

The old man had never eaten flesh, had never but once been in the way of begetting offspring, habitually fasted four months in the year, ate only a little rice boiled in water, with fruit and herbs, and that late in the evening, used to spend his nights in prayer, and before he entered his place of prayer washed his whole body, and put on a dress of spotless linen reserved for this only. He then would go in and worship the devil in his image, with the most single-minded devotion. He was the priest of the whole of his island, which was situated in the remotest region of the Indies.

Now God seeing his purity enlightened him first with wisdom from within; and afterwards the demon was constrained to address him through the idol's mouth, speaking thus: 'Thou art not in the path of salvation! God therefore enjoineeth thee to proceed to Columbum, a distance of two years voyage by sea, and there shalt thou find the messenger of God who shall teach thee the way of salvation!' 'Now, therefore,' said he to me, 'here am I, come to thy feet and ready to obey thee in all things; and what is more, it was thy face that I saw in my dreams, as now I recognize.' Then having prayed with tears, and strengthened him in his intent, we assigned his baptized son as his teacher and interpreter. And after three months instruction I baptized him by the name of Michael, and blessed him, and sent him away, whilst he promised to preach to others the faith that he had acquired.¹

This story serves to exemplify that God (as St. Peter said of Cornelius the centurion) is no respecter of persons, but whosoever keepeth the law that is written in the heart (For

¹ The old man was evidently a Brahman, accurately described, and it is almost too great a stretch of charity to suppose that he came truly in search of instruction. For certainly the interpreter at least was playing on Marignolli's simplicity and vanity with the stories of the two years voyage, of the miraculous admonition, etc., to make him think he was enacting Peter to this new Cornelius. In fact it looks as if the whole was got up as a trick, in the spirit of those which the Duke and Duchess played on Don Quixote.