name of Cardinal de Retz gave a solemn sentence of approval to the miracle, and caused a *Te Deum* to be sung; and, above all, other miracles and healings by the holy thorn followed in quick succession to the number of forty, which afterwards rose to the number of eighty.

Even the Jesuits did not venture to deny the reality of the miracle, although they knew it would be used against themselves, so that they were reduced to maintaining that it was the work of the devil. And even a pope gave his sanction; for Benedict XIII., in 1728, allowed it to be adduced in proof that miracles have not ceased in the Church.

✱ The "miracle" touched Pascal very closely. It not only happened on a member of his own family, but within a community in which he was deeply interested, and whose very existence was then threatened. There can be no doubt that he believed in the reality of the miracle, and regarded it as a divine interposition on behalf of Port Royal and the truth for which he was contending in his letters. Such was the opinion of his coadjutors in general. M. de Saci, we are informed, was accustomed to say to his friends that, if one could doubt of the justification of Port Royal by this miracle and by the others which followed, there would be no truth in the Church which might not be obscured; and if these miracles were explained away, all those which had been worked by God or by His servants could easily be evaded by the same reasons. But not the members of Port Royal only, but the Queen and Cardinal de Retz, the archbishop of Paris, became convinced of the divine protection being extended to the Society, and were anxious to take the nuns under their protection. Whatever may be our judgment on this strange incident, it would at least seem probable that it stirred up Pascal to undertake that great work in defence of revealed religion which occupied the last years of his life, and of which he has left us such precious fragments.



Marguerite Périer, the healing of whom was regarded as miraculous, lived with her family for many years at Clermont, and was the last to depart. She died in April 1733, at the age of eighty-seven years; and it was not unnatural that her friends, who believed in the miracle which restored her to health, should have thought her life in a manner miraculous, and that she was preserved to the year in which she died in order to see the reputed miracles of the Abbé Paris.

\* The effect of the belief in the miracle was, for a time at least, to free Port Royal from persecution. The Solitaries gradually came back, and the valley began to flourish as before. Many joined the nuns, whilst many others came to be with them for a season for the sake of retirement and devotion. Including the nuns and the Solitaries, there were two hundred and fifty members of the two societies, whilst the number under their direction amounted to several hundreds.

Pascal's health, never robust, broke down soon after the conclusion of the *Provincial Letters*, and his malady took the form of toothache, which deprived him almost entirely of sleep. In order to obtain relief from the pain he endured, he set to work to reconsider some problems in geometry which had formerly occupied his attention, and this seems to have had the desired effect. "However," says Madame Périer, "his infirmities continuing, without giving him a moment of relaxation, he was rendered unable to continue his work or to see any visitor. But if he was thus hindered from serving the public or individuals, his infirmities were not useless to himself, and he endured them with so much peacefulness and patience

that we may well believe that God willed thus to render him such as He willed that he should be in order to appear before Him; for, during this long illness, he never turned from his purpose, having always in his mind these two great maxims, to renounce all pleasure and all superfluity. He practised them in his worst sickness with a constant vigilance over his senses, absolutely refusing to them all that was agreeable to them; and when necessity constrained him to do anything which could give him any satisfaction, he had a marvellous readiness in turning his mind away so that it should take no part in it. For example, his continued maladies obliging him to nourish himself delicately, he took the greatest care not to taste what he ate. . . . He never said of anything, That is good; and when we served him with anything new, in accordance with the seasons, if we asked him, after the repast, if he had found it good, he simply said: 'You should have warned me of this before; and I assure you that I did not notice it.' And when it happened that anyone spoke of the pleasantness of any food in his presence, he could not endure it. He called it being sensual, even if it was only in reference to common things; since, he said, it was a way of gratifying the taste, which was always bad." We are under the impression that, among ourselves, neither religion nor science would make such demands upon the weakness of human flesh; but that is not here the question. <In his asceticism and rigorism Pascal was not merely sincere, he was obeying the dictates of sanctified reason and conscience, as he understood their voice; and herein he was following in the footsteps of many holy men.>

On another subject his sister remarks: "He had so great a love of poverty, that it was always present to him; so that when he wished to undertake anything, or anyone asked him for advice, the first thought that came into his mind was to see if poverty could be practised. One of the things on which he examined himself the most, was the thought of wishing to excel in everything; so also to make use of the best workmen in all things, and the like. He could not endure that people should carefully seek for all conveniences of life . . . and he was accustomed to say that there was nothing so apt to extinguish the spirit of poverty as this careful seeking for conveniences . . . and in regard to workpeople, he said we should always choose the poorest and the best, and not that kind of excellence which is never necessary, and which could never be useful. He was wont to cry out: 'If my heart were as poor as my spirit, I should be quite happy; for I am marvellously persuaded that poverty is a great aid to one's salvation.'"

Madame P rier goes on: "This love, which he had for poverty, led him to love the poor with so much tenderness, that he was never able to refuse alms, although he gave out of his necessity, having but little goods, and being obliged to expend in excess of his income by reason of his infirmities. But when this was represented to him on his giving any considerable amount in alms, he was displeased, and said: 'I have noticed one thing, that, however poor a man may be, he always leaves something when he dies.' Thus he shut the mouths of objectors; and he sometimes gave away so much that he had to borrow at interest of his banker so as not to trouble his friends."

In the worst of his sufferings he was wont to say to his friends who were distressed for him: "Do not pity me. Sickness is the natural condition of Christians. In sickness we are as we ought always to be—in the suffering of pains, in the privation of goods and of all the pleasures of the senses, exempt from all the passions which work in us during the whole course of our life, without ambition, without avarice, in the continual expectation of death. Is it not in this manner that Christians should pass their life? And is it not a great happiness when one finds himself by necessity in the state in which he is obliged to be, and when one has nothing else to do but to submit himself humbly and patiently?"

That the spirit of Pascal pervaded the community may be seen from some utterances of the Mère Angélique. <"Poverty," she says, "consists in a disposition of heart to suffer the want of things necessary, even to die naked, like Jesus Christ.> It is of such that we can truly say, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' For, to die of poverty is to die with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ . . . we should give thanks to God, if we were reduced to have only bread and water. . . . Poverty, when it is well practised, is only a small austerity, not only for the body, but also for the mind; because there is nothing which humbles more."

Pascal was very strong in his protests against what he called attachment to created things, by which he meant something like the opposite of renunciation. "It is well," he says, "to have wife, children, goods, and, above all, health, when we can; but not so as to attach ourselves to them in such a manner that our happiness depends upon them."



The devotion of Pascal to the interests of his fellow-men was profound and extensive ; and various instances are given by his sister. One of these is very remarkable. "About three months before his death there happened an incident which gave a very sensible proof of his vigilance against any loss of purity, and which, at the same time, illustrates the greatness of his charity. As he was returning one day from Mass at St. Sulpice, there came to him a young girl about fifteen years of age, very beautiful, asking for alms. He was touched at seeing the child exposed to palpable danger, and asked her who she was, and how it was that it became necessary for her to ask for alms ; and finding out that she came from the country, that her father was dead, and that her mother had fallen sick,—she had been conveyed to the Hôtel Dieu on that day,—Pascal believed that God had sent her to him as soon as she had been in need, so that from that hour he conveyed her to the seminary, where he put her into the hands of a good priest to whom he gave some money, and asked him to take care of her, and to place her in some position in which she could receive guidance on account of her youth, and where she would personally be in safety. In order to add to her comfort, he told her that he would send next day a woman to buy her some clothes, and all that should be necessary for her, to put her in a position to be able to serve<sup>as</sup> a mistress. The next day he sent her a woman, who worked so well with this good priest that, after having her dressed, they got her into a good situation. And this ecclesiastic having asked of the woman the name of the person who was doing this charity, she told him that she had not been commissioned to give this informa-



tion, but that she was to come and see him from time to time in order to make provision, with him, for the wants of the girl; and he besought her to obtain from him permission to communicate his name, saying: 'I promise you that I will never speak of it during his life; but if God should permit him to die before me, I should have the consolation of making public this action, for I find it so admirable that I cannot allow it to remain in oblivion.' Thus, by this single encounter this good ecclesiastic, without knowing Pascal, judged how much charity and love he had for purity. He had an extreme tenderness for us; but this affection did not amount to attachment. He gave a very striking proof of it at the death of my sister, which preceded his by ten months. When he received this intelligence, he said only: 'May God give us grace to die as well!' and ever after he kept himself in wonderful submission to the dispositions of the providence of God, without making reflection except on the great graces which God had conferred upon my sister during her life, and on the circumstances of the time of her death, which made him say incessantly: 'Blessed are they who die, provided they die in the Lord!' When he saw me in continual affliction for this loss, which I felt so deeply, he was distressed, and said that this was not well, and that we ought not to have these feelings for the death of the just; and that, on the contrary, we should praise God for having so abundantly rewarded her for the slight services which she had rendered to Him."

One of the great trials of the Pascals and of Port Royal was the mandate of the bishops requiring them to sign a formulary in condemnation of Jansenius.

They had been willing to condemn the five propositions condemned by the Sorbonne and the Pope, so long as they might have in reserve the opinion that the propositions did not embody the teaching of Jansenius. But now they were required to go further, and condemn the doctrines of the propositions as being those of Jansenius. The doctors and confessors of Port Royal having considered the demand, decided that with some modifications, the nuns might sign the formulary. By concession on the part of some of the members of Port Royal, the nuns were induced to sign, as had been done by the house in Paris. Jacqueline de Sainte Euphémie, Pascal's sister, was induced to do so, and died of a broken heart three months afterwards. *in my opinion* \* Pascal declared his inability to accept this compromise. He had gone as far as he could in rejecting the propositions: he would not condemn Jansenius and Augustine, for in his mind they were inseparable. *in my opinion* \* Arnould, Nicole, and others were in favour of concession; but Pascal held out. He saw that his friends were yielding out of a desire to preserve Port Royal. "It is our business," he said, "to obey God, and not to calculate the consequences of our obedience; Port Royal is afraid: it is a bad policy." So powerfully was he affected by the discussion, so deeply was he distressed by what he regarded as the surrender of the truth by his friends, that he fainted away, losing speech and consciousness. After being restored, and when the others had retired, leaving only his most intimate friends, the Duc de Roannez and the members of his own family, Madame Périer asked him to explain the effect produced upon him. He replied: "When I saw all these persons whom I regarded as those to whom God had

made known the truth, and who ought to be its defenders,—when I saw them shaken and surrendering the truth, I confess to you that I was seized with such grief that I could not endure it, but succumbed to it.”

We cannot but agree with the language of Sainte Beuve: “What moral grandeur! and how happy are those who can thus suffer for the integrity of conscience, even to fainting, even to dying! Sacred agony! Can one conceive anything more admirable than this tenderness for the truth, so delicate and so vulnerable, at the heart of intelligences so firm and so invincible? The sister dies of it, the brother falls to the ground without consciousness. Fontenelle, Goethe, and M. de Talleyrand have not these fainting fits.”

Pascal was the last representative of the spirit of St. Cyran, and even he had not all at once fully attained to it. <It was his sister who from the time of her confession had understood it and never departed from it.> It has been truly said that, in relation to her brother, she explains him, completes him, and perhaps in some respects surpasses him. \*

About two months before his death Pascal's sufferings increased. On 29th June 1662 he left his house for that of his sister, Madame Périer, and this for a reason which illustrates the most attractive side of his character. He had got into his house a family, husband, wife, and children; and one of the sons took smallpox, and he was afraid lest Madame Périer who came to see him every day, might carry away the disease to her own children; and instead of removing the sick boy, he, though suffering himself, found it more simple to remove himself. His old friends did not

forget him. Arnauld, who was then under the necessity of concealing himself, came several times *incognito* to visit him; and so did Nicole. So did the curé of St. Étienne.

“He had a great desire,” says Madame Périer, “to receive the communion; but his physicians were opposed to it, saying that he could not receive it fasting. . . . He then said: ‘Since this grace cannot be granted to me, I should wish to substitute some good work; and not being able to communicate in the head, I should like much to do so in the members; and for that purpose I have thought to have here a poor sick man to whom the same services may be rendered as to me, having some one to watch over him, and, in short, making no difference between him and me, in order that I may have the consolation of knowing that there is a poor man as well treated as myself. . . . For when I think that at the same time that I am so well off, there is an infinite number of poor persons who are in worse health than I am, and who are destitute of the things which are most necessary, that gives me a pain which I cannot endure; and so I entreat you to ask the curé to find a sick man whom I may help.’

“I sent to the curé at once, who informed me that there was no one in a condition to be removed; but that he could give him, as soon as he was cured, a means of exercising such charity, by taking charge of an old man of whom he might take care during the rest of his life; for the curé at that time had no doubt that he would recover.

“As he saw that he could not have a poor man in his house with him, he besought me to do him this



grace, to have him conveyed to the Incurables, because he had a great desire to die in the company of the poor. I told him that the physicians did not find it suitable to transport him in the state he was then in, which distressed him much; and he made me promise that, if he had a little intermission, I would give him this satisfaction."

As he grew worse, in spite of the assurances of the physicians that there was no danger, he saw the nearness of the end, and "he prayed me," says Madame Périer, "to call in an ecclesiastic to pass the night near him; and I found him so ill that I gave orders, without saying anything about it, to bring tapers and all that was necessary for communion on the morrow.

