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FATHER BERTRAND WILBERFORCE

**Nihil obstat :**

F. HUMBERTUS EVEREST, O.P., S.T.L.

F. HUGO POPE, O.P., S.T.L.

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F. ED. LAURENTIUS SHAPCOTE, O.P., S.T.L.,

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382

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
FATHER BERTRAND  
WILBERFORCE

OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

COMPILED BY

H. M. CAPES, O.S.D.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

VINCENT M'NABB, O.P.

“Verbo, vitâ prædicat.”

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## P R E F A C E

THIS volume has been compiled by one of a community to whose members Father Bertrand Wilberforce stood in close relations of friendship and brotherhood. He assisted them in many ways, both literary and spiritual, and often sacrificed himself in their service. Their superior, Mother Francis Raphael Drane, whose *Memoir* Father Wilberforce wrote, bore him a special affection, and her predecessor, Mother Mary Imelda Poole, esteemed him no less highly. The compilation of his *Life and Letters* has, therefore, been undertaken as a tribute of gratitude to the memory of an old and valued friend, and as such, is offered to all who knew Father Wilberforce, and, more especially, to his own Religious Brethren, the Fathers of the English Province of Friar-Preachers.

In such a life as Father Bertrand's there is little matter to be found for the biographer's pen, and the work of the compiler has almost necessarily been confined to giving a slight sketch of his early years, and to the tracing in outline his apostolic career, connecting the letters with the life by such links as were needed to make the whole intelligible. The letters themselves reveal much of the writer's inner life, and on this—by far the most interesting portion of a man's history—further light is thrown from many little notes and memoranda found among his papers after death.

Thanks are due to the many persons who have helped in the work, and particularly to those who, regardless of their

personal feelings, have allowed their letters from Father Bertrand to be printed, in order that other souls may profit by his words of exhortation and encouragement.

In order to avoid unnecessary repetition it has been judged expedient to omit some letters and curtail others; here and there, two letters to the same person have been inserted as one, and a few have, for convenience' sake, been arranged according to subjects, irrespectively of their dates.

Wherever it was possible or permitted, proper names have been given. In letters of a personal and private nature, this could not, of course, be done, and in one or two other cases Father Wilberforce's friends, no doubt from motives of humility, have desired to remain anonymous.

ST DOMINIC'S CONVENT,

STONE, STAFFS,

*Feast of St Lewis Bertrand,*

*October 10, 1906.*

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## INTRODUCTION

IT may perhaps be thought that some of the materials from which the following pages have been written were prepared by the subject of this memoir himself; therefore it seems well to say at once that the exact contrary is nearer the truth. Humility was so deeply rooted in Father Wilberforce's soul that the thought of his life being written probably never crossed his mind, and those who were privileged to know him in his many moods may easily imagine the look and tones which would have greeted such a proposal. If it had been suggested to him to set his notes in order, so as to lighten the work of his future biographer, such an appeal would probably have resulted only in the total destruction of the scanty material those notes did yield on examination. Father Bertrand was not "a man with a grievance." He cast his care upon the Lord, thereby transcending the anxieties that beset lesser minds.

It is, then, not from any desire to fulfil some known wish of Father Wilberforce that this volume is now given to the world. Nevertheless, it is truly love for him and, still more, love for the souls he loved, that has prompted the work. His life has been written in the hope that some account of what he was by nature, and what he became by grace, may reach and encourage those souls in whom the sense of their own almost unconquerable nature seems to clog the feet of grace.

We can hardly wonder that the grandson of William Wilberforce should have borne strong marks of individuality. Father Bertrand was obviously human. Some of his lesser defects clung to him unto the end; the greater ones fell off under the action of grace. There was a certain family idealism about him which unfitted him quite as much for practical affairs as it fitted him to be a preacher. The care of clothes, books, and the like was never natural to him. To

find anything in his cell always required a long search. Though he had a faithful memory for recalling what was there, he could seldom remember where it was to be found. He was a born mystic for whom the stereotyped methods of life and prayer were a crucifixion. This did not always make it easier for his brethren to be with him, for instance, on a mission. He did not always realise that his fellow-workers had not his gift of extempore speech; and that it required great self-trust or heroic self-denial to change the subject or manner of the evening sermon half an hour before it had to be preached. To him, of course, this would hardly have been an incident.

It goes without saying that he was naturally and notoriously unpunctual. In the earlier years of his priesthood he was for some time chaplain to the Franciscan Convent, Woodchester. It could almost be said with truth that he was never in time for anything. When he was not too late, he was most unpunctually too early. But in this, as in other matters, long years of struggle backed by divine grace wrought a change. Some years later on he gave a retreat to the same community, who remembering his past habits, were prepared for long delays. But it was remarked that during the whole retreat the clock had scarcely struck the hour for the exercises when his bowed figure moved out of the sacristy, where he had been awaiting the signal to begin.

His unpunctuality was less a moral fault than a mystical perfection. For the most part his thoughts dwelt with what St Augustine calls the "eternal ideas" (*rationes æterna*), and these, if we believe the mystics, are not measured or controlled by time. Like so many of the mystics, Father Bertrand's mind ranged mostly in eternity. Attention to the course of earthly time was a distraction from the essential attitude of his soul. But, needless to remark, to those who had trains to catch and duties to fulfil this mystical mood of Father Bertrand had its disadvantage. An example of this occurred at Woodchester one Good Friday. There was to be an afternoon service beginning at three, and consisting of sermon and Stations of the Cross. The prior in asking Father Bertrand to undertake the sermon, reminded him that, as the Stations of the Cross were to follow, he was not to be longer than half an hour. But during all the Holy Week services it had been noticed how whole-heartedly he had thrown himself into the offices of the Church, until his frail body seemed to become diaphanous to his soul. Once in the pulpit the barriers he had been setting up around his fervour gave way before the floods of his

emotion. The half-hour neared but there was no sign that the end of his sermon was nearing. The half-hour passed. Three-quarters struck, and the noviciate were asked to go into the choir with as much noise as possible in the hopes of distracting the preacher. But to no purpose. For a full half-hour more did he pour out the floods of his mystic love of our Lord. He was all apology when he came back to the sacristy, and realised that the Stations had to be abandoned. Yet I know not if those of us who listened to this lover of the Cross had lost anything by his forgetfulness.

So too in matters of business. Money-matters inspired him with a kind of horror. His father, who had thrown up a rich living in the Established Church, and had become, as Newman said of him, "a fool for Christ's sake," could never be brought to recognise in the closing years of his life that he had done anything for God. Father Bertrand was cast too unmistakably in his father's heroic mould to treat money as anything but the vilest scullion of his priestly life. Method in its outlay and accounting were naturally a trial to him. Yet, as it is a rule that a Religious on returning to his convent after a journey shall give an account of his expenses, loyalty to this rule became a point of honour, as it was undoubtedly a source of mortification to him. Many of us can recall his note-book in which every minute expense was jotted down. Strangers who noticed his scrupulous exactness in recording the slightest expenditure might have thought him naturally careful or even niggardly. They could never have guessed the struggles that such care betokened, nor the signal victory that grace had won over nature in the fulfilment of this humble duty.

Such natural imperfections unfitted him for jurisdiction. As it is an historic fact that St Thomas Aquinas never became prior—thanks to the good sense of his fellow-Religious—it is no slight on Father Bertrand to say that his one term of priorship did not altogether justify the confidence of those who elected him. He had not those lesser virtues of the eye and hand rather than of the heart that tend to make a superior the house-band of the community. But he was one of those who could and did say with truth and with a full heart, "I was not made for office. It is easier for me to obey than to command."

It may even be said that he was not altogether what Religious mean by the subtle phrase "a community-man." It was not that he was lacking in gifts of sympathy or, to be more accurate, consolation. He could easily be a paraclete—a strengthener; and, truth to tell, he was seldom anything

less. Indeed every counsel as it fell from his lips was a *Sursum Corda*, which his own radiant example gave his brethren the heart to follow. Perhaps the finest praise won from the brethren by his master St Dominic is handed down to us in the words of Jordan of Saxony, *Cum fratribus sociisve nemo communior nemo jucundior*. With the brethren or with his fellow-travellers no one was ever more serviceable or more full of mirth. But we have no English word for *communior*, which is nothing more or less than the mediæval Latin for a "community-man." It could hardly be said of Father Bertrand that he was "communis" amidst the brethren. The truth is he lived in regions apart, which, by a kind of paradox, he quitted only by an effort of abstraction.

He had a greater claim to St Dominic's gracious title of "nemo jucundior." Few had Father Bertrand's mirthfulness and sense of humour. It saved him from Puritanism; as it had saved his father from the inconsequences and incongruities of Tractarianism. There were hardly ten men in England who could tell a good story with more drollery. He was not one of those who unkindle laughter by contact with their own. His face, when he chose to control it, never betrayed the slightest sign of fun, even when the drollest anecdotes were convulsing his audience. He used to tell a story of a mayor who had an impediment in his speech, which led to a grotesque situation when he was presenting a municipal sword to Lord Wolseley. The chief excitant to laughter was the stolid face of Father Bertrand, who, wholly unconscious of his audience, had absolutely identified himself with the unfortunate mayor. His stories were endless. Missionary work throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom had filled his wallet from that best storehouse of innocent fun, the priests' table. But it was always the kindest of fun. If ever his lips let pass a word calculated to wound those present or absent, it was touching to see how almost unconsciously he seemed to add a kindly word as if in compensation for the pain he might have caused.

His character was by nature dominantly merry and buoyant. It is not usually this aspect of a priest's soul that finds its way into spiritual letters or biography. But to leave out this feature would be to caricature him. He had a most charming fancifulness with children—and here we may say he loved sunshine and children. Children made him a child at once by their presence.

He had a sweet voice, and would sometimes give his brethren the treat of hearing him sing Simon the Cellarer, or read an Ingoldsby legend. Once when suffering from one

of his most acute attacks of illness at Woodchester, two of the community were engaged in applying hot poultices to soothe the cruel spasms of pain. In the lulls between each attack the patient would lay aside his pitiful moans and begin to declaim passages from *Pickwick*. His rendering of the two Wellers was so inimitable that his nurses were compelled again and again to ask him to stop, as their laughter made it impossible for them to do their work. There was a vein of pathos about another incident redolent of his humour. Once when giving a retreat at Maryvale he fell so ill that an operation had to be performed at once. The surgeon was making the preparatory arrangements when the patient said: "It is very strange, but my sister was operated upon for this very same complaint this very same day six months ago." "I hope she came through all right," said the doctor almost mechanically. "No; she died," replied Father Bertrand calmly. His cool manner took the doctor aback. "Does it not make you afraid?" he asked. "On the contrary," replied his cheerful patient, "I should think it a most extraordinary thing if brother and sister were both operated upon for the same complaint on the same day, and both died!"

The letters of his youth show chiefly the thoughtful and serious side of his character: they do not picture him as he really was, the centre of all the home cheerfulness. His sister said of him: "The great joy of our lives was to see his face! He was the centre of all our fun during the holidays."

