

THE FIRST CHILD OF THERESE

Ms A, 46 r° & v°

One Sunday, closing my book at the end of Mass, a picture of Our Lord on the Cross half slipped out, showing only one of His Divine Hands, pierced and bleeding. I felt an indescribable thrill such as I had never felt before. My heart was torn with grief to see that Precious Blood falling to the ground, and no one caring to treasure It as It fell, and I resolved to remain continually in spirit at the foot of the Cross, that I might receive the Divine Dew of Salvation and pour it forth upon souls. From that day the cry of Jesus—"I thirst!"—sounded incessantly in my heart, and kindled therein a burning zeal hitherto unknown to me. My one desire was to give my Beloved to drink; I felt myself consumed with thirst for souls, and I longed at any cost to snatch sinners from the everlasting flames of hell. In order still further to enkindle my ardour, Our Divine Master soon proved to me how pleasing to him was my desire. Just then I heard much talk of a notorious criminal, Pranzini, who was sentenced to death for several shocking murders, and, as he was quite impenitent, everyone feared he would be eternally lost. How I longed to avert this irreparable calamity! In order to do so I employed all the spiritual means I could think of, and knowing that my own efforts were unavailing, I offered for his pardon the infinite merits of Our Saviour and the treasures of Holy Church. Need I say that in the depths of my heart I felt certain my request would be granted? But, that I might gain courage to persevere in the quest for souls, I said in all simplicity: "My God, I am quite sure that Thou wilt pardon this unhappy Pranzini. I should still think so if he did not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow, because I have such confidence in Thy unbounded Mercy; but this is my first sinner, and therefore I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me." My prayer was granted to the letter. My Father never allowed us to read the papers, but I did not think there was any disobedience in looking at the part about Pranzini. The day after his execution I hastily opened the paper, *La Croix*, and what did I see? Tears betrayed my emotion; I was obliged to run out of the room. Pranzini had mounted the scaffold without confessing or receiving absolution, and the executioners were already dragging him towards the fatal block, when all at once, apparently in answer to a sudden inspiration, he turned round, seized the crucifix which the Priest was offering to him, and kissed Our Lord's Sacred Wounds three times. . . . I had obtained the sign I asked for, and to me it was especially sweet. Was it not when I saw the Precious Blood flowing from the Wounds of Jesus that the thirst for souls first took possession of me? I wished to give them to drink of the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb that It might wash away their stains, and the lips of "my first born" had been pressed to these Divine Wounds. What a wonderful answer!

After receiving this grace my desire for the salvation of souls increased day by day. I seemed to hear Our Lord whispering to me, as He did to the Samaritan woman: "Give me to drink!". It was indeed an exchange of love: upon souls I poured forth the Precious Blood of Jesus, and to Jesus I offered these souls refreshed with the Dew of Calvary. In this way I thought to quench His Thirst; but the more I gave Him to drink, so much the more did the thirst of my own poor soul increase, and I accepted it as the most delightful recompense.