"The preparations were not useless, but they were called into requisition sooner than we had thought; for about midnight he was taken with a convulsion so violent, that when it passed we were afraid that he was dead, and we had this great disappointment, with all the others, to see him die without the sacrament, after having asked for it so often and with so much eagerness. But God, who would reward a desire so fervent and so just, suspended, as by a miracle, these convulsions and restored to him his judgment quite sound as in perfect health; so that the curé, when he entered his chamber with the holy sacrament, cried to him, 'Here is He whom you have so greatly desired.'

"These words awoke him; and as the curé approached to give him the communion, he made an effort and half raised himself to receive it with greater respect. And the curé having asked him, according to custom, concerning the principal mysteries of the faith, he



answered distinctly: 'Yes sir, I believe all that with all my heart.' He then received the holy Viaticum and extreme unction with sentiments so tender that he shed tears. He responded to everything, thanked the curé, and when he blessed him with the sacred Ciborium, he said, 'May God never forsake me!'—almost his last words; for a moment after, having offered his thanksgiving, his convulsions returned and did not leave him again, lasting on to his death, which happened twenty-four hours afterwards, on the 29th of August 1662, at one o'clock in the morning, he being thirty-nine years and two months old. He was buried in the church of St. Étienne du Mont in Paris."

Of Pascal's zeal for the truth and fidelity to his convictions we have had evidence sufficient; and his sister declares that he had so great zeal for the glory of God that he could not endure that it should be violated in the least particular. No less striking was his gentleness of disposition and his readiness to forgive offences against himself; indeed he seemed to forget such things so entirely that it was with difficulty they were recalled to his mind. And when anyone expressed admiration of this conduct, he would say: "Do not be surprised; it is not by virtue, it is by mere forgetfulness; I had no recollection of it." It was, however, clear that offences against himself made little impression upon him, since he forgot them so easily; for he had a memory so retentive that he often used to say that he had never forgotten anything of the things which he had wished to retain.

\* One of the most conspicuous characteristics of this great man was his simplicity. "This great simplicity appeared," says Mme. Périer, "when he spoke of God or

of himself ; so that on the evening before his death, an ecclesiastic [M. de Sainte Marthe of Port Royal], a man of great knowledge and of great virtue, having come to see him, as he had wished, and having remained an hour with him, departed so greatly edified that he said to me, ‘Go, console yourself ; if God calls him, you have great reason to praise Him for the graces He has given him. I had always admired many great things in him, but I had never remarked the great simplicity which I have just seen. That is incomparable in a mind such as his. With all my heart I could wish to be in his place.’

“The curé of St. Étienne, who saw him throughout all his sickness, marked the same thing, and said every hour, ‘He is like a child. He is humble, he is submissive as an infant.’” It was by this same simplicity that he gave his friends complete liberty to warn him of his defects, and he took the advice that was given him without resistance. The extreme vivacity of his mind rendered him sometimes so impatient that it was difficult to satisfy him ; but when he was warned, or when he perceived that he had vexed anyone by his impatience, he made amends for it immediately by such gentleness of conduct and by so many kindnesses, that he never in that way lost the friendship of anyone. . . .

“To an ardent charity he joined, during his illness, a patience so admirable that he edified and surprised all who were about him ; and he said to those who expressed their regret at seeing him in such a condition, that he felt nothing of that kind, and that he had even some apprehensions connected with a recovery ; and when he was asked the reason, he said, ‘It is because

I know the dangers of health and the advantages of sickness.' He said again, on occasion of the worst of his pains, when others were distressed at seeing him suffer: 'Do not pity me, sickness is the natural state of Christians.' He was always the same, never unequal to himself." It has been said, and not quite truly, of a great writer of another nation, that his heart, which few knew, was as great as his intellect, which all knew. Such a saying would be true of Pascal. His heart and his will were worthy of his intellect. To no son of man could higher testimony be given.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THOUGHTS

FOR several years before his death Pascal had meditated the composition of some great work in defence of the Christian Religion. But his health grew worse and worse, and during the last year or two of his life, he probably did little more than now and then jot down a memorandum of some thought which might be used for his purpose. It has been doubted by some whether it has not been an advantage to possess these last fruits of the genius of Pascal in a fragmentary state, instead of having them presented in a completely organised form. It is not merely that an unfinished work has a certain charm of its own, raising questions which are unanswered, and speculations as to the manner in which the author would have answered them; and no one will deny that the fragments left by Pascal have an originality, a freshness, an incisiveness which they might have lost in part if they had received further elaboration. At least, such as they are, we possess them, and the concurrent testimony of the most thoughtful of the human race has assigned to them a unique position among the products of the greatest minds, and has pronounced them to be "a monument more enduring than brass." The most superficial study of these precious fragments will

justify the title under which they were put forth—*Pensées*, “Thoughts”; and the motto affixed was no less happy than the title, “Pendent opera interrupta.”

There was a double aim in the mind of the writer: first, to defend Port Royal against the attacks made upon it by the Jesuits and other adversaries; and secondly and chiefly, to offer an *Apologia*, a defence of the Christian religion, which had long been a thought very near to the heart of Pascal, probably dating as far back as the period of his second conversion in 1654. Considering, however, the very prominent place assigned to the defence of miracles as evidences of Christianity, it has been inferred that the principal part of the work was written after the “miracle” of the Holy Thorn in 1656.

Before considering more particularly the contents of the *Thoughts* it may be well to give some account of the manner in which the work was edited and published. As a preface to the volume, Madame Périer drew up the Life of Pascal which has usually been prefixed to the various editions of the work. This Life seems to have been written soon after Pascal's death; but it was not until 1668, when Pope Clement IX., as was supposed, had put an end to the disputes respecting Jansenism, and made the “peace of the Church,” that they undertook to put the fragments in order.

The principal part in this undertaking was assumed by the Duc de Roannez, assisted by Arnauld, Nicole, and others. It was agreed that nothing should be published that would be likely to stir up any of the controversies between the Jansenists and Jesuits. But Madame Périer distinctly imposed the condition,



that, whilst omissions might be made, no alterations or additions should be allowed. The printing was finished in 1669, and the publication took place in 1670, the title of the book being, *Thoughts of M. Pascal on Religion and some other Subjects, which have been found after his Death among his Papers*.<sup>1</sup> Instead of the Life, prepared by Madame Périer, and published in subsequent editions, there was prefixed a Preface written by Pascal's nephew, Étienne Périer, setting forth the design of the work.

In spite of the statement that nothing had been changed in the original manuscript or added to it, a great many changes and additions were made, sometimes altering not merely the words, but the meaning. M. Cousin said no more than the truth when he declared in 1842, after examining the original, that there were "examples of every kind of alteration—of words, of phrases, suppressions, substitutions, additions, arbitrary compositions, and, what is worse, decompositions more arbitrary still"; whilst two years later, Faugère asserts that "there are not twenty successive lines which do not present some alteration, great or small. As for total omissions and partial suppressions, they are without number."

Many harsh words have been spoken of these original editors; but M. Sainte Beuve declares that they "did not do so very badly. Let us imagine," he says, "at this date of 1668, our putting other men in the place of our worthy friends,"—Roannez, Arnauld, and the rest,—“our forming another editing committee, and let us see whether the book would have had a chance of

<sup>1</sup> *Pensées de M. Pascal sur le religion et sur quelques autres sujets, qui ont été trouvées après sa mort parmi ses papiers.*

coming out of these other hands in a better condition and more conformed to our wishes in these days. Think of substituting for them Bossuet, La Rochefoucauld, Fontaine, and others, and what a wonderful committee you would have had! Let us then take things as they were. Here is the little volume in 12mo—at its head the preface of the Périet family. Port Royal was nowhere mentioned, and in referring to the locality of the conversion of Pascal, it is said only that he had for some time retired into the country.” However, the time was favourable. The publication lent a momentary strength and glory to Port Royal. Even the early age of Louis XIV., “that marvellous epoch, still young and already ripe,” received lustre from this book. At this time (1670) Molière had put forth the *Misanthrope* and *Tartufe*; Bossuet was already a bishop, and fresh from his great funeral oration on the Queen of England; Bourdaloue was beginning to be known as a great preacher; Boileau was preparing his *Art of Poetry*. At such a time the *Thoughts* of Blaise Pascal appeared.

The book was greeted with loud and unanimous applause. De Tillemont wrote to Étienne Périet expressing his astonishment. “You know,” he said, “that for many years I have honoured, or, rather, admired, the extraordinary gifts of nature and grace which appeared in the late M. Pascal. I must, nevertheless, confess to you, sir, that I have never before had a sufficiently exalted idea of those gifts. This last writing has surpassed all that I expected from a mind which I regarded as the greatest which has appeared in our age;” and then he, a Port Royalist, proceeds to compare Pascal to St. Augustine. Some

surprise has been expressed that the *Thoughts* are seldom referred to in the theological controversies of that period. But it should be remembered that neither was Pascal a professional theologian, nor was his book in any sense a theological treatise. His previous studies,<sup>1</sup> his intellectual tendencies, even rendered him incapable of producing a work of great theological learning. Pascal is, above all, a polemical writer. He was this in his *Provincials*, in which he attacked the morality of the Jesuits; he remained the same in the *Thoughts* in which he defends religion from the attacks of the Libertines and from the indifference of men of the world; and he does this, not so much with the skill of an orator, as with the warmth and indignation of a believer. > Pascal was not a man of wide learning. In the first part of the *Thoughts*, where he deals with man, his mind and his nature, it is chiefly to Montaigne and Charron that he is indebted. In the second part, which treats of religious subjects generally, it is the Bible and the *Pugio Fidei*, a theological work of the thirteenth century.

Whatever may have been the defects of the original edition of the *Thoughts*, it soon attained to a great circulation, and was everywhere read, and interest in its author became widespread. In 1670 Nicole published, in a book of his own, Pascal's discourses on the *Condition of the Great*. In 1728 Father Des Molets reported the conversation between Pascal and de Saci on Epictetus and Montaigne, and added several other "Thoughts," until then unpublished. These and other publications were recognised as having the *cachet* of the Master.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Molinier, *Pensées*, Preface, p. xxiii.

With regard to the *Thoughts*, it is necessary, for a moment, to give some brief attention to the various editions published, and to the efforts made to restore the original text. [The next edition, after that of Port Royal, was the edition edited by Condorcet in 1776, which had prefixed to it a eulogium of Pascal which has been properly described as a criticism of the author which was harsh and often unjust. This edition was enriched (?) by several notes of Voltaire, caustic and incisive, of course, but of no permanent value.] These notes of Voltaire's were only an expansion of some which he had put forth in 1734. At that time he was young, but he had already imbibed or generated the anti-Christian spirit which was preparing for the overthrow of the Church and Christianity in France. [Pascal was, in the eyes of Voltaire, the greatest representative of supernaturalism, and he selected him as the object of his attack. Writing to Formont, he said, in reference to his Philosophical Letters: "Should you advise me to add to them some short detached reflections on the *Thoughts* of Pascal? I have long had a mind to fight this giant. There is no warrior so well armed that one cannot pierce him without his breastplate; and I confess to you that if, in spite of my weakness, I could inflict some blows on this conqueror of so many minds, and shake off the yoke with which he has covered them, I should almost dare to say with Lucretius—

‘Quare [superstitio] pedibus subjecta vicissim  
Obteritur, nos exæquat victoria cælo.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Voltaire substitutes *superstitio* for *religio* (in Lucretius, i. 78). Munro translates: "Therefore religion is put under foot and trampled in turn; us his victory brings level with heaven."



As for the rest, I will set to work with precaution, and I will criticise only the parts which are not so closely connected with our holy religion, that one cannot tear Pascal's skin without making Christianity bleed." /

There was a strain of pessimism in Pascal; while Voltaire, like most of the Deists of that period, was much given to optimism—he had not yet written *Candide*!—and he looked upon Pascal as making the worst of mankind. "When," he says, "I consider London or Paris, I see no reason for giving way to the despair of which M. Pascal speaks. I see a city having no resemblance to a desert island, but, on the contrary, populous, wealthy, civilised, and where men are happy as far as human nature allows. Where is the wise man who will be full of despair because he does not know the nature of his thought, because he is not acquainted with some attributes of matter?"

Soon after the edition of the *Thoughts* by Condorcet, there appeared the collected works of Pascal, edited by the Abbé Bossut in 1779. The text of this edition was very superior to that of its predecessor; and although it made no attempt to correct the text throughout in accordance with the manuscripts, yet many corrections and additions were introduced, and it remained the standard edition until the publication of that of Faugère.

Mention should be made of an edition issued by M. Frantin in 1840, which, however, was not satisfactory. In 1842 Cousin published his paper on the *Necessity of a New Edition of Pascal*, which gave the signal for what has been called the resurrection of the *Thoughts*. By a careful examination of the manu-



scripts he pointed out the corrupt state of the text in all the existing editions, and the absolute necessity for a new edition. Two years later, in 1844, this task was undertaken by M. Prosper Faugère, who put forth a revised edition greatly superior to all its predecessors, but still leaving not a little to be desired. At the time of his death M. Faugère was occupied in preparing a complete edition of the works of Pascal, of which the *Provincial Letters* are already published, and the *Thoughts* are expected to follow.

Unfortunately the defects of this edition of Faugère were not detected for some years; and M. Ernest Havet founded his edition (1852), with its excellent commentary, upon that text; and this imperfect text was continued in the second edition. A careful examination of the original MSS. was instituted by M. Auguste Molinier, as a result of which he published a new text of the *Thoughts* in two volumes (1877, 1879), not only giving every word as it stands in the original, but in every case reproducing the spelling of Pascal. As a consequence M. Havet revised his text, conforming it in all respects, except the spelling, to that of M. Molinier. Several other editions have been published, based upon the original MSS.; but the differences between these and the editions last mentioned seem to be in arrangement, not in text.