Yet, amidst his brethren he was always a better talker than listener; besides which, his gift of humour needed too much stimulating to make him a successful "community-man," especially in later years, when his great sufferings, together with his almost superhuman sensitiveness to sin, had crushed out much of his natural buoyancy.

It must not be thought that his love of God and of suffering were grafted on a heart empty of human affection. On the contrary, God had endowed him with that best of human gifts, a heart fitted to love, and many of the letters in this book prove how strong was his family affection. Some of us who have known him for years never suspected, or never did more than suspect, the depths of the love he gave his home-circle. A letter which he wrote soon after the death of his sister Agnes, when he was still reeling under the blow, has few equals in its almost terse pathos, its unstudied outburst of affection, its whole-hearted acceptance of the will of God. Grace had here but a light work to do in this soul. Under its action his love did not become less human, but more divine. It became a spiritual passion, in which form

alone it could be offered up to Him who is a consuming fire.

Mysticism of such intense degree might easily have turned aside into fanaticism or pride, had it not been kept in the midway by two saving spiritual forces. One was a delicate sense of humour, without which few of the saints would have reached their height of holiness, and the other was humility. For the moment it is not our task to settle the moot-point whether these two are one. If the sense of humour is nothing but a delicately balanced sensitiveness to incongruity, and if humility is a fine sense of what we are, it may well be thought that the keen instinct for truth which underlies humility is no other than the equally keen instinct for incongruity which is the heart of humour. In the soul of Father Bertrand, though their outcome was so different, they seemed the same spiritual faculty. One characteristic word which, to be understood, ought to have been heard, seemed a kind of meeting-point for the two forces. It was almost the last word he used before death. When Father Raphael Moss, in order to prepare him for the last sacraments, gently broke the tidings of his dying state to him, no sign of fear passed over the dying man's face. Father Raphael Moss said, "Are you not afraid to die, Father?" "Afraid to die," replied the pale shrunken lips with something of their old incisiveness, "afraid to die! Do you think I am such a *tom-fool* as to be afraid of what I have been getting ready for all my life?"

One who spent some years not so much in the company as in the study of Father Bertrand, has said that as far as he could judge the thought of death hardly ever quitted him. It nowise embittered him; it steadied him, and, as we shall see, it filled his last years with an almost superhuman craving to work before the night came when work would be at an end. It was above all else the spring of his humility. His words and deeds were drained, not only of pride but even of vanity. None who knew him can recall one word they could look on as prompted by self-conceit. He once related an incident which throws light on this dominant characteristic of humility. "Whilst giving a mission at X——," he said, "I noticed during my instruction to the children that a little boy was making a 'cat's cradle' on his hands with a piece of string. I thought at once: 'This is my fault. If I were speaking in a more interesting way, the boy would take heed.' So instead of speaking to the little fellow, I made up my mind to do my best to take his mind from the cat's cradle and to fix it on me. After a few minutes, having changed my way of speaking, I saw his boyish face turned towards me. Then

the hands dropped, the cradle was wrecked, and the little man was listening to what I had to say."

Another trifling incident throws a sidelight upon the same lowliness of mind. The present writer well remembers going to the shoemaker at Rugeley with Father Bertrand, who carried a well-worn pair of boots, innocent of brown paper, in his hands, much to the amusement of the passers-by.

It would be an endless task seeking to give examples of his stratagems of humility. One last incident will be enough. A few weeks before his death, the nuns at S—— very kindly gave him hospitality between two spells of work. At that time some of the pains and weariness of death were upon him. One morning before saying Mass he asked the Sister Sacristan if he could see Sister M—— who had been set to nurse him. When she appeared he said, "Sister, you remember I spoke to you yesterday of A——. I think I spoke uncharitably of him. I am very sorry." His sensitive humility would not suffer him to go up to the altar with anything against his brother in his heart or even on his lips.

Once during a mission at Edge Hill, Liverpool, the good Benedictine Fathers discovered him hearing confessions standing up in such a state of prostration that he could not sit down. When the doctor came, the sick man was ordered to lie down. His absence from the pulpit and confessional threw extra work upon the other two missionaries. This was keen mortification to Father Bertrand, and he was presently overheard by his fellow-workers holding a sort of dialogue between himself and the one he called "Our Dear Lord," ending with the words: "So I said to our Lord, 'Lord, let me get up and preach, if I cannot hear confessions.'" And our Dear Lord said; "Fool, do you not see that I can do as much good by your illness as by your preaching?" It was his inimitable blending of humour and humility which we lesser souls should only parody by any attempt at imitation.

Mystical writers sometimes graciously liken prayer to the smoke of incense rising from the brazier. Father Bertrand's life seemed to make this metaphor much more than a poetical exaggeration. His whole being seemed to give off prayer; so that it appeared to be not only the perfume but the very breath of his soul. Prayer was not a form that he said but a life that he lived.

No doubt in God's sight it was as if his being was vocal. During the last years of life, those who were thrown with him usually confessed that they never knew such prayer before. He once said quite innocently: "I wonder why people say they can't pray during sickness." The best

commentary on this naïve self-exposure may be made in the words of one who occupied a cell next to his :—

“Father Bertrand is almost a nuisance when he is ill. For he prays all day long in a *sotto voce* which no wall could keep out.”

A spell of illness merely gave him an opportunity for exercising his favourite ejaculatory prayers. The divine office was to him a storehouse of prayer. He could not bear to hurry over it. Indeed so deliberate was he in the choral recitation that he was the despair of cantors. Even when he promised to say or sing the psalms in an undertone, so clear and deliberate and slow was his enunciation that he would upset every Religious on the same side with him. Many fervent resolutions did he make—and break. But the last twelve months of his life seemed to have put an end to what may have been an imperfection in the sight of Him who judges the reins and the heart. He delighted especially in prayers taken from the Sacred Scripture, especially the psalms. About two months before his death, as he was setting out from Hawkesyard, his prior and another Religious were walking near the entrance-door. Father Bertrand was so unwell that he had been ordered to drive to the station in a fly. He had hardly driven 200 yards from the door when he passed the prior and his companion ; and though he was the soul of reverence towards authority he gave them no sign of recognition. But they saw through the window of the vehicle that the man of God was already absorbed in telling his beads. A simple phrase of the prior—“There goes a saint!”—uttered the thoughts of both ; and bore witness to the place Father Bertrand’s holiness had won before that most searching of all tribunals, his own community.

His one aim in dealing with souls was to teach them to pray. It was a principle of his that a preacher should leave his hearers, not seated and listening, but kneeling and praying. During missions he would repeat simple prayers again and again ; so that the days he spent in the parish might be remembered as a time of prayer.

His many ailments, and some of them very especially, caused him in his later years a never-ceasing drowsiness that was not helpful to mental prayer. It was edifying to see how he would struggle with this teasing weakness, which, to use the consoling phrase of St Thomas, hinders not the substance, but the sweetness of prayer. Mental prayer of the formal kind was not his strength. There was but little method in any department of his soul. The truth is that he was already at the end, whilst others were plodding doggedly along the way.

One prayer was often on his lips and in his heart: "O God, I thank Thee for doing Thine own will in Thine own way, because it is Thy will." Its simple words take us at once from his prayer to another aspect of his mysticism—his patience under suffering. No doubt in the beginning the words were little more than an aspiration. Long years of the reality gave him the right to call them his own. He was one of those to whom our Lord's mysterious prophecy concerning St Paul was wholly applicable, "I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake."<sup>1</sup> He would have thought himself unequal to the cross of pain which was laid upon him in his closing years. Each fresh cross taught him how much he could bear. In his diary, under the date Retreat 1897, he writes, "The great principle to adopt is to be resolved to thank God always in all things and in all circumstances."

That this was not merely a pious passing emotion, but the first inspired lesson of the Master to his pupil, is seen by an entry in his Meditation on Death: "I have diabetes, *thank God*, and that often ends very unexpectedly by suffusion of the brain!" Ailment after ailment fell upon him. During the last twenty years of his life he could hardly be said to have had a day free from pain.

There were times when the ceaseless pain seemed to wear him out, and words of irritation showed that God's refining hand had still work to do in his soul. It was almost a consolation to us to see that he was flesh and blood like ourselves; though indeed so much unlike ourselves! But the fervour of his humble self-acknowledgment soon wiped out the traces of this evident humanity. When about to administer the last sacraments to him, Father Raphael Moss asked him, did he want to go to confession. "No, thank God! By God's grace I am not conscious of any grievous sin. But I own I was angry with a railway porter on the way up to London."

These passing gusts of impatience, whilst serving to keep him humble in his own sight, never for a moment overshadowed the heartfelt submission that lit up his soul in the sight of God. He used to say it was the "Following of Christ" that had sent him into the cloister. When the sterner call to suffering came, he answered it as one given over body and soul to the following of Christ. It was not his own wounds, but Christ's, that he bore in his withered body; it was not his own strength, but Christ's, that kept his

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 16.

spirit on high; it was not his own will, but Christ's that became the passion of his soul.

All this made him a true friar-preacher: a friar first; a preacher afterwards. His art of mysticism and, above all else, his suffering, gave him authority and power to speak. He confirmed the truth that none can speak so well of the Cross as they who are on it. And, after all, the burden of a preacher's message in season and out of season must be, not Christ only, but Christ crucified.

He had most of the natural gifts needed by a preacher. His voice, though sometimes worn with much preaching, was singularly melodious and telling. He paid great heed to careful articulation, with the result that there were few more distinct public speakers in the country. One who knew him well used to tell how he first heard him in St Dominic's, Newcastle-on-Tyne, one Rosary Sunday evening, under trying circumstances. The great church was as usual thronged. Even the passages were crowded so that the visitor who was anxious to hear Father Bertrand could find only standing room pressed against the partitions of the porch. When he looked round at the vast audience thronging every bench, chair, passage, and overflowing into the sanctuary, he somewhat imperfectly resigned himself to missing the sermon. No one, he thought, could make himself understood at such a distance and over such a surging sea of heads. But when the preacher read out his text in hammer-like tones that rang through the church, his hopes came back; and he found that not one syllable of the sermon was lost from beginning to end.

Perhaps the one defect of a preacher's voice that was almost perfect was its lack of sympathy. It was less fitted to sympathise than to console, encourage, embolden. But it was thus the voice of a leader of souls.

He had the further gift of speech. Extempore preaching was never a hardship. He exemplified the paradox that the only preacher who need never prepare is the one who is always prepared. Very early in his priestly life he had grasped the principle that what matters least is proximate preparation, and what matters most is remote. He was steeped in the word of God. His copy of the Bible is underlined in parts so intricately as to obscure the text. He would often say that a missionary could preach no better sermon on the mercy of God than by simply reading out the parable of the prodigal son. To his way of thinking the only valuable and forcible parts of his preaching were the texts of Sacred Scripture he was privileged to use.

A characteristic of his preaching was his devotion to the mercy of God. One of his fellow-workers in criticising his plan for the mission sermons and instructions at X—, remarked that he had several sermons on the mercy of God. "Yes," replied Father Bertrand, "that is what draws sinners. You should be careful to have sermons of that kind at all stages of the mission, so that sinners may be touched and won."

