

most fearful tortures. Hence they thought only of preparing for martyrdom by all the means that austerity can suggest for chastising the flesh. Men, women and children even, in this matter proceeded to excesses which the missionaries never would have permitted had they been fully informed in regard to them.

Catharine, more fully possessed by the interior spirit than all the others, was too the most unsparing to herself of all. She consulted naught but her fervor, and believed herself in no wise bound to depend in this on her director as formerly, believing that this general concert of the whole village could not be unknown to him, and that his silence in regard to it was a consent. She was accordingly soon reduced to a state of languor and suffering from which she never recovered.¹ Some time after she paid a visit to Montreal, where the sight of the Hospital Nuns, whom she had never even heard mentioned, increased her desire to consecrate herself to God by the vow of chastity ; she renewed her entreaties to her confessor, who judged it his duty no longer to withhold his consent. She accordingly took the long desired vow, with a joy that seemed to revive all her strength, and she was the first of her tribe who took upon herself such an engagement with heaven.

The heavenly spouse of chaste souls was not slow in giving her manifest proofs that he had accepted her sacrifice, and in treating her as his well-beloved spouse. She, on her side, exerted herself to correspond to his caresses and the internal communications with which he favored her by perfect fidelity and unreserved love. But her strength could not long sustain its ardor, and the flesh soon gave way beneath the efforts of the spirit. She fell into a dangerous disease, which left her only a lingering existence subject to constant pain. In this state she united herself more and more to Jesus Christ by meditating on His death and sufferings, and the frequent reception of the sacraments. She could no longer endure human conversation ; Anastasia and Theresa were the only two persons with whom she retained any kind of intimacy, because they spoke to her only of God.

She felt well only at the foot of the altar, where, buried in profound contemplation, and shedding torrents of tears, whose inexhaustible fountain was His love and the wound it had inflicted on her heart, she often so forgot the wants of her body, as not even to feel the cold, with which her whole frame was benumbed. She always came from this contemplation with renewed love of suffering, and it is unconceivable how ingenious

¹ Chauchetière intimates that this occurred while Father Fremin, her prudent director, was absent in Europe, ch. vi.