In proceeding to trace the plan and contents of this book, we naturally turn first to the "Plan of the *Thoughts*," described as the "account of a conference in which Pascal explained the plan and matter of his work on religion." It forms the preface to the first edition of the *Thoughts*, and was written by the author's nephew, Étienne Pascal. M. Sainte Beuve describes it

as a luminous abstract, which assists in penetrating more deeply into the *Thoughts*.

It is well remarked by Vinet, when discoursing on this "Plan" of Pascal, that his *Thoughts* are not a book.<sup>1</sup> They are not one book, but perhaps two, or even more. They are, he continues, if we must give them a name and qualify them,—they are Pascal himself, all Pascal. They are only the papers on which this great man projected all that occupied his powerful mind. Great pains have been taken to put these papers in order, and sometimes successfully; but in many cases we cannot be quite sure. Sometimes it may even be suspected that sentiments have been ascribed to Pascal which he meant to put in the mouth of an opponent.

A good many of these "Thoughts" hardly belonged to the general plan of the collection. They were jotted down on pieces of paper and got mixed up with the apologetic fragments. Of these may be mentioned his reflections on "Authority in the subject of Philosophy," on the "Art of Persuading," on "Geometry," and some thoughts on Philosophy and Literature. But apart from these and some similar fragments, there is very little which does not bear upon his general design, which was to produce, in as complete a form as possible, an Apology for the Christian Religion. Of this we are clearly informed in the preface, to which allusion has already been made.

It was about the year 1658 when Pascal communicated to his friends his ideas concerning his Apology. We are not told who those friends were, except that they were persons of high consideration, and people

<sup>1</sup> Vinet, *Du plan attribué à Pascal*.

not ready to admire everything. It was not desirable to obtrude the names of Arnauld and his friends, although they were probably of the number. It was ten or twelve years ago, says M. Périer, that is, before the publication of the *Thoughts*, that some of his friends asked Pascal to give an account of his Plan *vivâ voce*. In answer to their request he developed in few words the plan of his whole work; he told them what was to be the subject and the matter of it, and gave a summary of the arguments and principles, explaining to them the order and sequence of the things which he meant to treat. And those persons, who were as capable as any could be of judging concerning such things, confessed that they had never heard anything more beautiful, more powerful, more touching, or more convincing; and that they had heard enough of the project and design of Pascal in a discourse of two or three hours, made without premeditation or labour, to give them a notion of what it would be one day, if it were completed and brought to perfection by a person with whose power and capacity they were acquainted, who was accustomed to elaborate all his works, who was hardly ever satisfied with his first thoughts, however good they might appear to others, and who had often rewritten eight or ten times pieces which another would have thought admirable from the beginning.

After showing them what kind of proofs make most impression on the minds of men, and what are the most calculated to persuade them, he undertook to show that the Christian religion had as many marks of certainty and of evidence as the things which are received in the world as the most indubitable. In

carrying out this design he makes first a picture of man, and presents it to one who has previously lived in ignorance and in indifference with regard to his own nature, and bids him consider what he is. Such a one is surprised to discover an infinity of things of which he has never thought before, and he cannot remark without astonishment and admiration all that Pascal makes him feel of his greatness and baseness, of his advantages and his weaknesses, of the little light that remains to him, and of the darkness which environs him on almost every side, and, finally, of all the astonishing contradictions which are found in his nature. He cannot after that remain in indifference, however little share of reason he may have; and however insensible he may hitherto have been, he must wish, after having thus known what he is, to know also whence he comes and what he is to be.

Having thus aroused an interest in the subject, Pascal addresses himself first to the philosophers, pointing out the defects, weaknesses, contradictions, and falsities in all that they have advanced, so that there can be little difficulty in concluding that instruction cannot be had from them. He then takes his hearer over the universe and all the ages of the world, showing him the number of religions which have prevailed, at the same time pointing out to him, by reasons powerful and convincing, that these religions are full of vanity, folly, errors, mistakes, and extravagances, and that he can find nothing in them to satisfy him. He then takes him to the Jews, and shows the extraordinary circumstances of their history, and particularly that unique book by which they are governed, —a book from which he learns that the world was



the work of God, and that this same God created man in His image and endowed him with all his gifts of body and soul. Man, however, it is explained, is far from possessing all those advantages which he ought to have had when he came forth from the hands of his author, and when he pursues the reading of this same book he finds there that, after man had been created by God in the state of innocence, and with all sorts of perfections, his first action was to revolt against his Creator, and to employ all the advantages which he had received from Him in order to offend Him.

After pointing out the enormity of this sin, and the evil effects which it wrought, he shows that the corruption of the first man has been and will be transmitted to all his descendants through all time. These doctrines he discovers in many parts of the Bible.

It is not enough, however, to instruct his learner in the misery of man. The same book contains something that may bring consolation. It is there said that the remedy is in the hands of God; that it is to Him that we ought to have recourse in order to obtain the powers that are lacking to us, and that He will send a Liberator to men, who will make satisfaction for them and repair their impotence.

He next points out that this book is the only one which has spoken worthily of the Supreme Being, and which has given the idea of a true religion, calling particular attention to the fact that it makes the essence of worship to consist in the love of God,—a singular characteristic which distinguishes this religion from all others, the falseness of which appears from the absence of this essential mark. Pascal offers no argu-



ments in proof of these truths, yet he has produced in his hearer a disposition to receive them with pleasure, by reason of the blessings connected with them.

Passing from the truths to the proof of them, he draws attention principally to the Book of Moses in which these truths are particularly set forth; and he shows by a great number of indubitable circumstances that it was equally impossible that Moses should have recorded falsehoods in his writings, and that the people to whom he had left them should have allowed themselves to be deceived, even if Moses had been capable of deception.

He spoke also of all the great miracles which are recorded in this book, and of what great importance they are for the religion which is taught there; he proved that it was impossible that they should be untrue, not only by the authority of the book in which they are contained, but also by all the circumstances which accompany them and which place them beyond doubt.

He next pointed out the figurative character of the law of Moses, finding its realisation in the coming of the Messiah. He then undertook to prove the truth of the Christian religion by the prophecies; and he expatiated further on this point than on any other. Finally, having gone through the books of the Old Testament, he undertook to speak of the New Testament, and thence to draw proofs of the truth of the gospel.

He began with Jesus Christ; and although he had already given irresistible proof of Him by the prophecies, and by all the figures of the law of which there was seen in Him the perfect accomplishment, he

brought forward many more proofs drawn from His person, His miracles, His doctrine, and from the circumstances of His life.

He then took up the apostles; and in order to show the truth of the faith which they proclaimed everywhere, after having established that they could not be accused of falseness, unless by supposing either that they had been impostors, or had themselves been imposed upon, he showed clearly that either of these suppositions was equally impossible. Finally, he forgot nothing which could serve for the defence of the truth of the gospel history, making beautiful remarks upon the gospel itself, on the style of the evangelists, and on their persons; on the apostles in particular, and on their writings; on the prodigious number of miracles; on the martyrs; on the saints; in a word, on all the ways by which the Christian religion is completely established. And although there was not time in a simple discourse to treat so vast a theme at length, as he designed to do in his work, he nevertheless said enough to prove that all that could not be the work of men, and that it was God alone who could have led the issue of so many different effects, all equally concurring to prove in an invincible manner the religion which He came Himself to establish among men.

Although we have condensed some portions of this report of Pascal's Plan, we may not improperly close with the words of M. Périer: "This is the substance of the principal things on which he undertook to speak in his discourse, which he presented to those who heard him as only an abridgment of the great work which he meditated; and it is by means of one of those who were there present that we came to know the

little which I have here put on record." We shall have opportunities of remarking the accuracy of this report.

In the preface of Port Royal from which we have obtained the Plan, as given *vivâ voce* by Pascal to his friends, we have an interesting statement of his design in a fragment found among those which formed the book of *Thoughts*, but not placed in that collection. It runs as follows: "I shall not here undertake to prove by natural reasons either the existence of God, or the Trinity, or the Immortality of the Soul, nor anything of that kind; not only because I should not think myself sufficiently powerful to find in nature that which would convince hardened atheists, but also because this knowledge, without Jesus Christ, is useless and barren." Even if a man should be persuaded that the proportions of numbers are verities, immaterial, eternal, and dependent upon a first Verity, in whom they subsist, and who is called God, I should not find him much advanced in the way of salvation."

He thinks that such arguments have little power over the majority; and even that the few who are convinced by them are not permanently influenced. According to Pascal, the kind of proof which is most widely received and felt, and which has most practical efficacy, is the moral and historical. Arguments of this kind are no less convincing than the others, and they are more accessible, more penetrating, and more easily dealt with.

It is thought that, in some of these remarks on the metaphysical proof of God, Pascal is aiming at Descartes; and that although he says very little of Descartes, he thinks a great deal, and indirectly seeks

to neutralise his influence. ["I cannot pardon Descartes," he said; "he would have liked, in all his philosophy, to do without God; but he could not prevent His giving a fillip to put the world in motion. After that he has no more to do with God."] And he had the same objection to the metaphysics of Descartes as to his physics.

It is not quite easy to decide as to the best arrangement of these scattered fragments which we designate the *Thoughts* of Pascal. But all the editors seem to have had some regard to the outline given in the "Plan" contained in the original preface; and most of them place near the beginning of the collection that which appears as the first Article in the Port Royal edition and in that of Havet. In this large section the writer sets forth at some length his opinions respecting human nature, its greatness and its littleness, and also his want of faith in unaided human reason as a guide.

### *Greatness and Misery of Man*

In regard to human nature, Pascal is ever earnest in maintaining that man is not a god or an angel on the one side, nor on the other is he a brute. He is a creature made in the image of God, who has fallen from his high estate. So also, he contends, he is neither everything nor nothing—he lies between the two.

"He who considers himself in this manner," he goes on, "will be afraid of himself, and, considering himself sustained in the mass which nature has given him, between those two abysses of the Infinite and the Nothing, will tremble at the sight of those marvels;



and I believe that his curiosity will change into admiration, and he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to examine them with presumption.

“For, in fact, what is man in nature? A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a Mean between nothing and everything. Since he is infinitely removed from comprehending the extremes, the end of things and their beginning are for him hopelessly concealed in an impenetrable secret; so that he is equally incapable of seeing the Nothing from whence he is drawn, and the Infinite in which he is swallowed up.

“What will he do then, but perceive the appearance of the middle of things, in an eternal despair of knowing either their beginning or their end? All things proceed from the Nothing, and are carried on to the Infinite. Who will follow these astonishing processes? The author of these marvels comprehends them; no other can.” . . .

“Let us then know our compass: we are something, and we are not everything. That which we have of being, deprives us of the knowledge of first beginnings which are born of the Nothing, and the little that we have of being conceals from us the view of the Infinite.—In the order of intelligible things our intelligence holds the same rank as our body does in the extent of nature.—Limited in both departments, this state which holds the mean between two extremes is found in all our impotences.

“Our senses perceive nothing extreme. Too much sound deafens us; too much light dazzles us; too great distance and too great proximity hinder our view. Too



great length and too great brevity of discourse alike tend to obscurity.

“And that which completes our incapability of knowing things is the fact that they are simple in themselves, and that we are composed of two opposite natures, of different kinds, of soul and body. For it is impossible that the part which reasons in us should be other than spiritual; and if anyone maintain that we are simply corporal, that would exclude us altogether from the knowledge of things, there being nothing so inconceivable as to say that matter knows itself. It is not possible for us to imagine how it should know itself. And thus, if we are simply material, we can know nothing at all; and if we are composed of mind and matter, we cannot know perfectly things which are simple, whether spiritual or corporal. . . .

“Who would not think, seeing us compose all things of mind and body, that this mixture would be quite comprehensible to us? Yet this is the very thing that we understand the least. Man is to himself the most prodigious object in nature; for he cannot conceive what the body is, and still less that which the mind is, and less than anything else how a body can be united with a mind. That is the crown of his difficulties; and yet that is his essential nature: *Modus quo corporibus adhærent spiritus comprehendendi ab hominibus non potest, et hoc tamen homo est.*”<sup>1</sup>

Here we have a striking statement of Pascal's views as to the limitations alike of man's being and man's knowledge. Moreover, we have here a problem started

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, xxi. 10.

which we may perhaps say that Pascal received from Descartes, in the problem of the dual nature of mind and matter, which may be said to have occupied the thoughts of philosophers ever since. > We see here an approach to the mode of thought which has rendered Pascal exposed to the charge of Pyrrhonism, to which we shall have again to refer.

Pascal is at great pains to set forth the depth to which man has fallen; but, in order to make this clear, he must first point out the height from which he has come down; and he insists with great emphasis upon the greatness of man, and that which constitutes his greatness. He says:—

“I can quite conceive of a man without hands, feet, head, for it is only by experience we are taught that the head is more necessary than the feet. But I cannot conceive man without thought; that would be a stone or a brute.

“The greatness of man is great in the fact that he knows himself to be miserable. A tree does not know itself to be miserable. It is, then, being miserable to know oneself to be miserable. All these very miseries prove man’s greatness. They are the miseries of a great lord—of a king deposed. >

“The greatness of man is so visible that it is even inferred from his misery. For that which is nature in animals we call misery in man, whereby we recognise that his nature being now like to that of the animals, he has fallen from a better nature which was formerly his own.—For who finds himself unhappy at not being a king, but a king deposed? Was Paulus Emilius thought unfortunate because of not being longer consul? On the contrary, everyone thought him

fortunate in having been so ; because his circumstances did not permit of his being so always. But Perseus was thought unfortunate in being no longer king, because his circumstances allowed of his being so always, so that it was thought strange that he endured life. Who thinks himself unfortunate in having only one mouth ? And who will not think himself so in having only one eye. One is probably never afflicted at not having three eyes, but he is inconsolable if he has none. . . .