It may be said by some who read the following pages that they contain scarcely one event of public interest. Perhaps on the whole we are not concerned to deny the fact. Biographies full of events of public interest not uncommonly hold up the model of men whom few of us would or could follow. As the world is, the greatest part of mankind will live lives hidden from all but a narrow field of vision. On the other hand, the life we are now introducing to the reader with its outward simplicity and its inward drama of vocation, suffering, and priestly zeal, raised to the heavens by divine love, has something in it fitted to do more than wile away a dull hour. If it did nothing else, it would go far towards revealing to non-Catholics the secret force of the Catholic Church.

We have a further hope that the picture of this whole-hearted priest of God, this suffering follower of the Crucified, may lift up downcast hearts, and lead souls, in death, as he led them in life, to the feet of his Master.

VINCENT M'NABB, O.P.



# FATHER BERTRAND WILBERFORCE

## CHAPTER I

1839-1864

EXTERIORLY, Father Wilberforce's life was singularly uneventful. The child of earnest and religious parents, he was shielded from all the dangers of the world, and passed from his college to the cloister untouched by its evil breath. The power he afterwards displayed, in drawing souls from the bondage of sin, was certainly not gained by any experimental knowledge of his own, but must have been a direct gift from God, and the result of his living faith and keen insight into spiritual realities.

His childhood was a very quiet, a very good, and a very happy one; the family were remarkably united, and Arthur loved his parents intensely. That the tie between them was one, not only of affection, but of real friendship, is evident from the letters that have been preserved, which show at the same time how carefully the boy had been trained and guarded.

Of Father Bertrand's religious life, strictly so called, there is probably little to relate, and in any case it belongs exclusively to his own brethren. At the time of his death he had been thirty-nine years professed, but comparatively few of those years had been spent in the peace and calm of his monastery. He was a true "preaching-friar," and his life was given to the work of seeking and saving souls for God.

Arthur Henry Wilberforce was the second son and third child of Henry Wilberforce and Mary, daughter of the Rev. John Sargent, Rector of Graffham, Sussex.

The Wilberforces are of Yorkshire origin, and derive their name from an ancient property in the East Riding.

Wilberfoss, near Pocklington, is said to have been in the possession of the family from the time of the Norman Conquest till 1710, when the house and estate were sold. Their original name was Wilberfoss, but Arthur's great-grandfather changed it to the form it now bears. This Mr Wilberforce was a wealthy merchant of the city of Hull, and, we are told, resigned his alderman's gown in 1771, after holding office for nearly fifty years. He had a fine old house in the High Street, still known as "Wilberforce House," where, in 1639, Sir John Lister had entertained King Charles I. Here, in 1759, was born Arthur's grandfather, William Wilberforce, the famous philanthropist. On the death of his father, which took place whilst he was yet a boy, William was sent to a school at Wimbledon, where, under the influence of a pious aunt, he nearly became a Methodist. Happily, however, for his future grandson, the danger was averted by his removal to another school, and the "conversion" never took place, though, as is well known, the emancipator's religious views were always of the evangelical type.

From this celebrated man Arthur inherited the statesman's eloquence of tongue, together with that wonderful bell-like voice whose vibrations, once heard, could not easily be forgotten—gifts which were to prove of immense value to the future friar-preacher.<sup>1</sup>

Other and nobler qualities, too, were bequeathed by William Wilberforce to his descendant: the independence and freedom from all base motives and human respect; the upright mind, strong religious spirit, and high sense of duty that distinguished the emancipator, were no less conspicuous features in the character of his grandson.

In 1797, William Wilberforce married Miss Spooner, the daughter of Isaac Spooner, Esq., of Elmdon Hall, Warwickshire, by whom he had a large family. Arthur's father, Henry, was the fourth son. Two of his brothers, William and Robert, became, like himself, converts to the Faith; Samuel, remaining in the Church of England, was afterwards the well-known Bishop of Oxford, and later, of Winchester.

<sup>1</sup> In the first volume of Mozley's *Reminiscences of Oriel*—which contains many stories of Henry Wilberforce and his brothers—there is one allusion to Father Bertrand, *à propos* of his inheriting these rhetorical advantages. "Mannerism of any kind," says the writer, "not the less if it be the mannerism of genius and goodness, perpetuates and propagates itself, till it becomes an institution. A very distinguished preacher has carried into the Church of Rome Newman's style and Samuel Wilberforce's tone, no doubt in spite of himself. (Vol. i., p. 386.)

He married another of the beautiful Miss Sargents, whilst a third became the wife of Henry Edward Manning.

Henry Wilberforce was born at Clapham in 1807. He was for some time under the care of Mr Sargent, his future father-in-law, and in 1826 was sent to Oxford. He graduated at Oriel, already famous as Dr Newman's College, and is described by the cardinal, on his first arrival, as "small and timid, shrinking from notice, with a bright face and intelligent eyes"; and "partly from his name, partly from his appearance," adds Dr Newman, "I was at once drawn towards him."<sup>1</sup>

The attraction was mutual. During four long vacations Dr Newman acted as Mr Wilberforce's private tutor, and the acquaintance soon ripened into a warm friendship, which lasted till the younger man's death, and was extended to his children.

On leaving the university, Henry Wilberforce seems to have been in some doubt whether to take Orders or to adopt the career of a barrister.<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Newman considered him well fitted for the bar, and says that "he had an oratorical talent so natural and pleasant, so easy, forcible, and persuasive, as to open upon him the prospect of rising to the foremost rank in his profession had he been a lawyer." He had inherited also the beautiful silvery "Wilberforce voice," which would have made his eloquence most persuasive.

He finally, however, decided to become a clergyman, and told Dr Newman that this decision was the result of his influence. "Perhaps it was," is the cardinal's comment, "and at any rate, had it not been for his clerical profession, he would in all human probability never have been led to inquire into and embrace the Catholic Faith." And—it may be added—how different would probably have been the career of his son.

After his marriage in 1834, Mr Wilberforce was appointed to the perpetual curacy of Bramsgore in Hampshire, where he remained for seven years. He was a model clergyman; hard-working, self-denying, devoted to his flock, and full of zeal and energy in carrying out all he set himself to do in the service of God. He worked many reforms, and spent time, labour, and money on the spiritual and temporal needs of his parishioners. He had at times, as may be imagined,

<sup>1</sup> For this and some other details about his friend, see Cardinal Newman's "Memoir," prefixed to Mr Wilberforce's book, *The Church and the Empires* (King & Co., London, 1874).

<sup>2</sup> See a letter from Mr William Wilberforce to Cardinal Newman, in Miss Mozley's *Letters of John Henry Newman*, vol. i., p. 240

opposition to encounter, and, to quote again his old friend's words, "then it was found that, gentle and unassuming as he was at first sight and in his ordinary behaviour, and averse to all that was pretentious or overbearing, he had the command of plain words and strong acts when the occasion called for them; and could with fearlessness, directness, and determination speak his own mind and carry out his own views of duty."

This description by the cardinal of Mr Henry Wilberforce is especially interesting, as it shows us how much in Father Wilberforce's own character was inherited from, and probably modelled on, that of his father.

During the seven years of the Wilberforces' residence at Bramsgore three children were born, of whom Arthur was the youngest. The little girl, two years his senior, died at the age of four, whilst the eldest-born, a son, lived to be eleven years old—long enough for his little brother to know and love him, and deeply to mourn his loss. Other children came in time to fill the gaps in the parents' hearts, but out of a family of nine, five only survived to grow up. This must have been an acute trial to such parents as Mr and Mrs Wilberforce, but it was the only trial that disturbed the happiness of their married life. Devoted to each other, serving God with their whole hearts, to them was given the supreme blessing of good children, one son and one daughter entering the Religious State.

Arthur was born on 14th March 1839, not at Bramsgore, but at Lavington Rectory, the home of Mrs Wilberforce's brother-in-law, Archdeacon (afterwards Cardinal) Manning. Mrs Manning had died not long before, and Mrs Wilberforce and her mother were staying at Lavington when Arthur's birth took place. The child was probably baptised by his uncle.

In 1841, Mr Wilberforce was appointed Vicar of Walmer, where he also acted as chaplain to the troops. The first anecdote that has been preserved of Arthur's childhood belongs to this time, and is connected with Walmer—a pretty incident that Father Wilberforce was fond of recalling.

One day when Arthur and his eldest brother were out walking with their nurse, a gentleman passed who seemed to be attracted by their appearance. He stopped them, asked their names, and spoke very kindly to them. After talking for a few minutes he put a ribbon round the neck of each boy—one red and one blue—to which a shilling was attached, and said: "You must remember that these were given to you by the Duke of Wellington!" The duke was at

that time living at Walmer Castle as Governor of the Cinque Ports, and it seems that he was in the habit of carrying these ribbons and shillings about with him, and of giving them to any children to whom he took a fancy.

Long years afterwards Father Bertrand told the story to an intimate friend, who knowing the habit of losing things for which he was famous, asked rather mischievously, "what had become of *his* shilling?" He looked at her with a half-serious, half-quizzical smile. "I suppose I lost it," he said. Then after a moment's pause: "But, my dear child, what does that matter, if I have not lost the Image of the Heavenly King from my soul."

The stay at Walmer was short. In 1843, Mr Wilberforce was appointed Rector of East Farleigh in Kent, which living he retained till his reception into the Catholic Church in 1850.

Meanwhile Arthur, at the age of ten, had been sent to a private school, where, however, he only remained a year. The school bore a good reputation, and in those days was accounted as quite "High Church." But though the boys regularly attended church, and wore surplices, no practical religious teaching was given to them, and they spent the time of prayer in games and mischief. The moral standard among the pupils was low, and Father Wilberforce was apt to use severe language when comparing his Protestant school-days with the happy and profitable years that he afterwards spent at Ushaw. Corporal punishment was not spared, and he himself related how, on one occasion, when he had been unable to commit to memory a long punishment-task of Spenser's poetry, of which he did not understand one line, a threat of chastisement was held over him for some days, and he finally received such a caning that for a week afterwards he could not lift his arm.

With the boys, however, he evidently held his own from the first, and having been called "an idolater" on his arrival, for having brought with him a little statue of the angel-guardian, to which he was much attached, he immediately knocked down the boy who had thus insulted him. His mother, who had taken him to school, went home comforted, assured that her son would not allow himself to be bullied. Nevertheless the life did not suit him, and when he went home in the following summer, he was in a very unsatisfactory state of health. But his school life had for the present come to an end; the home at East Farleigh was being broken up, and a great change was at hand.

Mr Wilberforce, who, as a friend and disciple of Dr

Newman, had followed the Oxford movement with deep interest, had by this time come to the conclusion that he could no longer conscientiously officiate as an Anglican clergyman. He therefore asked for leave of absence for a time, in order to pay a visit to Belgium. The permission was given willingly enough by the bishop, who told him that "the most likely way of settling his mind was to see the Romish Church working abroad." The visit did indeed "settle" him, but not exactly in the way the good prelate had expected.

