While the soul still feels the full power of the divine unction upon it, its imperfections appear to be destroyed; but as the work of purification goes on, the virtues sink deep into the soul, disappearing from the surface and leaving the natural defects in conspicuous prominence. The effects of winter upon the vegetable world seem to me to present a lively and truthful image of this operation of God. As the season of cold and storms approaches, the trees gradually lose their leaves, their vivid green is soon changed into a funeral brown, and they fall and die. The trees now look stripped and desolate; the loss of their summer garments brings to light all the irregularities and defects in their surfaces which had previously been hidden from view. Not that they have contracted any new deformity; not at all; everything was there before, but hidden by their abundant verdure. Thus the man in the time of his purification, appears stripped of his virtues, but as the tree, in the preservation of its sap, retains that which is the producing cause of leaves, so the soul is not deprived of the essence of virtue, nor of any solid advantage; but only of a certain external facility in the display of its possessions. The man thus spoiled and naked, appears in his own eyes and in those of others with all the defects of nature which were previously concealed by the verdure of sensible grace. During the whole of winter, the trees appear dead; they are not so in reality, but, on the contrary, are submitting to a process which preserves and strengthens them. For what is the effect of winter? It contracts their exterior, so that the sap is not uselessly expended abroad, and it concentrates their strength upon the root, so that new ones are pushed out and the old ones strengthened and nourished and forced deeper into the soil. We may say, then, that however dead the tree may appear in its accidents (if we may be allowed to apply this expression to its leaves), it was never more alive in its essentials, and it is even during winter that the source and principle of its life is more firmly established. During the other seasons it employs the whole force of its sap in adorning and beautifying itself at the expense of its roots. Just so in the economy of grace. God takes away that which is accidental in virtue, that He may strengthen the principle of the virtues. These are still practiced by the soul, though in an exceedingly hidden way, and in humility, pure love, absolute abandonment, contempt of self and the others, the soul makes solid progress. It is thus that the operation of God seems to sully the soul exteriorly; in point of fact it implies no new defects in the soul, but only an uncovering of the old ones, so that by being openly exposed they may be better healed.—Mad. Guyon, Justifications, ii. 265