“The greatest baseness of man is the pursuit of glory ; but this very thing is the greatest mark of his excellence ; for whatever possession he may have on earth, whatever health and essential convenience, he is not satisfied if he has not the esteem of men. He values so highly the reason of man, that, whatever advantage he may have on the earth, if he is not advantageously placed also in the reason of man, he is not contented. That is the finest place in the world. Nothing can turn him from that desire, and it is the most ineffaceable quality of the heart of man. And those who most despise men and put them on a level with the beasts, yet wish to be admired and trusted by them, and contradict themselves in their thoughts ; their nature, which is stronger than all, convincing them of the greatness of man more forcibly than their reason convinces them of his baseness.”

And here follows that passage so often quoted, and so worthy to be remembered as altogether characteristic of its writer : “Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature ; but he is a thinking reed. It is not necessary that the whole universe should arm itself to crush him—a vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill

him. But though the universe should crush him, man would still be more noble than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies and the advantage which the universe<sup>1</sup> has over him. The universe knows nothing of this.—All our dignity, then, consists in thought. It is by this that we must raise ourselves, not by space and time which we cannot fill. Let us labour, then, to think well. This is the principle of morality.”

Here again we see the influence of Descartes, who not only taught the existence of two heterogeneous substances, mind and matter, but who said that Thought was the distinguishing quality of mind, and Extension of matter. And so Pascal proceeds: “It is not from space that I must seek my dignity, but from the regulation of my thought. I shall have no more if I possess worlds. By space the world comprehends and swallows me down like a point; by thought I comprehend the world.

“It is dangerous to let a man see too clearly how much he is on a level with the beasts, without showing him his greatness; and it is also dangerous to let him see his greatness too clearly, without seeing his baseness. It is still more dangerous to allow him to remain in ignorance of both. But it is very advantageous to set both before him.—A man should not be made to believe that he is on a level with the beasts, nor yet with the angels; nor should he be ignorant of his relation to both. It is well that he should know both.

“Let man now know his value. Let him love himself, for there is in him a nature capable of good; but

<sup>1</sup> The universe here, as elsewhere in Pascal, signifies the material world, and not the totality of existence.

let him not for this reason love the baseness which is there. Let him despise himself since this capacity is empty; but let him not, for that reason, despise this natural capacity. Let him hate himself, let him love himself; he possesses in himself the capacity for knowing the truth and being happy; but he has no truth either constant or satisfying.—I would then lead men on to desire to find truth, and to be ready and freed from the passions, in order to follow it wherever he shall find it, knowing how much his knowledge is obscured by the passions. I would have him hate in himself the concupiscence which determines him by itself, so that it may not blind him in making his choice, nor hinder him when he has chosen. . . .

“The nature of man may be considered in two ways: the one according to his end, and then he is great and incomparable; the other according to the life of the multitude, just as we judge of the nature of the horse or the dog by the action of numbers in the course, *et animum arcendi*, and then man is abject and vile. And these are the two ways which make us judge diversely of him, and which make so many disputes among philosophers. For the one denies the assumption of the other. The one says, He is not born for this end, for all his actions are repugnant to it; and the other says: He departs from his end when he does these base actions.

“Two things instruct a man in regard to his whole nature, instinct, and experience.

“I feel that I need not have been; for my Ego consists in my thought. Now, I who think should not have been, if my mother had been killed before I had received life. I am not, then, a necessary being. Thus



I am not eternal or infinite; but I see well that there is in nature a necessary Being, eternal and infinite."

According to M. E. Havet, Pascal argues here for the necessary being of the mother out of which man was formed. But surely his argument is deeper and more far-reaching. As far as his own personality is concerned, he need not have existed; but something existed, and that something, although it may itself be contingent, is traced back to a Being Who is necessary, eternal, and infinite. We might say, perhaps, that while Pascal is not inclined to lay stress upon the ontological proof of the existence of God, he recognises the power of the cosmological.

### *The Vanity of Man the Effect of Self-Love*

Pascal had enlarged upon man's greatness and littleness, and the misery which results from his failure to realise his true being. He now goes on (Art. ii.) to speak of his dissatisfaction with his actual self, of the idea which he forms of what he ought to be, and of his striving to seem to be this ideal. Under this head he inveighs against our pride and vanity. He says:—

"We are not satisfied with the life which we have in us and in our own being; we want to live in the idea of others an imaginary life, and we strive to make that appear. We toil incessantly to embellish and to sustain this imaginary being, and we neglect the actual. And if we have either tranquillity or generosity, or fidelity, we do our best to make it known, in order to attach these virtues to this being of our imagination. We would rather detach them from ourselves in order to join them on to this ideal; and

we should be willing to be cowards in order to acquire the reputation of being courageous. A great sign of the nothingness of our real being, not to be satisfied with the one without the other, and often to renounce the one for the other. For he who would not die to preserve his honour would be disgraced. . . .

"Pride holds us with a possession so natural in the midst of our miseries, errors, etc. We lose even life with joy, provided it is spoken of. . . . We are so presumptuous that we should like to be known by the whole world, and even by those who will come when we are no longer here; and we are so vain that the esteem of five or six persons who are about us amuses and satisfies us.<sup>1</sup>

"Curiosity is but vanity. Most commonly we desire knowledge only that we may talk of it. Otherwise people would not cross the sea if they could say nothing about it, or for the sole pleasure of seeing, without hope of ever communicating their knowledge. . . .

"The nature of self-love and of this human Ego is to love only self and to consider only self. But what will man do? He cannot prevent this object that he loves from being full of faults and miseries. He wants to be great, and he sees himself small. He wants to be happy, and he sees himself miserable. He wants to be perfect, and he sees himself full of imperfections. He wants to be the object of the love and esteem of men, and he sees that his faults merit only their aversion and contempt. This embarrassment which he experiences

<sup>1</sup> "Vain in the sense of the Latin *vani*; that is light, wanting in seriousness, so easy to content with things vain and empty. It is a term habitual with Pascal."—Havet.

produces in him the most unjust and criminal passion that can be imagined ; for he conceives a mortal hatred against this truth which reproves him, and which convinces him of his faults. He would wish to annihilate it ; and not being able to destroy it in itself, he destroys it as much as he can in his knowledge and in that of others ; that is to say, he takes every pains to hide his faults from others and from himself, and he will not allow anyone to show them to him nor to see them.

“It is without doubt an evil to be full of faults ; but it is a still greater evil to be full of them and to be unwilling to acknowledge them, since this is to add the fault of a voluntary illusion. We do not like that others should deceive us ; we do not think it fair that they should desire to be esteemed by us more highly than they deserve ; it is not, then, fair that we should deceive them, and that we should wish them to esteem us more highly than we deserve.

“So, when they discover only imperfections and vices which we actually have, it is patent that they do us no wrong, since it is not they who are the cause of them, and that they are doing us a service since they assist to deliver us from an evil which is our ignorance of these imperfections. We ought not to be offended by their knowing them, and by their slighting us, since it is right that they should know us for what we are, and that they should slight us if we are deserving of being slighted.

“Such are the sentiments which would arise in a heart full of equity and justice. What then should we think of ourselves when we see in us a disposition quite contrary ? For is it not true that we hate the truth and those who speak it, and that we like them

to deceive themselves for our advantage, and that we want to be esteemed by them as being different from what we are in fact."

In this severe strain the rigorous writer proceeds, doubtless with complete sincerity, but perhaps with less charity; and the Article closes with the following paragraph: "Man, then, is only disguise, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both in himself and in regard to others. He does not want to have the truth spoken, he avoids speaking it to others; and all these dispositions, so far removed from justice and reason, have a natural root in his heart." Probably most readers will feel as Voltaire did in reading such language, that they want "to take the side of humanity against this sublime misanthrope." Regarding fallen man as such, that is, as an abstraction, such language may be theologically justifiable of the unregenerate man, of one who has only "works done before justification"; but this abstract man cannot properly be taken as the representative of mankind in general so long as we have such a text in the Bible as that which declares that "in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." So much, perhaps, may be said, once for all, on such passages.

### *Weakness of Man—Uncertainty of his Knowledge*

The next Article (iii.) is, in several ways, remarkable, dealing, as it does, with human weakness and with the uncertainty of our knowledge. But the sections here are not so closely connected as in the previous Articles. The author starts with some of the difficulties of judgment and knowledge—



"If one is too young, he does not judge well; if too old, the same. If one does not reflect enough —; if too much, he becomes obstinate. If one considers his work immediately after having done it, he is still too prejudiced; if too long afterwards, he does not keep hold of it. Thus with pictures seen too far off and too near; and there is only an indivisible point which is the true place. The other places are too near or too far, too high or too low. In the art of painting the point is determined by the perspective. But in truth and morality who will assign it?"

He then proceeds to point out the errors induced by the imagination, speaking of it as "this arrogant power, the enemy of reason, which delights to control and to dominate it, in order to show how much it can do in all things"; and he declares that "it has established in man a second nature." One remarkable though brief paragraph deserves notice: "The imagination disposes of everything; it makes beauty, justice, and happiness, which is everything in the world. I should much like to see the Italian book of which I know only the title, which, by itself alone, is worth many books, *Della Opinione Regina del Mondo*.<sup>1</sup> . . . There is another source of error," he says, "sicknesses. They spoil the judgment and the sense. And if the serious maladies affect it sensibly, I doubt not that the smaller ones make a proportionate impression."

Further on he declares: "There is a universal and essential difference between the actings of the will and all other actions. The will is one of the principal

<sup>1</sup> In Article xxiv. 91, Pascal says: "Force is Queen of the world, and not opinion; but opinion is that which uses force." In v. 5 he says: "Opinion is as Queen of the world, but Force is its tyrant."



organs of belief; not that it forms belief, but because the things are true or false according to the aspect in which one regards them. The will, which finds more pleasure in the one than in the other, turns away the mind from comprehending the qualities of those things which it does not like to see; and thus the mind, proceeding along with the will, stops to consider the aspect which it likes, and so it judges of things by that which it sees of them."

Here comes Pascal's explanation of man's proneness to error: "Man is only a subject of error natural and ineffaceable, without grace. Nothing shows him the truth; everything abuses him. These two sources of truth, reason and the senses, besides that they both lack sincerity, abuse each other in turn. The senses abuse the reason by false appearances; and this very trickery which they practise on the reason they receive from reason in their turn; she revenges herself. The passions of the soul trouble the senses, and make false impressions upon them. They rival each other in falsehood and deception."

### *Diversion*

The fourth Article has for its heading a subject which has a very prominent place in the teaching of Pascal, "The Misery of Man." Such was the title given by the Port Royal editors; but, in point of fact, the subject treated is Diversion or Amusement—*divertissement*—in the etymological sense of the word, meaning that which diverts, turns aside, or distracts. It is not very easy to connect these fragments together, yet some of them are of considerable interest.

Pascal introduces the subject of diversion in the following manner. When, he says, he considers the various agitations of men, the dangers and troubles of every situation, he feels inclined to think that a man's happiness should consist in remaining quietly at home. But when he looks more closely at the subject, he sees that our miseries come from our natural feeble and mortal condition, so that nothing can really console us.

"Hence it comes," he says, "that men so much love noise and movement; hence it comes that a prison is such a horrible punishment; hence it comes that the pleasure of solitude is a thing incomprehensible. And it is, in fact, the greatest source of felicity in the condition of kings that there is a perpetual endeavour to divert them and to procure for them all sorts of pleasures. . . .

"Thus passes away all man's life. Men seek repose in combating certain obstacles; and, if they are surmounted, repose becomes insupportable. For we think either of the miseries which we have, or of those which threaten us. And even if we should see ourselves sheltered on all sides, weariness (*ennui*) on its own account would not fail to emerge from the depth of the heart, where it has natural roots, and fill the mind with its poison." And then comes an interesting illustration from gambling for money. Again he goes on—

"The only thing which consoles us in our miseries is diversion, and yet this is the greatest of our miseries. For it is this which principally hinders us from thinking of ourselves, and which makes us insensibly ruin ourselves. Without this we should be in a state of weariness, and this weariness would drive us to a

more solid means of escaping from it. But diversion amuses us, and makes us arrive insensibly at death. . . .

“Let us imagine a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death, where a certain number were each day killed in sight of the rest, so that those remaining saw their own condition in that of their fellows, and looking on them sorrowfully and hopelessly, waited for their turn. It is an image of the condition of men.”

Here we have ever the refrain of Ecclesiastes: “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity.”

### *Certain popular Opinions*

The Article (v.) which stands next in our book is of a miscellaneous character, and is entitled “Reasons for some Opinions of the People”; and here the author says he means to write down his thoughts “without order, and not perhaps in a confusion without design, which,” he says, “is the true order, and will always indicate my object by the very disorder. I should do too much honour to my subject if I treated it with order, since I wish to show that it is incapable of it.” The meaning of all this is obvious, and it is very like Pascal. An interesting fragment is the third, which the Port Royalists judiciously suppressed. He is speaking of the great evil of civil wars. Even a bad king who comes to the throne by succession is hardly so mischievous. “The evil to be feared from a fool who succeeds by right of birth is neither so great nor so sure”—not quite a sentence to be printed in the reign of Louis XIV.