In the course of the summer Mr Wilberforce took his family to Malines, his wife having been previously received in London by Father Brownbill, S.J., just before the birth of her youngest son. Her husband did not long remain behind; he made a retreat with the Jesuits at Brussels and was received into the Catholic Church on the 15th of September, that same year.

This event took place exactly a year from the date of an act of charity performed by the Wilberforces at East Farleigh, to which they always attributed the grace of their conversion. During the hop-picking season there was every year an influx of very poor Irish into the district round Mr Wilberforce's parish, and in 1849 a terrible outbreak of cholera had occurred amongst them. The Anglican clergyman, whose ministrations the Catholics could not of course accept, himself sent to the London Oratory for the necessary assistance, and did everything in his power to help the priests and the two Good Shepherd nuns who had come down to nurse the sick. Regardless of danger, he and his wife were unwearied in their kindness. They turned the schoolroom into a hospital, and even went so far as to provide Holy Water stoups for each bed. Many poor souls received the Sacraments, which for years they had neglected, and died blessing the "parson" who had obtained this grace for them. Numberless were the prayers offered by the grateful sufferers for their benefactors, prayers which, we cannot doubt, were heard and answered.

After their own reception Mr and Mrs Wilberforce's four children were conditionally baptised. They knew little about differences in religion, and when Arthur was asked if he would like to be a Catholic he could only reply that "he would be whatever mamma was!" His instincts, however, had always been Catholic, for he used to say that he could not remember the time when he had not prayed to our Lady, and he had delighted in Catholic practices long before he fully understood their meaning. He told his sister that

they were going to be Catholics, "because papa liked the services in Belgium better than those at East Farleigh," at which she exclaimed: "Why can't papa have what services he likes in his own Church!"

On their return to England the family stayed for a time at Rugby, in order to be near the Fathers of Charity, Father Lockhart being a great friend of Mr Wilberforce. Arthur was sent to a private tutor at St Leonard's. He had by this time developed into a bright, clever, high-spirited boy, full of fun, a lover of games and adventure, yet withal of singularly childlike and guileless soul, with a disposition naturally inclined to piety. He made his first communion at the midnight Mass, on Christmas Day, 1850, and afterwards told one of his sisters that he had offered it for the conversion of his beloved uncle, the Bishop of Oxford, and begged her to do the same at her first communion.

The summer holidays of 1851 were spent at Little Malvern. The present church was not then built, and the family were lodged in the Priory, where Father Scott, O.S.B., was living. All the services were held in the chapel at Little Malvern Court, and so great was the caution still considered necessary to be preserved by Catholics that the Blessed Sacrament was kept behind the shutter, the priest not daring to reserve It in the Tabernacle.

One of Arthur's sisters, who was about four years his junior, has still a vivid recollection of those holidays, and of the rambles they had together over the Malvern Hills. They found a cave and made wonderful plans of retiring from the world and living there together as holy hermits. In after life, when both had given themselves to God in Religion, they used to recall these childish aspirations with amusement, but at the same time with deep gratitude, seeing how they had been realised in a manner far beyond anything they had dreamt of at the time. In a letter to Mr Wilberforce, dated from the Dominican Novitiate in 1864, Arthur sends his love to various old Malvern friends, "most especially to dear old Father Scott, also to the hill and the baths, and the holy well, and to the camp and the *cave*."

It was also during these happy summer days of confidential intercourse between the two children that Arthur told a "great secret" to his sister, of how he had had a beautiful dream in which our Lady had visited and spoken to him. The little girl naturally wanted to know what the Blessed Virgin had said, but Arthur refused to tell her then, though he promised to do so later. He never again,

however, alluded to the subject, and for some unexplained reason his sister did not like to question him, though she always felt convinced that something had passed in that early dream which had made a great impression on her brother's mind.

In the autumn of 1853 Arthur was sent to Ushaw College, where he spent ten most happy years, and where his priestly and religious vocation gradually developed and was matured. In 1856 he made known to his parents his desire to become a priest, and though the sacrifice, as we can well understand, was a very costly one, no word of dissuasion or of unwillingness to resign their eldest son to God was uttered, and he met with nothing but kindness and generous encouragement.

He had been at one time seriously inclined to adopt the life of a sailor, the sea having always had a great attraction for him. His father, in fact, made an attempt to get him into the navy, but by some oversight, the application was made too late—a mistake which he afterwards thanked God for—thinking that had he become a sailor, he might perhaps have lost the priestly and religious vocation which he valued so highly. There had been also at one time a project to send him to study at Bonn, under Dr Döllinger. That the plan fell through was a source of unbounded gratitude to Father Wilberforce throughout his life; he always felt that a special Providence had watched over him and intervened in the matter, and no doubt to one of his impressionable nature there might have been danger.

The earliest letter from Arthur Wilberforce that has been preserved is addressed to his father and mother, on the occasion of his reception of the tonsure. It is written in an unformed schoolboy's hand, and is quite childlike in its simplicity, but it is interesting, as giving evidence of his appreciation of the dignity of the priesthood. It is headed:—



*“ Dominus pars hæreditatis mee et calicis mei :  
“ Tu es qui restitues hæreditatem meam mihi.”*

“ ST CUTHBERT'S COLLEGE,  
“ Sept. 21, 1856.

“ I received your letter yesterday as I came out of retreat. Thank God, I have received the tonsure, and so am now a cleric.

“ Though I have thought for some time that I should be a

priest, yet it never seemed any way so nearly settled as now. I hope, with the help and grace of God, that it is now certain. . . .

"I do not like to reckon too securely upon ever having great happiness, for I might, through some fault of my own, have the misery to lose my vocation if I did not take great care. Pray hard for it, and I will do my best, and then, please God, all will go right, and I shall be a priest. It seems sometimes as if it was almost too great a dignity to take upon myself; it is such a tremendously high call. Fancy offering the Sacrifice of the Mass! It is quite awful to think of.

"Is it not very solemn and awful in the ordination of priests, when the whole of the Canon is said out loud? We had it yesterday. There were two priests ordained.

"I was very rusty at the beginning of the retreat, but Father X— comforted me and it went off. I was partly, of course, tired with the journey."

In spite of his tonsure the young cleric had not ceased to be a boy. He is described at this time as full of life and energy, though very delicate in health; a famous skater, as are all Ushaw boys; a capital oarsman and fearless swimmer. During the summer vacations which were sometimes spent abroad, he and his father had many a boating adventure together, which sometimes came to grief. More than once has Arthur had to swim for his life.

In connection with his boating adventures there is a characteristic story (which, however, must have belonged to an earlier period) of how on one occasion Arthur and another boy were out in a small boat on the sea. Suddenly the plug at the bottom of the boat somehow got forced out, and the water began to rush in. Mrs Wilberforce at that time always made her son go out with a swimming-belt round his waist, so he was safe enough; but his companion, who could not swim, was in great terror.

"Oh, Arthur," he cried, "what shall I do? You have always been so good, you'll have nothing to fear in death, but I have always been rather a sinner. Do give me the belt!"

But Arthur did not see this at all.

"No! no! certainly not."

The poor boy was in despair, and exclaimed: "Then all I can do is to make acts of contrition!"

"You can make as many as you like," said Arthur. "*Præ* going to look for the plug."

The summer holidays of 1857 and 1858 were spent on the Island of Inishbofin,<sup>1</sup> off the coast of Connemara. It was a most primitive place, and the simple, open-hearted Irish peasants gave the English gentleman and his family the warmest of welcomes. On their arrival many ran down to the shore and into the water to drag the boat to land, while guns were shot off in their honour, and during the whole time of their stay they were kept supplied with eggs, fish, and poultry.

On this wild, sea-girt island Arthur and his young companions had full scope for the indulgence of their sea-faring tastes, and a friend relates how he would often recall with enthusiasm the delight of yachting in a "five-tonner" after a storm, when the Atlantic rollers would rise up before the craft like a wall of flint.

The chapel at Inishbofin was little more than a stable, with an earthen floor; there was no altar, only a wooden chest, in which the vestments—such as they were—were kept, and on this chest Mass was said. The candles were tallow dips stuck into bottles, and there were no pictures or statues of any kind. Inishbofin had no resident priest, the mission being served once a month from the mainland, when a sermon was preached in Irish, accompanied by the groans and ejaculations of the congregation, who were extremely devout. Many came from a neighbouring island and spent the whole day in the church. The young people, however, do not seem to have been so piously inclined, and sometimes preferred playing outside to coming in to Mass, when the English visitors were greatly amused to see the priest run out and drive the delinquents into church with his horsewhip.

The first Sunday at "chapel" was an entertaining one. During the Mass Mr Wilberforce was kneeling absorbed in his prayers, when he felt a hand on his shoulder, and looking up, saw the priest in his vestments standing by his side.

"Shure, Sir," said his Reverence, "and you'll say a few words to them, Sir." Mr Wilberforce protested that he was only a layman, and had no leave to speak in church. His excuses were vain: the good priest held his ground and would not be satisfied till his latest parishioner had "said a

<sup>1</sup> Inishbofin (the isle of the white heifer) is a small island off the coast of Connemara. It is not altogether unknown to history, for St Bede the Venerable records that Colman, Bishop of Lindisfarne, withdrew there, after he had left his diocese in A.D. 667, rather than conform to the Roman usage regarding the date of the Easter festival. He built a monastery on the island, which later authorities tell us afterwards became a large and important establishment.

few words.” So Mr Wilberforce stood up, and though scarcely one of his audience understood a word of English, they were all greatly edified at the “new gentleman’s” sermon!

Before the Wilberforces left Inishbofin they had succeeded in obtaining for the little island a resident priest; the Stations of the Cross were erected, and the chapel more suitably adorned. When they returned there the next summer they took with them a painted statue of our Lady, which was carried in procession to the chapel, amidst the tears and blessings of the kneeling people who lined the road.

“They seemed,” says a witness of the scene, “as if they almost thought our Lady herself had come down to them from Heaven!”

Another incident which occurred during the stay at Inishbofin appears to have made a great impression on them all, and Father Wilberforce used to describe it with great force. There were some friends from England staying in the house, and one evening a game of cards was proposed. Mr and Mrs Wilberforce, Arthur and one or more of their friends made a party, and the game became very engrossing. It grew late, and the two girls went up to their bedroom. Presently it struck midnight, and instantly the air was rent by a loud and piercing shriek, with a peculiar wailing sound in it, such as no one present had ever heard before. Instinctively the mother ran up to her children’s room, which was just overhead. They were still undressing, but had heard nothing. The gentlemen went outside, but there was nothing to be heard or seen. As may be imagined, the party were too much upset to continue their game, and all went to bed. A few days afterwards one of the family mentioned the incident to a crofter on the island, who looked oddly at him and answered gravely:

“Shure, ye’ll always be hearin’ the holy souls wailin’ if ye go on playin’ cards after midnight!”

Father Wilberforce used to vouch for the truth of this story, and the mystery of the scream was never further explained.

