

CHAPTER VII.

Of the imperfections in the matter of envy and spiritual sloth.

1. Sixth and seventh imperfections: envy and spiritual sloth as against the holy envy of charity. 2. Cause and effects of spiritual sloth. 3. Perfection is to do the will of God. 4. Why prayer is sometimes irksome; true spiritual joys of the Cross. 5. Good fruits of the Dark Night; God alone can purify the soul.

Beginners are not free from many imperfections, in the matter of the two other vices, envy and spiritual sloth. Many of them are often vexed because of other men's goodness. They are sensibly afflicted when others outstrip them on the spiritual road, and will not endure to hear them praised. They become fretful over other men's virtues, and are sometimes unable to refrain from contradiction when they are commended; they depreciate them as much as they can, looking on them with an evil eye,¹ and feel it acutely because they themselves are not thought so well of, for they wish to be preferred above all others. This is most opposed to that charity of which S. Paul says, it 'rejoiceth with the truth.'² If charity admits of envy at all, it is a holy envy that makes us grieve that we have not the virtues that others have; but still rejoicing that they have them, and glad that others outstrip us in the race that they may serve God, we being so full of imperfection ourselves.

2. As to spiritual sloth, beginners are wont to find their most spiritual occupations irksome, and avoid them as repugnant to their taste, for being so given to sweetness in spiritual things they loathe them when they find none. If they miss once this sweetness in prayer which is their joy—it is expedient that God should deprive them of it in order to try

¹ Y les crece como dijen, el ojo.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 6. Quoted not literally but according to the sense.