Here is a paragraph which connects itself with one already quoted. "The government founded upon opinion and imagination holds sway for some time, and this government is pleasant and voluntary; that of force holds sway always. Thus Opinion is Queen of the world, but Force is its tyrant."

"Epictetus asks why we are not offended if we are told that we have a headache, and that we are offended if we are told that we reason badly, or that we make a bad choice. The reason is, that we are quite certain that we have not a headache; but we are not so assured that we make a true choice. So that having no other assurance except that we see a thing in full view, while another as clearly sees the contrary, we are brought into suspense and surprise; and still more when a thousand others deride our choice. For we must prefer our own lights to those of so many others, and that is bold and difficult. There is never such a contradiction in the senses."

### *Detached moral Thoughts*

In the next Article (vi.), "Detached moral Thoughts," there is the same lack of connection between the sections. Yet certain thoughts are prominent; for example, the evil and the predominance of selfishness, and the separation of theory and practice. "All good maxims," he says, "are in the world; we need only to apply them. For example, it is not doubted that we ought to risk our lives in order to defend the public good, and many do this; but in the cause of religion, not.

"Reason commands us much more imperiously

than a master; for in disobeying the one a man is unfortunate; in disobeying the other, he is a fool.”<sup>1</sup>

We have in this Article a good many statements on the relation between custom and justice, some of which are slightly contradictory. Generally speaking, Pascal lays down the principle that justice is not an abstraction, but the embodiment of human custom. “As fashion (*la mode*) makes agreement, so also it makes justice.” Again, “Justice is that which is established; and thus all our established laws will necessarily be regarded as just without being examined, since they are established.” In the previous Article (v. 4) he had said: “Why do we follow the majority? Is it because they have more reason? No, but more power.”

Here again we have some of his utterances on selfishness. “The Ego (*Moi*) is hateful. . . . In a word, the Ego has two qualities; it is unjust in itself, in making itself the centre of everything; it is inconvenient to others, in that it wishes to enslave them. For every Ego is the enemy, and would like to be the tyrant of all the rest. You may take away its inconvenience, but not its injustice; and thus you do not make it lovable to those who hate injustice; you make it lovable only to the unjust, who find no longer an enemy in it; and thus you remain unjust, and can please only the unjust.”

Here is a recurrence to his earlier teaching on the dissatisfaction which demands diversion and excitement: “*In omnibus quietem quæsivi* [Ecclus. xxiv. 11]. If our condition was truly happy, we should not have

<sup>1</sup> The Port Royal edition strangely omits this section.



to divert ourselves from thinking of it in order to render ourselves happy."

The subject of custom comes up again. He says: "Montaigne is wrong; custom should be followed only because it is custom, and not because it is reasonable or just; but people follow it for this sole reason, that they believe it to be just. If not, they would not follow it, although it were the custom; for we do not like to be subject except to reason or to justice. Custom without that would pass for tyranny; but the empire of reason and justice is not more tyrannical than that of delight. They are principles natural to man."

We are here reminded of the question raised by Aristotle, whether men desire that which is really good, or what seems to them to be good; and the solution of the problem lies in the same direction. Men undoubtedly desire that which seems to them to be good; but they do so on the assumption that what seems to them good is really good. If they had a doubt on the subject, they would not desire it. So with regard to the obligation of law. Men keep the laws because they are imposed by the society in which they live; but they assume that the laws are imposed because they are just.

Pascal goes on: "It is dangerous to say to people that the laws are not just; for they obey them only because they think them just. And that is why they should be told at the same time that they should obey them because they are laws, just as they ought to obey their superiors not because they are just, but because they are superiors. In that way all sedition is prevented if this can be made intelligible, and this is the proper idea of justice."

And here comes in a paragraph part of which is too well known to be omitted in this place: "Anyone who wishes to know fully the vanity of man has only to consider the causes and the effects of love. The cause of it is 'a something, I know not what,'<sup>1</sup> and the effects of it are frightful. This 'I know not what,' so small a thing as hardly to be recognisable, moves the whole earth, princes, armies, the entire world. Cleopatra's nose—if it had been shorter, the whole face of the world would have changed."

### *Philosophy and Literature*

In the seventh Article, which treats of Philosophy and Literature, there are some striking thoughts. Thus: "Man is neither an angel nor a beast, and unfortunately one who tries to be an angel makes himself a beast." This thought comes from Montaigne (iii. 13): "They want to put themselves outside themselves and escape from being men. It is folly. Instead of transforming themselves into angels, they transform themselves into beasts. Instead of raising themselves, they lower themselves."

"The heart has its order; the mind has its own, which goes by principle and demonstration. The heart has another. We do not prove that we ought to be loved when we set forth the causes of love; that would be ridiculous. Jesus Christ and St. Paul have the order of charity, not of intellect; for their purpose was to warn, not to instruct. So with St. Augustine. This order consists principally in digression at each point. Let us have reference to the end so as to keep it always in view. . . . All the false beauties which

<sup>1</sup> *Je ne sais quoi*. Cf. Corneille, *Rodogune*, i. 5; and *Medéc*, ii. 6.

we blame in Cicero have admirers, and these in great number. . . .

“To make sport of philosophy is truly to philosophise.”

### *Contradictions in Man*

The eighth Article deals with the “astonishing contradictions which are found in the nature of man with regard to truth, happiness, and several other things.” It is here that we meet with some of those utterances which have brought upon Pascal the charge of Pyrrhonism. After speaking of the two extremes of Pyrrhonism and Dogmatism, he goes on: “What then shall man do in this condition? Shall he doubt of everything? Shall he doubt if he is awake, if he is pinched, if he is burnt? Shall he doubt if he doubts? Shall he doubt if he exists? It is hardly possible to go so far; and I lay it down as a fact that there never has been a perfect and effective Pyrrhonist. Nature sustains impotent reason, and hinders it from carrying its extravagance so far. Shall a man then say, on the contrary, that he certainly possesses truth—he who, when pushed but a little, can show no proof of it, and is forced to let go his hold. What a chimera, then, is man! what a novelty! what a monster, what chaos, what subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depositary of truth, common sewer of uncertainty and error; glory and refuse of the world! Who will disentangle this confusion? Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists, and reason confounds the Dogmatists. What will you become, O man, who seek to understand your true condition by your natural reason? You cannot escape

one or other of these sects, nor subsist in either. Know, then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, impotent reason; be silent, imbecile nature; learn that man infinitely transcends man,<sup>1</sup> and hear from your master your true condition of which you are ignorant. Listen to God.

“For, in short, if man had never been corrupted, he would enjoy in his innocence both truth and felicity with assurance. And if man had been nothing else but corrupted, he would have no idea either of truth or of beatitude. But, unhappy that we are, and more so than if there had been no greatness in our condition, we have an idea of happiness and cannot attain to it. We perceive an image of truth, and possess only falsehood. Incapable of being absolutely ignorant, and of knowing with certainty—thus is it manifest that we have been in a degree of perfection from which we have unfortunately fallen.

“Astonishing, however, it is that the mystery which is furthest removed from our knowledge—that of the transmission of sin—is a fact without which we cannot have any knowledge of ourselves! For it is beyond a doubt that there is nothing which gives a greater shock to our reason than to say that the sin of the first man has rendered guilty those who, being so far removed from this source, seem incapable of participating in it. This devolution seems to us not merely impossible, it seems to us even unjust; for what is there more contrary to the rules of our miserable justice than to condemn eternally an infant incapable of voli-

<sup>1</sup> Compare the lines of Daniel—

“Unless above himself he can  
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!”

tion for a sin in which it seems to have so little part that it was committed six thousand years before it came into being? Certainly nothing offends us more violently than this doctrine; and yet, without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves. The knotty point of our condition takes its windings and its turnings in this abyss, so that man is more inconceivable without this mystery than this mystery is inconceivable to man." Again he says: "If man is not made for God, why is it that he is not happy except in God? If man is made for God, why is he so contrary to God?" Again: "Man knows not in what rank to place himself. He has visibly gone astray and fallen from his true place without being able to find it again. He seeks for it everywhere with disquiet and without success in impenetrable darkness."

### *Necessity of studying Religion*

Under Article ix. there are passages of deep interest but of somewhat too great length to be introduced here; we must therefore be contented with extracts. Speaking of the antagonists of religion, Pascal remarks: "Let them at least learn the nature of the religion which they combat before combating it. If this religion were to boast of having a clear view of God and of possessing it clear and unveiled, it would be in opposition to this to say that we see nothing in the world which shows it with this clearness. But when, on the contrary, it says that men are in darkness and far from God, that He is hid from their knowledge, that this is, in fact, the name which He



gives Himself in the Scriptures, *Deus Absconditus* ("A God that hidest Thyself," Isa. xlv. 15); and, finally, if it labours equally to establish these two things: that God has established sensible works in the Church in order to make Himself known to those who should seek Him sincerely, and that nevertheless He has covered them in such a manner that He will be perceived only by those who seek Him with their whole heart; what advantage will they derive when, in the negligence with which they make profession of being in search of the truth, they cry out that nothing shows it to them; since this obscurity in which they are involved, and with which they reproach the Church, establishes only one of the things which the Church sustains without touching the other, and is so far from overthrowing its doctrine that it establishes it? . . .

"After that they boast of having sought without success in books and among men. But, in truth, I should say to them that which I have often said, that this negligence is intolerable. We are not here concerned with some trifling interest which concerns a stranger, so that we might justify such a mode of treatment; this concerns ourselves, and ourselves altogether.

"The immortality of the soul is a thing which means so much to us, which touches us so profoundly, that we must have lost all feeling to be indifferent on such a subject. All our actions and our thoughts must take a direction so different, according as there are eternal blessings to hope for or not. So that it is impossible to go forward with sense and judgment unless we regulate our course by our view of this point which ought to be our final object."

Passing on from those who regard these questions with indifference, he comes to a different class: "I can have only compassion for those who mourn sincerely in this doubt, who regard it as the last of misfortunes, and who, sparing no pains to escape from it, make of this inquiry their principal and most serious occupations. But," he goes on, "for those who pass their life without thinking of this last end of life, and who, for this sole reason that they do not find in themselves the lights which persuade them of it, neglect to seek them elsewhere, and to examine to the very foundation whether this opinion is one of those which people receive with a simple credulity, or one of those which, though obscure in themselves, have nevertheless a very solid and immovable foundation, I consider them in a manner quite different."

In a striking passage he sets forth the opinions of the unbeliever, and then comments upon them. "I know not," says the sceptic, "who placed me in the world, nor what the world is, nor myself. I am in terrible ignorance of all things. I do not know the nature of my body, nor of my senses, nor of my soul, nor of that part of me which thinks what I say, which makes reflections on everything and on itself, and knows itself no more than the rest. . . . As I know not whence I come, so neither do I know whither I go. I know only that, in leaving this world, I fall for ever either into annihilation, or into the hands of an angry God. . . . And from all this I conclude that I should pass all the days of my life without caring to inquire what is going to happen to me," and so forth.

To all which Pascal replies: "Who would wish to

have as a friend a man who discourses in that manner? Who would choose him out from others in order to tell him of his affairs? Who would have recourse to him in his afflictions? And, in short, of what service could such a one be in life?

“In truth it is the glory of religion to have for enemies men so unreasonable; and their opposition to it is so little dangerous, that, on the contrary, it serves for the establishment of its truths. For the Christian faith principally establishes these two things, the corruption of nature and the redemption of Jesus Christ. Now, I maintain that if those men do not serve to show the truth of redemption by the holiness of their manners, they serve at least admirably to show the corruption of nature by sentiments so unnatural. . . .

“Nothing proves more powerfully an extreme weakness of mind than to be ignorant of the misery of a man without God; nothing indicates more clearly an evil disposition of heart than not to wish that the eternal promises were true; nothing is more cowardly than to be brave in opposition to God. Let them, then, leave those impieties to those who are so badly born as to be truly capable of them; let them at least be honest men if they cannot be Christians, and let them recognise at last that there are only two sorts of persons that can be called reasonable: either those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, or those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not know Him.

“But as for those who live without knowing Him and without seeking Him, they judge themselves so little worthy of their own care that they are not

worthy of the care of others ; and one would need to have all the charity of the religion which they despise in order not to despise them even to the point of abandoning them to their folly. But because this religion obliges us to believe that as long as they live they are capable of the grace which may enlighten them, and that they may, in a short time, be more replenished with faith than ourselves, and that, on the other hand, it is possible for us to fall into their blindness, we are bound to do for them that which we should wish them to do for us if we were in their place, and to implore them to have pity upon themselves, and at least to take some steps in the endeavour to find light."

*It is better to believe when we cannot prove*

The heading of this section in its complete form runs as follows: "Although it might be difficult to demonstrate the existence of God by the light of nature, the surest course is to believe it." We have here Pascal's theory of Tutorism, which he set over against the Jesuit Probabilism, or even the modified form of the doctrine known as Probabiliorism. Probabilism we have already considered in connection with the *Provincial Letters*. Probabiliorism held that we should accept and act upon not a merely probable opinion, that is to say, an opinion supported by a single accredited doctor of the Church, but upon the more probable opinion, that which has several doctors in its favour or other similar supports. The doctrine of Tutorism held that a man should accept the safer doctrine ; for example, if there should seem to be a doubt

as to the existence of God, a man was safer who acted as though there were a God. So with the doctrines of the gospel. We can easily see that there is another side to this question without denying the validity of Pascal's argument. In the present section the subject is not fully discussed, and we must examine his writings generally in order to find his complete teaching on the subject.