In 1858 the Jubilee of Ushaw College was celebrated with great solemnity. It was for this occasion that Cardinal Wiseman wrote his play of “Saint Alexius,” called *The Hidden Gem*, and Arthur Wilberforce was chosen to perform the part of the Saint. The Cardinal not only wrote the play: he also arranged the dresses and attended the rehearsals, and when the night of the performance arrived

“Arthur’s acting,” says one who witnessed the scene, “and his wonderful voice made an extraordinary impression on all present. There was scarcely a dry eye in the room, and the Cardinal was weeping like a child.”

Arthur was a great favourite with his college companions, as well as with his masters, and the friendships made at Ushaw lasted through life. One old friend says of him: “Ever since college days he has been to me like a guardian-angel, going before me, guiding and encouraging me. Thanks be to God for his example and holy influence.”

In 1859, the young student’s college life was interrupted, as he had to remain at home for more than a year on account of his health; part of the time was spent in Rome, where Arthur had more than one audience with Pius IX. He was now in minor orders, and his ecclesiastical dress, together with his youthful appearance and almost angelic innocence of countenance, attracted the Holy Father’s attention. He took special notice of him, inquired about his vocation, and much to the amusement of his family, guessed his age to be about sixteen. Mr Wilberforce pretended to console his son by reminding him that as the Holy Father had not spoken *ex Cathedra*, he might still believe himself to be twenty-one!

So passed quietly away the childhood and early youth of Arthur Wilberforce. Uneventful enough as far as exterior events were concerned, they were nevertheless important years for the future Priest and Religious. Surrounded as he was by holy influences, whether at home or at college, there was nothing to hinder the growth of grace in his soul, and it is evident that he faithfully responded to the call of God which was speaking in his heart with a stronger and clearer note every year.

It was a happy period too, as we find from passages in some of his home letters: in one addressed to his sister in 1861, he says:—

“We have begun theology regularly now, and I shall enjoy it very much indeed. It is most interesting. Our professors are very able men, and well fitted for their posts.

“I am most exceedingly happy for myself. Everybody has little things to soften down their enjoyment in this world. It would be too much like heaven if there were no little sorrow at all.

“I have to teach elocution this year, for which I get privileges, of which I will tell you hereafter.”

His vocation appears to have developed amid peace and calm, and he was spared the violent storms through which some souls have to pass ere the desired end is reached.

Even in those early days there must have been a singular charm about Arthur Wilberforce that attracted all who came in contact with him. Those who knew him as a college student or young divine all agree that his was a unique personality. A special grace seemed as it were to have sealed and set him apart from his fellows: his humility and that simplicity and utter unconsciousness of self which was the leading note of his character no doubt deepened this impression in those who knew him intimately, but even such as had but a casual acquaintance felt the charm and acknowledged the attraction which they could not explain. An old friend describes her first recollection of meeting him at a large garden-party at Fulham House, and how greatly she was struck by "the gracious, graceful manners, combining strangely the natural sweetness of refinement, and gentle breeding with the higher grace of the young Seminarian."

Another instance of a somewhat similar kind is related in connection with a friend of the Wilberforces, a Protestant gentleman, who often visited the house but had never seen Arthur. On the return of the latter from Ushaw one vacation, they met, and Mr Gordon afterwards remarked to Mr Wilberforce: "He has a Catholic face: I should have known he was one even if I had only met him accidentally!"

Mr and Mrs Parsons, old friends of the family, described the mixture of admiration and amusement occasioned by the first appearance of the young divine in their house:—"Arthur was staying in Malvern for the water-cure," says Mrs Parsons, "and one day the drawing-room door opened, and an angelic-looking youth came in, and with the utmost simplicity, introduced himself, saying: 'I am Arthur Wilberforce!' His complete absence of self-consciousness precluded all idea of shyness or awkwardness, and we were immediately at home with him."

It was about this time also that a lady, calling one day on Mrs Wilberforce, found her with a letter just received from Ushaw, in which Arthur told her of his night-watch before the sepulchre in Holy Week, and of his having spent it in thanking God for having made him a Catholic. His mother read the letter to her friend, and then folded it up with loving care, saying: "That is what Arthur is always doing: always thanking God for being a Catholic!"

This spirit of gratitude for the gift of Faith never left him. After his death, a small manuscript book was found

among his papers, in which, in October 1890, he had written :—

“How little, when I began to write in this book, could I have foretold that I should live till 1890! What changes have taken place since 1849, forty-one years ago, when, as a child of ten, I received this book as a birthday present from Catherine Porte. I know not whether she is now in this world, or in the unseen state. By October 1850, I was a Catholic ; though in reality I never was anything else, except in name. But what a blessing for me to be received into the Holy Church as a child !

“How great a debt of gratitude do I not owe to my beloved parents, who had all the difficulty and anxiety of the change, and left me the heritage of the Faith. May God reward them with eternal crowns !”

In 1862, Arthur Wilberforce was admitted to the subdiaconate. On the eve of the preparatory retreat he wrote to his parents :—

“I feel quite happy in the prospect of doing that which will consecrate me for ever in a peculiar manner to the service of God. If I am sometimes inclined to tremble at the responsibilities and duties of the state upon which I am just really going to enter, I feel sure at the same time that if undertaken for God, they will bring with them the grace necessary to do them well. I feel no doubt whatever as to my vocation, and I never have felt any serious one since I received the tonsure. . . .

“I am glad, I think, that I do not feel very enthusiastic, or in any hurry to take the final step, but only peacefully happy and satisfied about it, as a thing, the cost of which I have long ago counted, and as the only thing on earth that I have any real inclination for.

“Join, then, most heartily with me in earnest prayer to God to give me grace to make a perfect sacrifice of myself to His service, and thus constantly to go on preparing myself till that happy day, when I shall stand as His Priest at the altar to offer the great Sacrifice to God. At the same time thank Him for all the graces and favours He has showered upon me in His free mercy. To speak of unworthiness seems to imply a possibility that I might have been worthy—if you understand me—and that I therefore leave unexpressed. Blessed be God for ever for all His favours, especially for having put me in His Church and called me into the number of His Priests, and for having given me what, under

Him, is the cause of all, such good and tenderly-loving—and therefore such tenderly-loved parents. What I owe you no words can say, but the heart can feel. Thank you, I never can here; words are so empty, so unmeaning. I will leave that to be done by the Almighty Himself, when He will, I trust, crown you with a bright diadem of glory for all you have suffered for His Faith. . . . May He keep us all for that happy day. Pray for me, my own beloved ones, and I will not forget you. It is a great thing, and a happy one, to give a priest to the Church.

“Your most tenderly loving son,

“ARTHUR.

“This day week was the day Agnes and I rode together; it was great fun. I hope C—— had one afterwards.”

After the ordination he wrote again:—

“Sept. 21, 1862.

“It is needless to say that yesterday was the happiest day of my life. When I think of it, I can only say ‘*Deo Gratias, Deo Gratias!*’

“Now, dearest father, I am not free. I cannot be a lawyer. Though I had no real doubt or fear ever before, still it is the most wonderful happiness to feel quite, quite secure, and bound.

“Then I have the glorious office in which I can unite myself every day to the songs of the angels, and which will bring many graces. I do not think it will bring any manner of burden, though sometimes it may call for a little self-denial.

“When the Bishop said: ‘*Si in sancto proposito perseverare placet in nomine Domini huc accedite,*’ I felt so delighted, and stepped forward with a good long step!”

Father Wilberforce’s attraction towards the Religious State appears to have been almost simultaneous with his vocation to the priesthood. Although there is no definite mention of it in the earlier letters, it had evidently been working in his mind for some years. As he says himself, “he never felt drawn to the life of a secular priest,” and when the time came for his reception of the diaconate, he had quite made up his mind that God was calling him to the state of perfection.

He used often to say that he owed his vocation to the reading of the *Following of Christ*, and after the Bible, it was the book he most constantly used.

A month or two before he was ordained deacon, whilst he was earnestly deliberating and praying both about his religious vocation itself, and as to what Order he should choose in which to make his final sacrifice, one of the Fathers of the Dominican Priory at Woodchester, whom he knew well, invited him to pay a visit to the Priory. He went, and was immensely struck by all he saw.

In a letter to his father, dated from Woodchester, he says:—

“The monastery is a beautiful place in a beautiful country. The church is very nice, and the house, which joins it, is not a common modern house, but a real monastery, all Gothic, and every part complete: cloisters, chapter-room, and cells. The novices are here. About a quarter of a mile off is a convent of Franciscan nuns, with an orphanage. The Fathers here have a night-school, to which a great many Protestant boys come. Many converts have been already made. . . .

“The Prior is very kind. He turns out to be Father Procter, who met you in Rome last year.”

Father Augustine Procter was in his way rather a character. Severe almost to rigidity in his ideas of religious discipline, a kind heart was hidden under a stiff and unattractive exterior. Father Wilberforce always spoke of him with respect and affection, though he would sometimes find matter for a joke in the old Prior's formal ways. He was much entertained on this first visit to Woodchester, when in reply to his remark: “Why this is more like a monastery than anything I have yet seen in England,” the Prior answered in a tone of severity: “Sir! It IS a monastery!”

Arthur Wilberforce's visit to Woodchester resulted in the conviction that God willed him to enter the Order of Friar-Preachers, and that there he would find all that his soul desired, and when he returned to Ushaw he had evidently left his heart behind him.

In the following December he received the diaconate, and the day after the ceremony wrote a long letter to his parents in which he carefully and clearly explains his attraction to the state of Religion, and details the reasons for his choice of the Dominican Order. We can only give it in an abridged form:—

“USHAW, Dec. 22, 1863.

“The Ordination took place on Monday morning, and I can now say to you with a full heart, ‘*Dominus vobiscum.*’ It is a great step into the hierarchy to have received the Holy Sacrament of Orders. I have certainly felt an indescribable but still perceptible difference since the Bishop, with his hands imposed on me, said: ‘*Accipe Spiritum Sanctum, ad robur ad resistendum diabolo et tentationibus ejus; in nomine Domini.*’ I feel I suppose the *robur*.

“How extremely beautiful the whole service for the deacon’s ordination is! It struck me, of course, more than ever yesterday, and I fancied the Bishop was our Lord, and I was kneeling at His feet, as the apostles did, when they were ordained by Him;—I!!—

“About my own hopes for the future. I have been praying to be guided and I have sought advice, and now, wishing to speak, my own beloved ones, as I shall wish at the hour of death, and trying to consider wholly the will of God, I must say that I believe myself called by God’s unmerited and unfathomable mercy to the Religious State. And now for my reasons.

“As it is an undoubted fact that the state of the evangelical counsels (the state of the *Saturday Review*’s ‘dead virtues’)<sup>1</sup> is the state of perfection, given the inclination for it, and given also that there is no manifest obstacle showing that God does not wish me to embrace it, why am I not to go into the state of perfection?

“For it is the *safest* state. Every priest must practise the counsels in some degree, and when one has given up all external things it is a great help to do the ‘one thing necessary,’ and give oneself up to God wholly.

