

## TO CLERKS

[The following passage is taken from the fifteenth century MS. Douce 274 (s.c. 21848). It occurs among some short prose instructions on the Commandments etc., at fol. 17v.—C.K.]

**B**RETHEN and sisters, the Gospel tells us that our Lord shewed him to his apostles oft after he was dead. And at the third time that he shewed him, then said he to them, and spake to St Peter and said on this wise: 'Simon lovest thou me?' and St Peter answered: 'Sir thou wost well that I love thee'. And thus he asked him thrice together. But wit ye well that this word was not only said to St Peter, but to all the clerks of Holy Church that souls have for to keep and to counsel. Now then is myster<sup>1</sup> that we have these three things and the first is holy life; that other, wit and wisdom; the third facund<sup>2</sup> of speech to preach and teach.

Good life specially that each man may take example of goodness. And it needeth that preachers be learned of all sciences where through they may con<sup>3</sup> govern them and others in body and in soul. Facund, that they have the mouth open and readiness to speak. Through these things owe each man of holy Church to call again his parishens<sup>4</sup> from evil life and amonish them good life for to lead. Clerks and men of holy church owe for to give good ensample to the lewd men through holy life and clean, through chastity and soberness and meekness and suffraunce and poverty, following Christ in his living preaching and teaching the will of God, wisely to all that will them hear.

The clerk owe to be of such measure<sup>5</sup> that if any man missay him or misdo him, that he be not wrathed nor grieved, but pray to God for him, and be debonair and large after that he may, in alms deeds, and to comfort the sorry and the meek, chastise the fools and receive the sick and be suffrande to all men. And also the clerk owe to be ensample of good life to all, as our Lord said to the clerks: 'Ye are salt of the earth and light of the world'. As meat that is without salt is evil savoured and may not endure; no manner of meat may be held any while without salt. And if it be well salted men may hold it till men will dispend it to their profit. Right so is man without the clerks. If he be well learned, he does the good and leaves the evil, and he may dure till the day of doom.

1 O.F. *métier* from *ministerium*: office, need, here needful.

2 O.F. *facunde* from L. *facundia*: eloquence.

3 know to govern.

4 parishioners.

5 probably O.F. *mesure*: with sense of balance, evenness.

And then shall our Lord dispend him, in his house, at his feast that men shall have; that is, he shall set him in his joy without end.

The clerk owe to be light of the world to lewd men. As men that are in mirkness without light go wrong, so might men of this world go wrong till they be learned through teaching of clerks. And therefore hear [ye] the gospel and the understanding of it! for God says himself: 'Blessed be they that hear my words and keep them'. Amen.



## ST TERESA OF LISIEUX IN HER LETTERS

BY

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THE Letters of St Teresa of Lisieux, now first published in English<sup>1</sup>, are an indispensable companion to her Autobiography. For they shed new light on her character and underline the special *cachet* of her sanctity. In the many short letters and occasional *billets* we are permitted to watch her soul as it were in working dress—and, let us say it at once, from

the first letter to the last we see sheer sanctity. John Beevers, in his very understanding biography of her with the somewhat flashy title *Storm of Glory*<sup>2</sup> writes: 'St Thérèse of the Child Jesus is the greatest Saint of modern times . . . because she has liberated sanctity and made it obviously accessible to everyone'. It is this that strikes the reader so forcibly in her letters.

Let us look first at the recipients. They are almost all addressed to members of her own family, except for those to the two missionaries entrusted to her prayers during her last years, and a few to Carmelite and Visitation nuns. If we compare them with the letters of a St Catherine of Siena or with those of her own holy Mother, St Teresa, who numbered Popes, kings, cardinals and other high dignitaries both of the Church and of the world among their correspondents and who showed themselves keenly alive to the problems and events of their time, the letters of the modern Saint seem, at first glance, quite uninteresting. For, as regards worldly affairs,

<sup>1</sup> *The Collected Letters of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*. Translated by F. J. Sheed. (Sheed & Ward, 1949; 15s.)

<sup>2</sup> Sheed & Ward, 1949; 10s.6d.