Speaking here of God, he says that just as we believe there is an Infinite without our being able to describe its nature, so we can quite understand that there is a God without knowing what He is. "We know the existence of the infinite and are ignorant of its nature, because it has extension like us, but not boundaries like us. But we do not know either the existence or the nature of God, because He has neither extension nor bounds. But by faith we know His existence; in glory we know His nature. Now I have already shown that one may well know the existence of a thing without knowing its nature. . . . Who then will blame Christians for not being able to give a reason for their belief, since they profess that they hold a religion of which they are unable to render a reason. They declare, in explaining it to the world, that it is 'foolishness' [1 Cor. i. 19], and yet you complain that they do not prove it. If they proved it they would not keep their word; it is in lacking proofs that they are not lacking in sense. . . .

"You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your blessedness; and your nature has two things to flee from, error and misery. Your reason is no more wounded in choosing the one



than the other, since you must necessarily make a choice. There is one point settled. But your blessedness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances: if you gain, you gain everything; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He exists.—That is admirable: yes, we must wager; but perhaps I wager too much.—Let us see. Since there is equal risk of gain and of loss, if you had only to gain two lives for one, you might still wager. But if there are three lives to gain, you must needs play (since you are under the necessity of playing); and you would be imprudent, when you are under the necessity of playing, not to hazard your life in order to gain three at one cast when there is equal risk of loss and gain.” . . .

He afterwards gives another reason for acting on the principles of faith even when one does not actually believe. “Learn at least your inability to believe, since reason carries you to this, and that nevertheless you are unable to believe. Strive, then, to convince yourself not by heaping up proofs of the existence of God, but by the abatement of your passions. You would like to attain to faith, and you do not know the way; you would like to heal yourself of unbelief, and you ask for the remedy; learn of those who have been bound as you are, and who now wager all that they possess. These are men who know the path which you would follow, and who are cured of the malady of which you want to be cured. Follow the way by which they began; they lived as though they believed. By such means you will come to believe. . . . What have you to lose?

“Now, what harm will befall you if you take this side? You will be faithful, virtuous, humble, grateful, beneficent, a sincere friend, truthful. Certainly you will not have tainted pleasures, or glory, or delights. But will you not have other pleasures?—I tell you that you will have gain in this life, and that at every step you take in this way you will see so much of the certainty of gain, and so much of the nothingness of that which you risk, that you will know in the end that you have wagered for something certain, infinite, for which you have given nothing.”

Again he returns to his point, that, whilst faith produces good deeds, these also have a tendency to generate faith. “I should soon have quitted pleasures, they say, if I had faith. And I, on my part, tell you, you would soon have faith, if you had quitted pleasures. Now it is for you to begin. If I could, I would give you faith. I cannot do this, nor therefore can I prove the truth of that which you say. But you can easily quit pleasures and prove whether that which I say is true.”

(Over against these practical ways of attaining to faith he places the futility of abstract arguments.) “The metaphysical proofs of God,” he says, “are so remote from the reasoning of men, and so involved, that they make but little impression; and even if that kind of argument should serve some, it would do so only whilst they considered the demonstration; but an hour afterwards they would fear that they had been deceived.” These are prominent thoughts with Pascal, and remind us of the language of Anselm. “I do not ask to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand.”

*Nature and Marks of Religion*

The Articles following (xi. xii.) deal with the nature and characteristics of religion. The former deals with the "marks of the true religion." "The true religion," he says, "should have as its mark, that it obliges one to love his God. That is most just; and yet there is no other religion which has required it; ours has. So also the true religion should recognise concupiscence and impotence in man; ours has done so. It should also have supplied remedies; one of these is prayer. No other religion has asked of God that we might love Him and follow Him. . . .

"In order that a religion may be true, it must have known our nature. It must have known its greatness and its littleness, and the reason of both. What religion has known this but the Christian?

"The heathen religions are more popular, for they are external; but they are not adapted for more enlightened men. For such a religion purely intellectual would be better adapted; but it would be of no use to the common people. The Christian religion alone is adapted for all, being both external and internal. It lifts up the common people to the internal, and it humbles the proud to the external; and it is not perfect without the two: for it is necessary that the common people should understand the spirit of the letter, and that the more enlightened should submit their mind to the letter.

"The external should be joined to the internal in order to obtain from God; that is to say, one should kneel, pray with his lips, etc. . . . so that the proud man, who has not been willing to submit himself to

God, may now be submissive to the creature [that is, to the body]. To expect succour from this external is to be superstitious; to be unwilling to connect it with the interior is to be proud.

“No other religion has proposed to man to hate himself. No other religion, therefore, can please those who hate themselves, and who seek a Being truly lovable. And these, if they had never before heard of the religion of a God humiliated, would embrace it at once. . . .

“No religion but ours has taught that man is born in sin, no sect of philosophers has said it; none, therefore, has spoken the truth. . . .

“This religion, which consists in believing that man is fallen from a state of glory and of communion with God into a state of sadness, penitence, and estrangement from God, but that, after this life, we shall be re-established by a Messiah who is to come,—this religion has always been on the earth. All things have passed away, but this has subsisted for which all things exist. . . .

“The only religion which is opposed to nature, opposed to common sense, opposed to our pleasures, is the only religion which has always existed.

“The greatnesses and the miseries of man are so visible that it is of necessity that the true religion should teach us, both that there is some great principle of greatness in man, and also that there is a great principle of misery. It must therefore give us a reason for these astonishing contradictions.

“In order to make man happy, religion must show him that there is a God; that we are bound to love Him; that it is our true happiness to be in Him, and

our only misfortune to be separated from Him. It must also recognise the fact that we are full of darkness, which hinders us from knowing Him and loving Him; and that thus our duties require us to love God, and our lusts turn us away from Him, so that we are full of unrighteousness. Religion must explain these oppositions within us to God and to our true good. It must teach us the remedies for these impotences, and the means of obtaining these remedies. Let us examine, in this regard, all the religions in the world, and let us see whether there is any other than the Christian religion that would yield satisfaction. . . .

“What religion will teach us, then, to cure our pride and our lust? What religion, in short, will teach us our good, our duties, the weaknesses which turn us away from them, the cause of these weaknesses, the remedies which can cure them, and the means of obtaining these remedies? None of the other religions can do this. Let us see what the Wisdom of God will do.”

Here speaks the Voice of Wisdom, which is identical with the Eternal Word: “It is in vain, O men, that you seek in yourselves the remedy for your miseries. All your lights can only succeed in making you know that it is not in yourselves that you will find either Truth or Good. The philosophers have promised this to you, but they cannot give it. They know neither what is your true Good, nor what is your true state. How should they have given you remedies for your Evils which they have not even known? Your principal maladies are pride, which separates you from God; lust, which makes you cleave to the earth; and they have not got beyond entertaining one of these



maladies.<sup>1</sup> If they have given you God as your object, it has only been to exercise your pride; they have made you think that you were like to Him, and by nature conformed to Him. And those who have seen the vanity of this pretension have cast you over the other precipice, by making you believe that your nature was akin to that of the beasts, and have led you to seek for your happiness in the lusts which you share with the animals. That is not the way to heal you of your unrighteousnesses which those sages have not known?

"If there is one sole principle of all, one sole end of all, then all is by Him, all for Him. In that case the true religion must teach us to adore only Him, and to love none but Him. But, as it is impossible for us to adore that which we do not know, and to love anything but ourselves, religion which instructs us in these duties must also instruct us in respect to these impotences, and must also teach us the remedies. It teaches us that by one man all has been lost, and the connection between God and ourselves broken; and, further, that by One Man the connection is repaired. We are born so opposed to this love of God, and it is so necessary, that we must needs be born in guilt, or God would be unjust. . . .

"Christianity is strange! It orders man to recognise that he is vile, and even abominable, and it bids him wish to be like to God. Without such a counterpoise, this elevation would render him horribly vain, or this abasement would render him terribly abject.

"Misery counsels despair; pride counsels presump-

<sup>1</sup> The Stoics pride and the Epicureans lust.

tion. The Incarnation shows to man the greatness of his misery by the greatness of the remedy which has been necessary."

*Impotence of Reason : Study of the Scriptures*

⟨Pascal dwells with emphasis upon man's inability to discover God, and on the need of the Scriptures and the miracles recorded there, in order to bring conviction of the truth of the gospel.⟩ So in Article xiii. he dwells upon the "submission and use of reason"; after which he takes up the case of one (xiv.) who abandons this way and begins to read the Scriptures. In doing this he considers (xv.) the history of the Jews, next (xvi.) the typical character of the Ancient Law; from which he proceeds (xvii.) to the great subject of Jesus Christ, entering upon the various proofs of His mission and character (xviii. and xix.). It may be well, before noting the concluding Articles, to give some extracts from the portion now described.

Speaking of reason, he says: "The last proceeding of reason is to acknowledge that there is an infinity of things which surpass it. It is but weak, if it does not attain to such knowledge. But if natural things surpass it, what shall we say of the supernatural?"

Again: "The submission and the use of reason; in this consists true Christianity. If we submit all to reason, our religion will have nothing mysterious and supernatural in it. If we offend the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous. St. Augustine says: 'Reason would never submit, if it did not judge that there are occasions when it ought to submit. It is then right that it should submit when it judges

that it ought to submit.'—Piety is different from superstition. To carry piety on to superstition is to destroy it. Heretics accuse us of this superstitious submission. This is to do the very thing of which they accuse us."

Here again are words worthy of being weighed at all times. He is dealing with those who demand a miracle in order that they may believe. "If I had seen a miracle, they say, I should be converted. How do they assure themselves that they would do a thing of the nature of which they are ignorant? They imagine that this conversion consists in an adoration of God which is a kind of commerce, and in a communion such as they fancy it. True conversion consists in annihilating oneself before this Universal Being, whom one has displeased so often, and who might lawfully destroy us at any moment; in acknowledging that we can do nothing without Him; and that we have deserved nothing at His hands but His displeasure. It consists in knowing that there is an invincible opposition between God and ourselves; and that without a mediator, we could have no communion with Him."

Passing on to the need of the Scriptures (xiv.), he says: "We have pleasure in the society of others like ourselves. Miserable as we are, impotent as we are, they will not help us; we shall die alone. We should therefore act as if we were alone; and in that case, should we build grand houses and the like? We should seek truth without hesitation; and if we rejected it, we should show that we valued the esteem of man more than the search for truth."

Taking up his Bible he finds (xv.) that "the Christian religion is founded upon a preceding reli-

gion"; and this religion he finds very impressive. It is of one family, it is of great antiquity, it is singular in its duration. It has the most ancient law in the world, and it preserves books which, by their testimony, condemn the people who preserve them.

In the fulness of time Jesus Christ came, but not in the earthly splendour expected by His countrymen. "The Jews," he says, "so loved the figures that they misunderstood the reality, even though it came at the time and in the manner predicted."

"The Messiah, according to the carnal Jews, was to be a great temporal Prince; according to carnal Christians,<sup>1</sup> He is come to dispense us from loving God, and to give us sacraments which operate entirely without us. Neither the one nor the other is the Christian religion nor the Jewish. True Jews and true Christians have always expected a Messiah who would make them love God, and by this love triumph over their enemies."<sup>2</sup>

Pascal, like the Fathers, finds types of Christ everywhere in the Old Testament (xvi.): "The letter kills. All happened in figures. St. Paul gives us a key. Christ must suffer. A God is humiliated. Circumcision is to be of the heart—true fasting, true sacrifice, true temple. The prophets have shown that all these things have a spiritual meaning. . . . Nature is an image of grace, and visible miracles are an image of the invisible." He uses strong language: "When the Word of God, which is true, is false literally, it is true spiritually. 'Sit Thou at My right hand.' That is false literally; yet it is true spiritually. In these

<sup>1</sup> An undoubted reference to the Jesuits.

<sup>2</sup> Their spiritual enemies, temptations to evil.

expressions God is spoken of after the manner of men; and this signifies only that God has the same kind of intention which men have when they seat another at their right hand. This, then, is a mark of the intention of God, not of His manner of executing it."

Many striking and beautiful things are said in the Article (xvii.) on Jesus Christ, on His lowliness and His greatness. "What man ever had more renown? The whole Jewish people predict Him before His coming. The Gentile people adore Him after His coming. The two peoples, Gentile and Jewish, regard Him as their centre. And yet, what man enjoys this renown less? Of thirty-three years, He lives thirty without appearing. For three years He passes for an impostor; the priests and the chief of the people reject Him; His friends and His nearest of kin despise Him. Finally, He dies betrayed by one of His followers, denied by another, and abandoned by all. What part, then, had He in this renown? Never had man so much renown; never had man more ignominy. All that renown has served only for us to render us capable of recognising Him; and He had none of it for Himself.

"Jesus Christ said great things so simply that it seems as though He had not thought them [to be great]; and yet so clearly that we can easily see what He thought of them. This clearness, joined to this simplicity, is admirable. . . .

"Jesus Christ is a God whom we approach without pride,<sup>1</sup> and under whom we humble ourselves without despair."

In Article xviii. the evidences from the prophecies are brought forward, and in the next (xix.) those from

<sup>1</sup> Unlike the Stoics.



the testimonies of the apostles. If these cannot be depended upon, he argues, the apostles must have been deceived or deceivers. "The supposition that the apostles were impostors is very absurd. Let one think it out; let one imagine those twelve men, assembled after the death of Jesus Christ, plotting to say that He was risen. By this they attack all the powers. The heart of man is strangely inclined to levity, to changes, to promises, to gains. However little any of them might have been led astray by such attractions—nay, more by the fear of prisons, tortures, and death, they were lost. Let one follow up this thought.