“Then it is the most *meritorious* state, and I want to store up during the few years I shall live as much wealth as I can for eternity. And as a Religious I shall be better able to face death, and can then say to our Lord: ‘I took the state I saw as most perfect; I have given up all to Thee: now save me!’

“It is also easier to do penance, especially exterior penance, the great helper of the interior, and none but God knows how much need I have of that. . . .

“Again, it is so beautiful, so grand an idea to me, to be an unworthy follower of the saints of some great Order, to have

<sup>1</sup> The *Saturday Review* once spoke of certain virtues, among them Humility, and the three evangelical counsels, as being “dead” in the present century.

such special claims on them, to have so many brothers and sisters, dead and alive, to pray for and help you. And then, after working hard for souls, if it so please God, to go back to the quiet and peace of the house, in which it is indeed 'a good and pleasant thing to see brethren living together in unity'; and to go there to end one's days in peace, helped by all around to die well, as a brother going home before them.

"Then, with regard to the particular Order. As far as I can see, of all the Orders I know, I feel attracted to none as I do to the great and magnificent Order of St Dominic. Amongst the Friar-Preachers I think I shall find all I want, and be more happy than I could be anywhere else in the world. I never was so struck with any place as I was with Woodchester. I said to myself: 'Here is my ideal; here is exactly what I have had in my mind, but never before have seen in any form that I could embrace.' How can I describe to you the beauty of the life there? The charity, the zeal, the most happy union of the life of Martha and Mary, the most burning love of God and our Lady, in that—one of the choice homes of the virtues—the home of St Dominic, of St Thomas Aquinas—a worthy house of one of the most glorious of the Orders which are jewels on the vesture of the King's Spouse.

"I only wait for your blessing on my wish, my own dearest ones, and that granted there is nothing that I can see to prevent my *trying* the life. It is simply by God's mercy that I have the wish—His undeserved grace—and therefore I hope He will enable me to carry it out.

"Pray for me, and write.

"Your most tenderly loving Son,

"ARTHUR H. WILBERFORCE."

Such arguments, expressed with all the enthusiasm of ardent youth, were irresistible. The desired blessing and consent were not withheld, and the young candidate was accepted at Woodchester.

The one obstacle to his vocation was that of health. His parents in after years used to say that, except on this score, their son had never given them a moment's anxiety. But his health had always been delicate, and at the very time of his first visit to Woodchester he was under medical treatment for the water-cure. This difficulty, however, was not allowed

to stand in the way, and in April 1864, he left Ushaw College to enter the Dominican Novitiate.

The Ushaw student could not part from his beloved *Alma Mater* without keen feelings of regret, which are very simply expressed in the last letter from Ushaw. He says:—

“I have now only about ten days more to spend at this dear old place, and the idea of separation from it in itself is by no means pleasant. I owe it more than words can say, and I love and respect it most deeply. It has become a familiar home, associated for years with my highest hopes and best feelings. . . .

“I remember, as I look back, the unwearying assiduity of all those above me for my true welfare in mind and body, and the constant and extreme kindness that has ever been shown me since I first set foot in the house, as well as the genuine kindness, courtesy, and sincere sympathy of my companions. Everything has been done to implant within me a thorough Catholic spirit, and I see that it is my own fault alone that I am what I am. . . .

“I can hardly yet realise that next Sunday fortnight I shall be a priest. That what I have longed for and looked forward to for many years will be then, D.V., accomplished; that I shall be then able to offer to God, in the person of our Blessed Lord, the awful and adorable sacrifice. Praised be God!

“One thing I could have wished, if it were possible: that you could be present, at least at the first Mass, if not at the time of Ordination. It would be an immense addition to what will be the happiest and the greatest day of my life. But if that cannot be, there is the Communion of Saints, and we can be together.

“But just at present I can hardly look beyond the disagreeableness of leaving the college, where for so long I have been so very happy; still I feel no question that I am about to begin a life even still more happy.

“X—— says that the Prior has applied to Dr Grant for all necessary papers for my Ordination, so that I need trouble myself about nothing. I think I shall have to leave here on Wednesday, in the middle of the day.

“Ever, my own beloved ones,

“Your most tenderly loving Son,

“ARTHUR H. WILBERFORCE.”

Father Wilberforce's affection for his old college never diminished. He always spoke of it with gratitude and veneration, and loved to revisit it. The present vice-president writes of these visits: "I have seen a good deal of Father Bertrand during the last fifteen years, when he came to Ushaw. We all got to like him very much. There was a delightful blend of absolute self-possession and simplicity of character, which we greatly appreciated. I can see him coming into the professor's dining-room with head erect, and looking as if the place belonged to him. He felt and acted like a man coming home when he was with us. We used greatly to enjoy his anecdotes, delivered with that beautiful silvery voice of his."

It was at Ushaw that Father Wilberforce first became acquainted with the writings of Blosius, whose teaching he made so thoroughly his own, and his translation of *A Book of Spiritual Instruction* is dedicated, "To the grateful Memory of my *Alma Mater*, and of Monsignor Newsham, D.D., who first taught me to love the works of Blosius."

After a week or ten days spent in quiet preparation at Woodchester, Arthur Wilberforce went to Clifton, where he was ordained on the 1st of May. On his return he made a short retreat, and on the 7th of May received the Dominican habit from the hands of the Prior. The next day he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice for the first time. His father and mother were present, having come over from France for the occasion, and just before the Mass began Mrs Wilberforce received a little note from her son. It has been carefully preserved, and on the envelope, in his mother's writing, are the words, "Received in the Church, just before his first Mass. *Deo Gratias!*" Very simple and loving are the young priest's words:—

"MY OWN BELOVED FATHER AND MOTHER,

"I feel so intensely happy. What a most wonderful grace our Lord has, in His boundless mercy, bestowed upon me, enabling me to offer myself entirely to Him in the Religious Life, in preparation for the first offering to Him of the adorable Sacrifice!

"I shall offer that Sacrifice for the temporal, and still more, for the spiritual welfare of us all—of the whole family. Also in earnest thanksgiving to the Blessed God for all His infinite favours to us all, general and particular. Under the last head, specially for our being brought into the Church, preserved from great sins, and kept in good bodily health; and for myself, for having everything overruled in such a

wonderful way to make me not only a Priest, but, as I have good reason to hope, a Religious also. I am sure we have sufficient cause for thanksgiving.

*"Laus Christo, Honorque Mariæ.*

"Pray for me; we will for each other. You may be certain I shall pray hard for you to-day and always.

"Your own tenderly loving Son,

"ARTHUR WILBERFORCE.

"I trust mother will not fast to-day, as she will, I fear, have a headache. She can breakfast in the guest-room, now, or during the sermon, if she likes."

Father Wilberforce's college companion, the Very Reverend Canon Greene, has sent us some reminiscences of his old friend, which may perhaps find their most appropriate place at the end of this first chapter, before the memory of the Ushaw Student has been quite merged into that of the Priest and Religious. Though this arrangement involves some amount of anticipation (for Canon Greene describes Father Bertrand, not only as a college student, but also as he knew him afterwards in later years), the picture is, nevertheless, a complete one, and to divide it would be to distort and injure it as a whole. We therefore give it just as it stands.

The Canon has entitled his paper *Reminiscences of Father Wilberforce, O.P., by a Friend from Boyhood.*

My earliest recollection of Father Bertrand is his coming to Ushaw College as Arthur Wilberforce in the year 1854 (I think) at the age of about thirteen years, and his being placed in my class. As a joyous, light-hearted, good-looking boy, he was a general favourite. Even then he had a certain distinction of character which was a refining and edifying influence on his schoolfellows. He always showed scorn and disgust for anything mean or dishonourable, or low or coarse. I do not refer to anything morally wrong: for such was, happily, unknown at Ushaw in my experience; but I speak of the words and ways, not very culpable, of ordinary school-boys who were lacking in refinement, good breeding, or fine sense of honour.

He was not brilliant in his classical studies, but showed considerable ability in English composition, and in elocution. When Cardinal Wiseman's drama, *The Hidden Gem*, was

performed for the first time, on the occasion of the Ushaw College Jubilee of 1858, Arthur Wilberforce took the leading part, Alexius, and acted it admirably. There was an illustrious assemblage, including Cardinal Wiseman himself, several bishops, Dr Russell, President of Maynooth College, Canon Oakley, and many other distinguished men, who were present to witness the performance. The scene in which Alexius appears, in his dingy cell, absorbed in an ecstasy of prayer, with light, as from heaven, shining on his upturned face, made a very vivid impression. The emotional thrill in his clear, ringing voice and the heavenly expression of his countenance seemed perfectly natural. And indeed it was so. The character suited him, and Arthur was himself Alexius without effort. I think he had very little of the actor's power of personating another. As a youth, indeed, he was somewhat wanting in that sympathy and knowledge of the diversities of human nature which enable one to enter into the thoughts and feelings of others. Some good persons he simply could not understand, and disliked their ways. As years went on, a wider experience of mankind enlarged his mind and heart; and hardly anything in his life was more edifying than the wise and humane toleration, which he gradually acquired, of those extreme differences in human character which are often so perplexing and irritating.

During the first few years of Ushaw life, he was a lay-student, without any apparent intention of aspiring to the priesthood. The lay-students at Ushaw College mix with the clerical students without any distinction being made between them till the end of the philosophy class. But long before that time, many find that the priesthood is their vocation. Arthur was one of these. His fervent piety could not be concealed, however much he wished to hide it. It was observed that sometimes in his concentration of devotion, the earnest whispering of his prayers might be overheard by his companions kneeling near him. This was made known to him on one occasion with a sudden shock that disconcerted him for the time. He was charged, in the presence of several of his friends who were in the secret, with saying his prayers so much aloud that every word was heard at the other side of the chapel. This seemed to him incredible. But a friend of his, whose word he could not doubt, assured him that it was a positive fact; but, he explained afterwards, these prayers were not quite private prayers; it was when Arthur, in his turn, was reading the prayers aloud for all. Thus he was hoaxed, but also admonished.

One of the senior students was from time to time selected

to be reader in the refectory during dinner and supper. Never in my college course was any reader so highly appreciated and so much enjoyed as Arthur Wilberforce. Over the clatter of knives and forks, the clanging of plates and dishes, the moving about of waiters and the calling at the kitchen "drum," his silver voice rang out with penetrating force. No ear was strained to listen. Every word was heard and every point was driven home. As was generally expected, he was appointed Professor of Elocution, and many congregations have reason to thank him (if they only knew it) for the clear enunciation and good delivery of their pastors, who had been taught the management of their voices by Arthur Wilberforce.

He did not distinguish himself in the ordinary athletic games: his chief exercise was in walks and runs through the surrounding country. In the later years of his Ushaw life, he was one of a party of three who were often seen starting, on the recreation afternoons, at full run across the front of the college, and again were observed, some two or three hours later, crossing the front on their return, still running. The impression was made on the observers that they had been running all the time; which indeed was not so, for they had slackened speed when out of view. In all weathers, without overcoat or umbrella, Arthur and his two companions regularly followed this practice, so that they got the name among the juniors of "the wild men of the woods." As their exercise was not so violent nor so long continued as supposed, and as they always on their return changed their clothes if they were drenched, I think their exercise was most healthful and delightful.

