When Father Cafaro found that Gerard meant to follow him about from place to place, he rebuked him, and tried to persuade him that the congregation would not suit him. All the fathers were of the same opinion. "Try me," replied Gerard, "and then dismiss me;" and he followed them to Rionero. His firmness was so great, that it at length succeeded in moving Father Cafaro, who consented to send him to the house at Iliceto, rather however for the sake of getting rid of him, than from a wish to receive him. This then was the manner in which Gerard Majella was admitted into the congregation.

CHAPTER VI.

NARRATION OF BROTHER GERARD'S VIRTUES WHILE HE WAS IN THE HOUSE AT ILICETO.

After Gerard's prayer had been granted, every moment seemed an age to him until he reached our house. He was delighted to find that it was dedicated to our Blessed Lady of Consolation. No sooner had he reached it, than he went to the altar of our Blessed Lady, and protested to her that he meant to live under her protection, and to die in the house which was thus dedicated to her. He wept for very joy, and never could thank God and the Blessed Virgin sufficiently for the great favour they had conferred upon him.

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When Father Cafaro returned to Iliceto, instead of finding that Gerard was quite useless, as he had at first imagined, he was surprised to hear all the fathers and brothers uniting in praising his quickness, his diligence, exemplary conduct, recollected demeanour, and prompt obedience. In fact, he gave such general satisfaction that none of the fathers could oppose his reception, and Gerard Majella was therefore numbered amongst our lay-brothers.

Gerard immediately placed himself under the direction of Father Cafaro, who soon perceived that God manifested Himself to him in an extraordinary manner. One day, amongst others, when different theological and ascetical questions were being discussed, Gerard joined in the conversation, and spoke with so much accuracy that he excited the admiration of all who heard him. Father Cafaro was in the habit of proposing questions of various kinds to the brothers; and whenever they were at a loss what to say, Gerard always replied with theogical exactness. This sufficed to cause his real worth to become known, and he was soon esteemed among us as highly as he deserved to be.

The life he led in the world was admirable, but that which he led amongst us was far more so. For well did he know how to unite the labours of Martha with the holy repose of Mary. The brothers declare that he did the work of four men, and that he would often labour in their stead, saying, in a cheerful tone, "Go away, and leave me to do that, for

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I am the youngest." The most servile occupations were the objects of his predilection, and he not only performed them when ordered to do so, but he sought for them and embraced them of his own accord. He was fond of every kind of labour, provided it were sufficiently abject. Thus he really took pleasure in cleaning out the stable, and in performing the most repulsive offices which were required in the house. In fact, fatigue was his beloved spouse, and it grieved him to be deprived of it.

Labour did not interfere however with Gerard's love for meditation, for though he worked hard during the day, he retired to the church at night, and remained in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, shedding abundance of tears. As he longed to do more than he was enjoined to do by the rule, he made up for this pious want during the night, so that he was to be found in the morning in the very spot where he had placed himself the evening before. And besides this, every moment of his time was spent in meditation; for however distracting the nature of his charges might be, he was always recollected and in the presence of God. His ejaculatory prayers were frequent and like darts of fire. Jesus and Mary were ever in his heart and on his lips, and he was sometimes so absorbed in God that he would stop short in the middle of what he was doing in a kind of ecstasy. He was no novice in the school of Divine love, and this was gradually discovered by the ecstasies and raptures with which he

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was favoured by Heaven. One day some strangers who were going to dinner perceived Gerard in an ecstasy before an image of Mary Immaculate, which was facing the staircase.

He was so sensibly affected by the passion of Christ, that he used to faint when he contemplated a representation of it. Once when there were several candidates for ordination in the house, Gerard was ordered to clean the refectory. Whilst he was thus engaged, another lay-brother came in and found him kneeling before a picture of the "Ecce homo," ravished out of himself, with extended arms, holding a fork in one hand and a plate in another. As the brother who found him in this state did not understand this mystery, he ran to call Father Cafaro, who commanded Gerard to come to himself, which he immediately did, and then resumed his work.

He was once sent to Melfi to attend Father D. Stephen Liguori, and two of our other fathers who were taking the mineral waters. One day while he was there Father Liguori began to play and sing Metastasio's well-known air, "If thou wilt find God," &c., upon which he fell into a transport of love, seized on Father Liguori, and danced about with him during his ecstasy, holding him tightly in his arms and carrying him from place to place without the least difficulty, to the great astonishment of all present.

About this time Gerard one day went to visit Canon D. Leonard Rossi, who purposely turned the conversation on the infinite perfections of

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God. No sooner had Gerard begun to contemplate them, than he fell into an ecstasy, consumed as it were with the flames of Divine love. As the canon divined the cause, he cooled his breast with cold water, which restored his consciousness, and the brother immediately went away much disconcerted at having been thus discovered. To meditation Gerard united a holy hatred of himself. The instruments wherewith he crucified his flesh were appalling even to look at. The discipline which he used so often and unrelentingly was furnished with twelve steel stars, and with numerous long and sharp points; he used also to scourge himself twice a day with knotted cords, which caused such a great effusion of blood, that his flesh was always covered with wounds, but in common he generally used the former, and he did so with such severity that the place where he took it was watered with his blood.

He made constant use of hair-cloth round his body, wore sharp-pointed chains round his legs and arms, and daily crucified his body by other cruel instruments of penance. Jesus Crucified was the book which was continually in his hands, and the more he studied it, the more severe did he become towards his own body.

He was at all times most rigorous in mortifying his appetite. He did not take as much as two ounces of bread a day; and if he were obliged to eat the little which was served up at dinner, he took care to season it with aloes and centaury. He used to say, "The love of God

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cannot exist in a soul if the body be well fed." He seemed to be quite absorbed in God during dinner; he often remained without eating, holding a morsel of bread in his hand, with his eyes bathed in tears in a complete ecstasy. Fathers Januarius Rendina, Francis Juvenal, and Gaspar Cajone, who watched him more narrowly than the others, render their testimony to the same thing.

I cannot here omit to mention an instance of patience which Gerard gave in this house, and which I witnessed myself when I was only a student. A young father, who was afterwards expelled by Alphonso, was left alone in the house, and therefore became the superior of the brothers; now as he was severe by nature, and had an aversion to Gerard, he could do nothing, indeed he could scarcely even breathe, without this irascible father finding something to complain of. His corrections were harsh and frequent, and his penances were severe; yet Gerard bore them with unruffled patience, never giving way to the least complaint, and never manifesting the slightest repugnance to any order he might receive. He was often obliged to fast on bread and water, and amongst other things, he was enjoined to draw his tongue along the pavement several times a day, or else to make from twenty to thirty crosses of a palm's length with it. This good brother's tongue was quite torn by this, and the pavement was watered by the consequent effusion of blood. This exercise lasted for a month. The other brothers and myself

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