"The style of the gospel is admirable in so many ways, and among the rest in hurling no invectives against the persecutors and enemies of Jesus Christ; for none such are in any of the historians levelled against Judas, Pilate, or any of the Jews." Speaking of the false religions which confront Christianity, and specially of Mahometanism, he remarks: "Any man can do what Mahomet did; for he did no miracles, he was not foretold. No man can do that which was done by Jesus Christ."

*Divine concealing and revealing*

Our Lord spoke more than once of the revealing of truth to some and concealing it from others; and Pascal (xx.) remarks: "God has willed to redeem men, and to open the way of salvation to those who should seek it. But men render themselves so unworthy of it that it is right that God should refuse to some, because of their obduracy, that which He accords to others by a compassion which is not due

to them. If He had willed to surmount the obstinacy of the most hardened, He could have done so by discovering Himself so manifestly to them that they could not have doubted of the truth of His essence; as it will appear at the last day, with such thunders and such overthrow of nature, that the dead will rise, and the most blinded will see it.

“It is not in this manner that He has willed to appear in His Advent of mercy, because, since so many men rendered themselves unworthy of His clemency, He has willed to leave them in the privation of the good which they do not want. It was not, then, right that He should appear in a manner manifestly divine, and calculated to work absolute conviction in all men; but, on the other hand, it was not right that He should come in a manner so hidden that He could not be recognised by those who should sincerely seek Him. He has willed to make Himself perfectly recognisable by those; and thus, willing to appear plainly to those who seek Him with their whole heart, and to remain concealed from those who flee from Him with their whole heart, He so regulates His manner of revelation that He has given marks of Himself visible to these who seek Him, and not to those who do not seek Him. <There is light enough for those who only desire to see, and enough of obscurity for those who have a contrary disposition. There is enough of clearness to enlighten the elect, and enough of obscurity to humble them. There is enough of obscurity to blind the reprobate, and enough of clearness to condemn them and to render them inexcusable.”>

The thought here expressed is carried on throughout

the fragments contained in this Article. Thus (8): "Jesus Christ came to blind those who see clearly, and to give sight to the blind; to heal the sick, and let the healthy die; to call to repentance and to justify sinners, and to leave the righteous in their sins; to fill the needy, and to leave the rich empty." So in the last fragment: "We understand nothing in the works of God, if we do not start from the principle that He has willed to blind some and to enlighten others."

*True Christians and true Jews have the same Religion*

"The religion of the Jews seemed to consist essentially in the paternity of Abraham, in circumcision, in sacrifices, in ceremonies, in the ark, in the temple, in Jerusalem, and, finally, in the law and in the covenant of Moses. I say that it consisted in none of those things, but only in the love of God, and that God disregarded all the other things" (xxi.). And this thought is worked out at length in the paragraphs following.

*The Knowledge of God only through Christ*

In the beginning of this Article (xxii.) Pascal gives an outline of his plan. Thus he puts down—

"First Part: Misery of man without God.

Second Part: Felicity of man with God.

Otherwise. First Part: That nature is corrupt.

[Proved] by nature itself.

Second Part: That there is a Restorer.

[Proved] by Scripture."

Further on he says: "The knowledge of God without the knowledge of man's misery produces pride. The knowledge of his misery without that of God produces despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ produces the intermediate, because we there find both God and our misery.

"All those who seek God apart from Jesus Christ and who stay in nature, either find no light which satisfies them, or they end by finding a means of knowing God and serving Him without a Mediator; and in this way they fall either into Atheism or into Deism, two things which are almost equally abhorred by the Christian religion.

"We know God only through Jesus Christ. Without this Mediator all communion with God is taken away; through Jesus Christ we know God. All who have pretended to know God and to prove Him without Jesus Christ had only powerless proofs. But to prove Jesus Christ, we have the prophecies, which are solid and palpable proofs. And these prophecies, being fulfilled and proved true by the event, mark the certainty of these truths, and therefore the proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In Him and by Him, then, we know God. Apart from that and without the Scripture, without original sin, without a necessary Mediator promised and come, we cannot prove God absolutely, nor teach good doctrine or good morality. But by Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ we prove God, and we teach morality and doctrine. Jesus Christ, then, is the true God of men.

"But we know at the same time our misery, for this God is no other than our restorer from our misery. Thus we cannot know God well except in knowing

our iniquities.—Thus those who have known God without knowing their misery have not glorified Him, but have glorified themselves. *Quia non cognovit per sapientiam, placuit Deo per stultitiam prædicationis salvos facere* [1 Cor. i. 21].

“Not only do we know God only by Jesus Christ, but we know ourselves only by Jesus Christ. We know life and death only through Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus Christ, we know not what is our life, nor what is our death, nor what is God, nor what are we ourselves. Thus without the Scriptures, which have only Jesus Christ for their object, we know nothing, and see only obscurity and confusion in the nature of God and in our own nature.”

### *Thoughts on the Miracles*

Again and again Pascal returns to the miracles, and in this respect is perhaps less in harmony with existing modes of thinking than in most of his utterances. It may, however, turn out that Pascal is nearer the truth on this subject; and, at anyrate, he has some admirable remarks on the place of miracles.

“Miracles enable us to discriminate doctrine, and doctrine to discriminate miracles.—There are false miracles and true. There must be a mark in order to know them, otherwise they would be useless. Now they are not useless; on the contrary, they are fundamental. Now the rule which we receive<sup>1</sup> must be such that it does not destroy the proof which the true miracles give of the truth, which is the principal end of the miracles. Moses gives two rules: When the

<sup>1</sup> *Qu'il donne*—meaning somewhat uncertain.



prediction is not fulfilled (Deut. xviii. 22), the prophecy is false. When they do not lead to idolatry (Deut. xiii. 4), they are true. Jesus Christ gives one (St. Mark ix. 38) . . . We are to judge of the doctrine by the miracles; and we must judge of the miracles by the doctrine. All that is true, but there is no contradiction. . . . If there were no false miracles there would be certainty. If there were no rule to distinguish them, miracles would be useless, and there would be no reason for believing. Now there is, humanly speaking, no human certainty, but we have reason.

“There are three marks of religion: Perpetuity [of doctrine], a good life [in its adherents], and miracles. There are those who destroy perpetuity by their doctrine of probability; a good life by their morals; miracles by destroying either their truth or the inferences to be drawn from them.<sup>1</sup>

### *Miscellaneous Thoughts on Religion*

The last two Articles (xxiv. and xxv.) contain a number of fragments less easy to classify, the former being described as *Pensées diverses*, and the latter being composed of Thoughts published for the first time since 1842. A few of these fragments may be offered here. The first is one which has been often quoted:—

“The Heart has its reasons which Reason does not know. We see it in a thousand things. I say that the heart naturally loves the Universal Being, and

<sup>1</sup> Reference to Jesuits. See *Provincial Letters*, particularly the fifth.

also itself naturally, according as it is addicted to the one or the other; and it hardens itself against the one or the other according to its choice. You have rejected the one and maintained the other. Is it by reason that you love? It is the heart which feels God, and not the reason. This is what we mean by Faith—God sensible to the heart, not to the reason.

“There are two ways of convincing men of the truths of our religion: the one by the power of reason, the other by the authority of the speaker. People do not make use of the latter, but of the former. They do not say: You must believe this, because the Scripture which says it is divine; but they say: You must believe for such or such a reason,—and these are feeble arguments, reason being always flexible.” Here we have one of Pascal’s favourite contentions—the insufficiency of reason. It is not quite agreed as to the class of persons here intended. Possibly Montaigne was in his mind; but there can hardly be a doubt that, in part at least, he was thinking of Descartes.

“Religion is a thing so great that it is right that those who will not take the trouble to inquire into it because it is obscure, should be deprived of it. What do they complain of, then, if it is of such a nature that they could find it out by inquiring into it? . . .

“The Prophecies, even the miracles and the proofs of our religion, are not of such a nature that we can say they are absolutely convincing. But they are also of such a kind that we could not be said to be without reason in believing them. Thus there is both evidence and obscurity sufficient to enlighten one class and to darken the other. But the evidence is of such force that it surpasses, or at least equals, the evidence

on the other side; so that it is not reason which can determine us not to follow religion; and thus it can only be the lust and malice of the heart. And by this means there is enough evidence to condemn and not enough to convince; so that it is manifest that, in those who follow it, it is grace and not reason that makes them follow; and in those who flee from it, it is lust and not reason that makes them flee. . . .

"The conditions under which it is easiest to live according to the world, are the most difficult for living according to God, and *vice versâ*. Nothing is so difficult according to the world as the religious life; no life is more easy according to God. Nothing is easier according to the world than to occupy a great position and to have great wealth; nothing according to God is more difficult than to live in such circumstances without being moulded by them.

"As the two sources of our sins are pride and sloth, God has discovered to us two qualities in Himself to heal them: His mercy and His justice. The property of justice is to humble pride. However holy men's works may be, they are taught to say: 'Enter not into judgment'; and the property of mercy is to combat sloth by promoting to good works, according to the passage, 'the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance' (Rom. ii. 4); and this other of the Ninevites: 'Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?' (Jonah iii. 9). And thus so far is it from being the case that mercy encourages laxness, that, on the contrary, it is the quality that directly opposes it; so that, instead of saying: If there were no mercy in God, it would be necessary to make all sorts of efforts in the

way of virtue, we should say, on the contrary, that it is because there is mercy in God that we should make all kinds of efforts." The reader will remember that this thought occurs more than once in Pascal. Spinoza also speaks of Pride and Sloth as the sources of all evil. As he died eight years after the publication of the *Thoughts* (1677), it is hardly likely that he derived the idea from Pascal.

"People say a miracle would strengthen my faith. So they say when they do not see one. The reasons which, being seen from a distance, appear to bound our view . . . but when we reach that point we begin to look beyond it." It has been thought that there is a reference here to those who refused to accept the evidence of the "holy thorn" in favour of Port Royal; but the remark is of universal application.

"There are three means of believing: Reason, Custom, and Inspiration. The Christian religion, which alone has reason, does not acknowledge as its true children those who believe without inspiration; and this is not because it excludes reason and custom. The contrary is the truth. The mind must be opened to proofs, must be confirmed by custom, and lay itself open, by humiliation, to inspirations which alone can work a true and salutary effect, 'lest the cross of Christ should be made void' (1 Cor. i. 17).

"There are only three sorts of persons: those who serve God, having found Him; those who employ themselves in seeking Him, not having found Him; and those who have not found Him and do not seek Him. The first are reasonable and happy; the last are foolish and unhappy; those between are unhappy and reasonable. . . .

“If there is a God, we should love only Him and not the transient creatures. The reasoning of the impious, in the *Wisdom*, is founded only on the assumption that there is no God. This granted, he says, let us enjoy the creature. It is our last resort. But if there were a God to love, he would not have come to this conclusion, but quite the contrary. And this is the conclusion of the wise: There is a God, let us not then enjoy the creature. Everything, therefore, which induces us to attach ourselves to the creature is evil, for that hinders us either from serving God, if we know Him, or from seeking Him, if we know Him not. Now we are full of concupiscence; therefore we are full of evil; therefore we ought to hate ourselves and everything which provokes us to any other attachment than God alone. . . .

“In order to regulate the love which we owe to ourselves, we must imagine a body full of thinking members, for we are members of the whole body, and see how each member ought to love itself, etc.

“If the feet and the hands had a particular will, they would never be in order except in submitting this particular will to the first will which governs the whole body. Apart from this they are in disorder and misfortune; but in willing only the good of the body they procure their own good. . . .

“God regards only the interior; the Church judges only by the exterior. God absolves as soon as He sees penitence in the heart; the Church when she sees it in the works. God wills to make a Church which is pure within, which confounds, by its internal and its entirely spiritual holiness, the internal impiety of proud sages and Pharisees; and the Church wills to make an assembly



of men whose external manners shall be so pure as to confound the manners of the heathen. If there are hypocrites among them, but so well disguised that she does not discover their venom, she tolerates them; for, although they are not received by God, whom they cannot deceive, they are by men whom they do deceive. And thus she is not dishonoured by their conduct, which appears holy. But you want the Church to judge neither of the interior, because that belongs only to God, nor of the exterior, because God stays only at the interior; and thus, taking away from her all choice of men, you retain in the Church the most dissolute, and those who dishonour her so grievously, that the synagogues of the Jews and sects of philosophers would have banished them as unworthy, and would have abhorred them as impious. . . .

“All great amusements are dangerous to the Christian life; but among all that the world has invented, there is none which is more to be feared than the theatre.<sup>1</sup> It is a representation of the passions so natural and so delicate, that it rouses them and gives birth to them in our hearts, and, above all, the passion of love, principally when it is represented as thoroughly chaste and virtuous. For the more innocent it appears to innocent souls, the more they are capable of being affected by it. Its violence pleases our self-love, which immediately forms a desire to produce the same effects which are seen so well represented; and at the same time we make ourselves a conscience founded on the virtuous character of the sentiments which we see there, by which the fear of pure souls is removed,

<sup>1</sup> Pascal uses the word *Comédie*, but evidently refers to all theatrical representations.

since they imagine that there is no hurt to purity in loving with a love which seems to them so reasonable. Thus we leave the theatre with our heart so filled with all the beauties and all the delights of love, and the soul and spirit so persuaded of its innocence, that we are quite prepared to receive its first impressions, or rather to seek an opportunity of awakening them in the heart of another, in order to receive the same pleasures and the same sacrifices which we have seen so well depicted in the theatre."