Shakespeare and Newman were in those days his favourite authors. How much he enjoyed the pastoral scenes in *As You Like It*, and with what gusto he would recite the moralising of the exiled duke or of the melancholy Jacques! From Newman's *Callista* he was fond of quoting passages with keen appreciation.

From what I have said about him, it might be easily inferred that he attracted the love and admiration of all who knew him. Indeed he looked so happy and so holy, and his character stood so high in college life, that some who never spoke a word to him and whom he never knew, regarded him as a living model of perfection. Many years afterwards I received an unexpected testimony to this good influence of his personal appearance and character. When rowing one summer day on the river Slaney in the County Wexford, with an army doctor named Prendergast, who had

been a student at Ushaw in our time, though much younger, our conversation turned on our college days. To my surprise and delight, he recalled, as one of his chief reminiscences, the memory of often seeing Arthur Wilberforce coming over to the junior college (commonly called "The Seminary"), where Prendergast was then classed, and he told me how much he and some of the other small boys admired him, as he always looked so happy, and so good, and so handsome. Here was an indelible impression made on a child's mind by a living example of the beauty and happiness of holiness.

I think it was in the year 1863, in the month of June, that he and I took a little tour together in Normandy, and had some mild adventures. While sailing one day on the River Seine, near St Germain-en-Laye, our boat was capsized by a sudden squall, and Arthur, his father, and I, found ourselves plunged into deep water. It was well that we all three could swim. We struck off in different directions. Arthur made for a long island not far off, his father made a short circuit and clung to the upturned boat, while I swam to the mainland. A boat, rowed by a woman, shot from the shore to the rescue of the shipwrecked father and son, and landed them safely. Our own boat was soon after towed in. But where was *Cartouche*? *Cartouche* that was with us in the boat? *Cartouche*, the grand swimmer? *Cartouche*, the splendid German poodle and most accomplished of dogs? *Cartouche* was nowhere to be seen. He was found in the fo'c's'le dead, hemmed in and suffocated by the wet canvas that blocked up the opening. The dog belonged to Arthur's uncle, Mr William Wilberforce, with whom Arthur's family were staying at St Germain-en-Laye. *Cartouche* was a great favourite, and his untimely death was keenly felt. But for that serious loss, we would have laughed at our immersion. It was the second time that Arthur had been obliged to swim for his life. He had told me before of his having been capsized in the Atlantic near his father's property in the island Inishbofin, off the coast of Galway. It was at St Germain-en-Laye that I first met his mother—a happy privilege, for she was one of the loveliest, and wisest, and sweetest of mothers. His father I had met previously at Ushaw. What an admirable man he was! He appeared to me to be a walking history or a living library, such a stream of knowledge flowed in his talk, and all the while he was as humble as a child. He even apologised to *me* (who listened to him so eagerly) for taking up so much of the conversation. Truly he was meek and humble of heart. Now I could plainly see whence it was that Arthur drew his

admirable qualities, his love for what was good and noble, his detestation of everything base or mean, his good breeding, and his manly refinement.

In the village of Jumièges, not far from the venerable twin-towers of the fine old ruined abbey, we had the novel experience of being shaved by a weaver's wife! Having inquired for the village barber, we were directed to a weaver's house, for the man combined the two trades; but as the weaver-barber was not at home, his wife offered to do the work. We laughed at the joke, but she meant it quite seriously, and assured us that she had been accustomed to shave her husband's customers in his absence. She was an elderly woman with a boxwood face, and as rigid as if it had been carved out of that material. Not the ghost of a smile ever seemed to relax her features. Our danger was the risk of laughing suddenly at the humour of the situation, and so twitching the face as to be cut by the razor, and Arthur under the operation cried out to me earnestly, "Oh, don't make me laugh!" She did her work with a blunt and scraping razor, but with perfect success.

At Havre, a little hitch occurred between us. I don't remember the occasion, but I know it was something very trivial. The temper of one or other, or both of us, had been set on edge, probably by something eaten, which had disagreed. However, we had a little "tiff"—slight indeed; but we parted from one another for a while, and wandered about each his own way. After an hour or two we met again; and never was a meeting more agreeable. We found how much we leant upon one another, and how delightful it was to have the company of one's own true friend among strangers in a foreign land. No shadow of a cloud ever dimmed our friendship after that.

During our lives as priests, stationed in different and distant parts of England, hardly a year passed without our spending a few days together. Whenever there was a suitable occasion, I invited him to preach a special sermon in the church of which I happened to be incumbent, and arranged, if possible, that he should stay for a few days that he might give a discourse at each of our confraternity meetings on the week-day evenings. One of my motives, no doubt, in asking for his services in preference to those of any other distinguished preacher, was my desire for his company. But the excellence of his sermons and the good which his preaching and presence effected were sufficient reasons. His manifest earnestness, the absolute sincerity of what he said, with his natural manner and impressive voice, took hold of souls and lifted

them up. Sometimes he spoke with great and powerful eloquence.

On a certain "Mayor's Sunday," in a certain town when the Catholic Mayor, accompanied by several non-Catholic members of the town council, was present at High Mass, Father Bertrand preached a most appropriate and telling sermon. A certain congregational elder, a man by no means demonstrative or enthusiastic, declared it to be the best sermon he had ever heard in his life.

On more than one occasion at the request of Dr Newman, afterwards Cardinal, he preached a mission or retreat at the Edgbaston Oratory Church. He told me that Newman highly commended him and expressed his strong approval of the method of his preaching, because he spoke from the heart and simply and naturally, and because he had nothing of that noisy declamation and unreal manner which Newman disliked. He often gave me his views about effective preaching; and we often talked together of the best means of impressing the truths of religion on the minds of the hearers. We discussed the management of the voice, the prolonged emphasis, judicious pauses, short sentences, questions, emphatic repetitions, and other such secrets of the art of commanding attention. Thus he studied how he could best use the faculties which God had given him, in doing the divine work entrusted to him. He was conscious of being sometimes very effective in his preaching, but he seemed to be completely free from any vain-glory or pride in this respect. His self-contempt was remarkable. Perhaps, indeed, that was the secret of the success of his sermons, according to the memorable saying of Saint Francis Xavier, that the success of the preacher in gaining souls to God will be in proportion to his self-contempt.

Father Bertrand simply laughed at the absurdity of being called "learned," or "able," or "eloquent." What disregard he had for public praise and newspaper fame is shown by an incident of which he told me with glee. He had preached a special sermon on some important occasion in a certain church, and was afterwards requested by the reporter of the local newspaper to be kind enough to let him have the manuscript of the sermon. But as the sermon had not been written, Father Bertrand satisfied the importunity of the reporter by promising that he would himself send some account of it to the editor. The next day the reporter, with the newspaper in his hand and a face of dismay, came to apologise to Father Bertrand for the dreadful misprint which represented the Very Reverend Father Wilberforce, O.P., as having

preached "a poor sermon" on the text and subject stated. It was no misprint. It was Father Bertrand's own report, and he chuckled merrily over its being printed literally as he had written it. Such an incident he greatly enjoyed, by reason of the sense of humour which was one of the charms of his life. I remember many instances of his soul being tickled by the ludicrous side of things. A rather cross-tempered housekeeper, at a priest's house where he was staying, came to complain with wrathful face that some of the school-children "were be'aving 'orrible." Oh, how he laughed, again and again, over that phrase, and the woman's tragic denunciation! As for the little ones, whom he always loved, he was of the same mind as St Philip Neri, who would let them "chop sticks on his back," as long as they committed no sin.

At the same priest's house his sense of humour had a remedial effect. Sick and sleepless one night, he called in his host, who, chatting with him pleasantly, related an incident which had recently occurred to a much-beloved common friend who, from his occasional melancholy expression, was affectionately called, "The Knight of the Rueful Visage." This sad-faced man had incautiously swallowed an oyster, beard and all, and was dreadfully sick therefrom, until the victorious oyster, "bearded like the pard," returned of its own accord to "revisit the pale glimpses of the moon," like the ghost in *Hamlet*. This story produced such hearty laughter that he felt quite well again and slept a sound sleep till morning.

He enjoyed it all the more as he had himself suffered from some similar mishaps. Three or four times in his life, at long intervals, he had been laid up for a day or two from eating crab, and he acknowledged that the history of his life had thus been divided into natural periods by the epoch-making crab!

This latent humour must have contributed to that joyousness of character which never left him. Even in his later years, when he was physically depressed by his ailments, this bright joyousness would occasionally burst out, like the sun between the clouds. Years before he died, he often spoke cheerily of "slowing into the terminus."

A stronger support to this interior joy than his natural temperament was his intense and all-absorbing love of our Divine Saviour. His whole life breathed forth this love. One of his favourite prayers was that of St Thomas Aquinas: "Absorbeat, quæso, Domine Jesu Christe, mentem meam ignita et melliflua vis amoris Tui ab omnibus quæ sub cælo sunt, ut amore amoris Tui moriar, qui amore amoris mei

dignatus es in ligno crucis mori"; which he has thus translated into English, in the *Life* of his holy patron, St Lewis Bertrand: "May the burning force of Thy love, sweet as honey, O Lord Jesus Christ, so possess my mind, I beseech Thee, that it may detach me from all things under heaven, that I may die for the love of Thy love, who for the love of my love didst deign to die on the wood of the Cross." This ardent love of his secret soul could not but manifest itself on various occasions. When a certain Catholic whom he knew fell from one sin to another and apostatised, the shock and grief which Father Bertrand felt were most of all for the insult thus offered to our Lord. It was a happiness to him to be near our Lord in His Blessed Sacrament. On one occasion he said that he could not understand how any good Catholic could willingly be absent from the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament when there was an opportunity of attending. "Why," he said, "it would seem as if they didn't believe in our Lord's presence, or didn't care for His Blessing."

As his years advanced it was noticeable that he advanced in perfection. This was seen especially in his greater tenderness towards others and his gentler consideration for their failings. How mildly and inoffensively he suggested the correction of some fault in his friend or neighbour! There was one instance where his exercise of the charitable duty of fraternal admonition was almost heroic. A friend of his, a man of superior ability and of rather stiff unbending character, had a certain habit of speaking which was hardly culpable but unintentionally startling and disedifying to strangers. How to make it known to him without nettling him sorely was the difficulty. Father Bertrand said to me: "Shall I tell him?" "Will it do good?" "Won't it offend him mortally?" He judged that it would do good; and in the kindest and sweetest way gave the admonition. I think it wounded. But "the wounds of a friend are better than the deceitful kisses of an enemy."

It was a grace from heaven to have such a friend. His admirable qualities could not but influence one for the better. To know him intimately, and to see the love of his heart for our Divine Lord and His Blessed Mother and the great and humble St Joseph, to converse with him about passages in Holy Scripture in which he delighted, to hear him talk with such copious knowledge and loving admiration about St Dominic, or St Thomas Aquinas and his great *Summa*, or about St Lewis Bertrand, or St Vincent Ferrer, and many other holy persons and things—all this was inspiring and encouraging, and helped one to a higher life. It makes one

more fully understand the deep meaning of those words of Ecclesiasticus: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality."