The passage already noted in connection with the *Provincial Letters* occurs in this place, and may here be given in its entirety: "If my letters are condemned at Rome, that which I condemn in them is condemned in heaven: *Ad tuum, Domine Jesu, tribunal appello*. You yourself [probably the Pope] are corruptible. I feared that I might have written amiss, seeing myself condemned; but the example of so many pious writings made me believe the reverse. It is no longer permitted to us to write well, to such an extent is the Inquisition corrupt or ignorant."

"It is better to obey God than men.

"I fear nothing, I hope for nothing. It is not so with the bishops. Port Royal fears, and it is bad policy to disperse them; for they will fear no longer, and they will make themselves more feared. I do not fear even your censures [perhaps that on Arnauld], if they are not founded on those of tradition. Do you censure everything? What! Even my respect? No. Say then what, or you will do nothing, if you do not point out the evil, and why it is evil. And this is what they will have much difficulty in doing.

"I love poverty because He loved it. I love property

because it affords the means of assisting the miserable. I preserve fidelity to all. I do not return evil to those who do me evil; but I wish them a condition similar to my own, in which one receives neither good nor evil from men. I endeavour to be just, truthful, sincere, and faithful to all men, and I have a tenderness of heart for those to whom God has united me more closely . . . and whether I am alone or in the sight of men, I have in all my actions a sense of the presence of God who shall judge them, and to whom I have consecrated all. These are my sentiments; and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has implanted them in me, and who, of a man full of weaknesses, of miseries, of concupiscence, of pride, and of ambition, has made a man exempt from all these evils by the power of His grace to which all the glory is due, since from myself I have only misery and error.

“Nature has some perfections, to show that it is the image of God, and some defects, to show that it is only His image.

“Man is not worthy of God, but he is not incapable of being made worthy of Him. It is unworthy of God to join Himself to miserable man; but it is not unworthy of God to take him out of his misery.

“Eloquence is an art of saying things in such a manner—(1) that those to whom we speak may understand them without difficulty and with pleasure; (2) that they may feel themselves interested, so that their self-love may lead them more willingly to reflection. It consists, then, in a correspondence which we endeavour to establish between the mind and the heart of those to whom we speak on the one side,

and, on the other, between our thoughts and the expressions of which we make use; and this takes for granted that we have studied well the heart of man so as to know all its powers, and then to find the just proportions of the discourse which we wish to adapt to them. We must put ourselves in the place of those who are to hear us, and make experiment on our own hearts of the turn which we give to our discourse, in order to see if the one is made for the other, and if we can assure ourselves that the hearer will be, as it were, forced to yield. We ought to restrict ourselves, as much as possible, to the simple and natural, and not make great that which is little, nor little that which is great. It is not enough that a thing be beautiful, it must be appropriate to the subject, so that there may be nothing in excess and nothing lacking.

“Atheists ought to say things which are perfectly clear. Now, it is not perfectly clear that the soul is material.

“Unbelievers the most credulous. They believe the miracles of Vespasian in order not to believe those of Moses.”

*Thoughts published since 1842*

“The ordinary world have the power not to think of that which they do not want to think about. Do not think of the passages of the Messiah, said the Jew to his son. Thus do ours often. Thus are false religions preserved, and even the true in regard to many persons. But there are some who have not the power of thus preventing themselves from thinking, and who think the more from being forbidden to think. Such

persons get rid of false religions and even of the true, if they find no solid proofs of it.

2. "Nothing is so insupportable to man as to be in complete repose, without passions, without business, without amusement, without application. He then feels his nothingness, his abandonment, his insufficiency, his dependence, his impotence, his emptiness. Immediately there will issue from the depths of his soul weariness, darkness, sadness, chagrin, vexation, despair.

"I regard Jesus Christ in all persons and in ourselves. Jesus Christ as Father in His Father, Jesus Christ as Brother in His brethren, Jesus Christ as poor in the poor, Jesus Christ as rich in the rich, Jesus Christ as teacher and priest in the priests, Jesus Christ as sovereign in the princes, etc. For being God, all that He has that is great is by His glory, and it is by His mortal life that He has whatever is mean and abject in Him. For this He has taken this unhappy condition, so as to be able to be in all persons, and a model of all conditions.

"Fear death out of danger, and not in danger, for one must be a man.

"The Eternal Being is always if He is once.

"We implore the mercy of God, not that He may leave us in peace in our vices, but that He may deliver us from them."

### *The Pyrrhonism of Pascal*

[It may be well to add here a few words on what has been called the Pyrrhonism or Scepticism of Pascal.] And a few words may suffice for two reasons. In the first place, it would be impossible to treat the subject



here exhaustively; and, in the second place, the work has been done so ably by Victor Cousin and Alexander Vinet that it is unnecessary to add anything to what they have said so well.

Different views have been taken of this subject, some writers denying altogether the appropriateness of the phrase in reference to Pascal, others maintaining that whilst he could not be called a religious sceptic, he might properly be so termed in the philosophical sense, whilst others have gone so far as to declare that he might be called an atheist!

The absurdity of this last statement need hardly be insisted upon. Not only is an atheist not a sceptic, but no reader of Pascal's writings can fail to recognise the fact that he was, in the deepest sense of the words, a devout Christian. There is, however, more reason for classing him among philosophical sceptics, since he did most certainly deny the possibility of arriving at religious truth by the mere exercise of reason.

Let us glance for a moment at some of his own statements, and then we shall perhaps be better able to understand his meaning. In one place<sup>1</sup> we have the following: "Pyrrhonism is the truth; for, after all, men before Jesus Christ did not know where they were, nor whether they were great or small. And those who have said the one or the other, knew nothing of it, and divined without reason and by chance; they even erred always in excluding the one or the other. *Quod ergo ignorantes quæritis, religio annuntiat vobis.*"

Again:<sup>2</sup> "All their principles are true, those of the

<sup>1</sup> Havet, Article xxiv., Fragment 1.

<sup>2</sup> xxv. 29.

Pyrrhonists, of the Stoics, of the atheists, etc. But their conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are also true."

On this section M. Havet remarks: "Man is incapable of knowing with certainty (i. 1); this is the principle of the Pyrrhonists; and, according to Pascal, this principle is true. But man is equally incapable of absolute ignorance." This is the opposite principle, and it is also true (cf. viii. 1). In the same way the Stoical principle is true, that man is essentially rational, and that order is his law. But the opposite principle is also true, that man is essentially animal, and that pleasure is his law. The principle of the atheists is true, that the evil which is in man and in nature testifies that the world does not obey a divine will. According to Pascal, the reconciliation of all these contradictions is found in Original Sin. "Man was made for the knowledge of the true and for the practice of the good; but he has fallen and has been given over to ignorance and to evil. The hand of God the Creator was on man and on the world; but by consequence of original sin, God has withdrawn Himself, and His elect alone find Him again."

To this two remarks may be added. In the first place, Pascal evidently has often in his mind the ontological argument of Descartes for the being of God; and finding this unsatisfactory, he declares that Reason does not possess the authority which his contemporary attributes to it. It was a time of breaking ground, and neither Pascal nor Descartes need be blamed because the problem was not yet clear, much less its complete solution. Since those days, and since the time of Kant, the ontological argument has been

so stated as to be divested of the difficulties by which it was formerly surrounded.

But Pascal was surely right when he held that men never had discovered the true nature of God without the aid of a supernatural revelation; and here at least he had the authority of St. Paul: "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. i. 21); and of a greater than St. Paul: "No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27)./

## CHAPTER VIII

### DESTRUCTION OF PORT ROYAL

THERE are few sadder episodes in the history of any great people than the story of the later years of Louis XIV. The greatness of this age has often been dwelt upon; but too often it has been forgotten that the glory of the age of Louis XIV. belonged to its earlier history, before the destruction of civil and religious liberty had produced the effects which universally result from such antecedents. To the latter part of the seventeenth century belonged two crimes of the darkest character, from which it may be truly said that France has never recovered—the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the destruction of Port Royal. In both cases the Government—that is to say, the King—was influenced by the same sentiment, the determination to bring about unity of religious belief and practice, and the destruction of heresy.

Undoubtedly Louis XIV. was induced to believe that Port Royal was heretical; and it may be well to glance back over the history which has been partially told in the preceding pages. The ruin of Port Royal was certainly brought about by the enmity of the Jesuits; and this enmity proceeded from causes partly of a

doctrinal character, partly personal. As has been already remarked, the original sin of the Arnaulds, the great upholders of Port Royal, had been the line taken by the grandfather of the Mère Angélique in gaining a suit against the Jesuits. But this offence might have been forgotten but for the prominent part taken by the family in the defence of St. Cyran, and so of Jansenism. Whether the Jesuits have been rightly charged with Pelagianism or not, at least they were the vehement opponents of Augustinian doctrine as taught by Jansenius.

But this was not all. The Jansenists were noted for their high code of morals and their indisposition to relax the demands of the gospel in the manner often charged against the Jesuits. This was specially brought forward in Arnauld's *Treatise on Frequent Communion*, in which he insisted upon the necessity of such repentance as led to newness of life, in which the love of God had part. We have seen how Pascal attacked the adversaries of the Jansenists in the *Provincials*. In addition to these differences, the success of the schools of Port Royal gave great offence to the Jesuits, who gave much attention to the work of education in their own way.

We have seen how the condemnation of the five propositions, professedly taken from the writings of Jansenius, was brought about. This was done by Pope Innocent in 1653; and in 1656 Arnauld was expelled by the Sorbonne, and with his friends had to go into hiding. Soon afterwards the Jesuits obtained an order from Government to abolish the "little schools" of Port Royal. A slight check was put upon the hostile endeavours of their adversaries by the "miracle"



of the Holy Thorn in 1656; but this was of short duration.

The first demand made upon Port Royal was that its members should condemn the five propositions, which they did. But this did not satisfy their enemies, who caused a second formulary to be drawn up, in which the propositions were declared to contain the doctrine taught by Jansenius. The nuns protested their inability to judge of the contents of a voluminous work in Latin which they could not read, and refused to comply with the demand. As a consequence, the little schools were broken up, the novices and scholars were expelled from Port Royal des Champs, and the directors and confessors banished. In this same year (6th August 1661) the Mère Angélique died. It was a true testimony which was borne of her, "She united a profound humility to a sublime genius."

The Mère Angélique had expressed the belief that her death might end the persecution of the community; it was rather the beginning than the end. The nuns remained "contumacious," either refusing to sign the formulary, or signing it only with an explanation. The signing probably cost the life of Jacqueline Pascal. "Her health," says Madame Périer, her sister, "was so shaken by all this business that she fell dangerously ill, and died soon after." It was a fulfilment of the language of Madame de Guémenée to the King's Jesuit Confessor, whom she was vainly endeavouring to soften towards Port Royal: "The King makes princes of the blood, he makes archbishops and bishops, and he will make martyrs likewise." In 1664 both houses were laid under interdict. In May 1666 de Saci was arrested and sent to the

Bastille, where he completed the revision of his translation of the Bible (1668).

In 1669 Clement IX., a man of peaceful disposition, issued a Brief of reconciliation, known as the Pacification of Clement IX. A great change instantly took place. Arnauld was received at Court; de Saci resumed his place as Confessor and Director at Port Royal. The recluses returned, and the nuns were released from their confinement. It was a time of prosperity and happiness for the society at Port Royal. One great drawback, indeed, must be noted: Port Royal of Paris was separated from the mother house and placed under Jesuit management (1669). The nuns of Port Royal des Champs were allowed to receive pupils, but not to add any more to their own number.

The relief afforded by the peace of Clement IX. was not to be of long duration. Again the nuns were required to affirm the condemnation of Jansenius and his doctrine. This had been the stumbling-block of Port Royal for many years. It had killed Jacqueline Pascal. It may have hastened the death of her brother, who died in the following year, aged thirty-nine. As we have said, the respite was but momentary. In 1679 the death of Madame de Longueville, a near relative of the King and a devoted friend of Port Royal, was the occasion for the renewal of hostilities. The recluses received an order from the Government to leave Port Royal at once. Many of them died in exile and in want. The nuns, deprived of their protectors, were exposed to cruel persecutions, forbidden to receive either novices or scholars, and deprived of the slender endowments by which they were maintained. The

year 1684 saw the death of de Saci, who, from his retreat, had watched over and guided the society at Port Royal.

Papal Bulls issued in the years 1705 and 1708 ordered the suppression of Port Royal des Champs, and the transference of the property to Port Royal de Paris. In the following year (1709) the Cardinal de Noailles, archbishop of Paris, most reluctantly, but constrained by Court influence, issued the decree for the extinction of the monastery of Port Royal des Champs, whilst the destruction of the buildings was ordered by the Council.

It is a sickening story which tells of the expulsion of the nuns in cold and inclement weather, with the shortest notice and in the harshest manner. Some of them were old and infirm, yet no time was allowed them to make preparation for their departure. One fainted, another who had been bled the day before felt the bleeding return; but it was with difficulty that they received the slightest consideration from the officer who was commissioned to expel them.

The expulsion of the nuns was followed by the destruction of the monastery, which was carried out in the following year (1711); and this again was followed by the demolition of the church, and, finally, by the exhumation of the bodies to the number of nearly three thousand. Who can deny that this work was a hideous crime? Who can fail to discern the terrible reckoning exacted of the Church of France in the not distant future? It was not the Port Royalists who were the chief sufferers, it was the Church and nation of France. The words of the wise man are seldom more applicable than to these victims of a cruel and

wicked persecution: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace. For, though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality."

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