Such a friend is the loving image, however imperfect, of the Divine Friend who came among us, all kindness and compassion, and so sweetly called us His friends and His brethren, and lived for us, and died for us, and has opened heaven for us.

## CHAPTER II

1864—1875

THE year of novitiate seems to have been a very happy one to "Friar Bertrand," and passed away only too quickly. The days of a novice in any Religious House are all much alike; hours of prayer and study alternating with homely manual exercises and simple recreations. In his new life Arthur Wilberforce found all and more than all his soul had longed for, and each day was bringing him nearer to the solemn profession of the three vows that would bind him irrevocably to his God. As a novice he was chiefly remarkable for his earnestness and simplicity, and for the spirit of boyish fun which must have made him a favourite with his companions. His novice master, Father Henry Bartlett, sums up the history of his novitiate in one phrase, telling more, perhaps, than many words could do. *He was always humble.* "As a priest he said Mass daily, but would have shrunk from putting himself forward, or claiming any exemption on this account."

Though so delicate, he does not appear to have desired or obtained any dispensation from the decidedly rigorous laws of fasting and abstinence of the Dominican Order; the letters of this time always speak of his being well, and able to keep the rule.

In the autumn of the year 1864, the Wilberforces spent a few weeks in the neighbourhood of Woodchester, but so wisely strict were the novitiate rules, that their son was never once allowed to visit them. They heard his Mass daily, and spent a short time with him on Sundays in the monastery guest-room, but that was all. The only exception granted was that Mr Wilberforce was permitted now and again to join the novices in their weekly excursion to Woodchester Park.

There were not, of course, many letters written during

the period of Father Bertrand's novitiate, but one or two have been preserved which may be of interest to those who would like to know something of Dominican life in a house where the old customs of the Order were being observed with great fervour.

In a letter to his brother he describes the death and funeral of a fellow-novice:—

“Oct. 23, 1864.

“MY DEAREST H.,

“Many thanks for finding time to let me hear of you: you know what pleasure a letter from you always gives me, especially if it gives proof that you are doing well. . . .

“One of our novices, Brother Leo Moore, was called a day or two ago to the next world. Having been for more than a year in consumption, his end had been for some time expected, but as usually happens, it came suddenly after all. When we went down to Matins at twelve, he called one of the brothers and said he felt very ill. Father Henry, the novice master, was fetched out of choir, and it was deemed necessary to give him the Last Sacraments. We went in procession from the church with lights, bell, etc., carrying the Blessed Sacrament to him.

“When I was holding the Crucifix for him, he said: ‘Talk to me, Father Bertrand.’ I made ejaculations for him and said other prayers, in which he joined so devoutly, and knew some of them, even then, better than I did. He said to me: ‘How happy a thing it is to go to heaven, and see all the saints of our Order, St Dominic and our Blessed Lady!’ and he added he would pray for us when there. He had my Crucifix and relic of the true Cross, both of which he kissed devoutly.

“About half-past four in the morning, they thought the end had come, and called up all the house. I was at the foot of the bed. Then we sang the *Salve Regina*, which is always done when a member of the Order is dying. He lay in his agony all day, and all day his room and the passage outside were almost full of the brethren, saying the Psalter for him. The novice master was assisting him, and praying for and with him, and he had his full senses up to the last. About one o'clock, after dinner, the *Salve* was sung twice again, and he quietly breathed his last, just as *O Clemens!* was being sung.

“The funeral was the most solemn thing I have ever seen, and I shall never forget it. He was laid out, dressed in the full habit, with the black *cappa* on, and the whole com-

munity went in procession from his cell to the church. He was laid upon a black board and carried by four of the brothers. We all wore our black *cappas* and carried candles; it was dark, and the procession winding slowly through the cloisters and church, to the chant of the *Libera me, Domine, de morte æterna, in die illa tremenda*, etc., was most wonderfully solemn.

"I have the charge of the night school that meets twice a week during the winter months. I do not teach a class, others do that. I superintend the whole, keep order, and give a small sermon or instruction; the great bulk of those who come, both men and boys, are Protestants. The object of the school is to convert, or at least, to lessen prejudice, and it has done a work in former years. Pray that God may be pleased to bless it this year.

"Next Wednesday papa is going to give a lecture to the school. On Thursday he and the others go to Malvern. They have been most good during their stay, and have taken care not to distract me. It was not my doing they came, and God has made it a comfort and I hope a blessing to them.

"Pray for your loving brother in J. C.

"FRIAR BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

To his parents he wrote at Christmas:—

"Our services went off very well. Matins began at 10.30. Between Matins and Mass in our Rite, the gospel from St Matthew, giving our Lord's genealogy, is solemnly sung by a deacon. I sang it, and then, wearing a humeral veil, I had to take in my arms a wax Bambino, which was lying on the altar, and carry it in procession to the crib at the bottom of the church, the *Te Deum* being sung. After the feet of the Bambino had been kissed I laid it in the crib.

"After that we had High Mass, and a sermon—not long—from dear Father Prior.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Father Augustine Procter, whose sermons, as a rule, were certainly "not short." A story is told of a novice, Brother Vincent (afterwards Bishop) King, having once persuaded a little boy—the son of a gentleman in the neighbourhood—to ask the Prior not to give them such very long sermons. The little monkey, who was about six years old, went up to Father Procter in the sacristy and piped out: "Father Prior, *why* do you preach such long sermons?" The Prior leaned against the table and from his great height silently surveyed the diminutive figure before him. "TO DO YOU GOOD, SIR!" he said, so sharply that the small boy slunk away abashed, amidst the scarcely subdued tittering of the novices, who were listening outside the door.

"On Monday we had a recreation day, with a walk, and on Wednesday morning skating in the park; very good ice, but weak. I don't mind the cold at all, but feel stronger for it. There is always on cold nights a nice fire in the common room to warm our toes before going to bed after Matins.

"We use oil with the fish often. I could not manage 'bread and oil.' I do not mind it with fish. Much love and every Christmas wish.

"*Jan. 2, 1865.*—This letter has been lying ready to go for several days, only as it did not seem inclined to go of itself, it lay there still. It is now in Father Henry's hands, so I hope you will find it on the breakfast-table to-morrow."

In the course of the same year he tells his father that he has "been made porter of the novitiate," and has the honour of keeping the key in his cell, after which he goes on to say how greatly he had enjoyed the annual retreat given that year by Father Albert Buckler:—

"It only makes me more and more thank God for the great favour of a religious vocation. I trust I may be a good Religious."

A very affectionate letter to Mrs Wilberforce, who was no doubt keenly feeling the loss of her dearly loved son, is dated:—

*"Dec. 19, 1865.*

"MY OWN DEAREST MOTHER,

"You must write to me when you feel down: it is hard not to be so sometimes, though it does us harm when it is voluntary. In Religion one is less liable to it than in any other state. I think the best thing we can do, when some physical or mental cause is bringing on a fit of the blues, is to kneel down and formally accept and thank God for all we shall suffer from them. And then to console ourselves with the thought that God and our Lady and the saints are happy, and lifting up our hearts, try to rejoice in that glad thought.

"Since you have sent before you more than one little angel to heaven, heaven is more than ever our home. How beautiful it is to think of members of our own family being at this moment before the throne of the Lamb, in the secure embrace of unspeakable Love for ever! We must all cheer up, love, and trust, and fight courageously, and then rest—and such rest!—for ever. . . .

"The schools go on well, and some are nearing the Church.

“What a commotion Dr Pusey’s book is making! I hear the *Times* has taken it up. Any idea of union between the Church and the establishment seems utterly chimerical. It would be more hopeful if it were a real Church with Orders, etc., though in schism, like the Greek. But as it is, it seems to me like trying to join a + to a —, or add emptiness to fullness.

“Poor Pusey! I trust he may come himself.”

On the 12th of May 1865, Arthur Wilberforce made his Profession in the hands of the Prior, the Rev. Augustine Procter. He thus obtained the fulfilment of his heart’s desire, and in the spring-time of life, turning his back on all that was fair in the world, he consecrated himself for ever to the service of God, under the banner of “Truth,”<sup>1</sup> among the white-robed ranks of the Friar-Preachers.

Two letters referring to his Profession have been preserved:—

*To his Brother.*

“April 20, 1865.

“. . . This day last year I left Ushaw to come here, so it is exactly a year to-day since I have seen you. . . . How fast the past year has gone. It seems but yesterday that I wished you good-bye on the doorstep, and went through the terrible ordeal of shaking hands and parting with so many friends, to go out to what was *then* an uncertainty. No one can tell how much I felt it. I could have sat down and cried and roared any time that morning, and as I sat watching the dear old college, the happy home of so many years, till the hill hid it from me, I assure you my cheeks were not dry. All has, however, been made up to me, as it always is if you trust yourself to God, and I have found here not only a most dear home, but a family of brothers, and a health and strength of body and a real and deep happiness and content of soul that I never had before, and should not have elsewhere. Thank God for all this, for it is a wonderful mercy.

“Though it is true the Dominican life here is the highest one could wish, still everything is so sweet and easy that the days glide by faster even than at Ushaw.

“It is a life most thoroughly wholesome for soul and body, and just the one to make you work really for souls. Our Fathers are doing a great work, and a far greater is opening out for them. The nonsense people talk about Religious not

<sup>1</sup> The motto of the Order.

being able to work, etc., is extreme. The very fact of being a Religious helps work in a thousand ways, and I am convinced that, *ceteris paribus*, a man will do far more for God and for souls in Religion than as a secular. . . . I have now had a year's joyful experience, and I can only say that had I really known what it was to be a Religious, I should have been here five or six years ago, and I know plenty now at Ushaw and elsewhere who, did they know the life, would be here next week. It is the grandest, the most heroic, life to embrace, and yet—such is God's love—the sweetest, the easiest, and the most joyful.

“As to the body also, it is the most healthy life you can lead. I am a completely different person now in health from the useless fellow of last year. And others find the same.

“And then how glorious it is to be in the old Order, the grand old family of Friar-Preachers, treading, however far off, in the footsteps of the innumerable saints of our own household, and with all the helps and all the prayers of the countless multitudes of members on earth and in heaven, the son of St Dominic, and one of that order which Mary has called “Her Order.” I assure you this and a thousand other things quite changes the look of death, and of life too.

“And now pray for me to help me to prepare for my Profession, which will take place, D.V., on the 10th of May, St Antoninus's day. He is one of our great saints.<sup>1</sup> I go into retreat next Monday week. Get prayers for me, that I may make the oblation of myself as perfect as possible. Nothing consecrates you to God so much as the Religious Profession. After that you have only to live up to your state, for your state is of the highest perfection. You can then devote yourself to work for souls.”

*To his Mother.*

“May 11.

“I am afraid the Profession will be over when this arrives. It is to take place, please God, at about seven to-morrow morning. The Prior is to be out during the day, so he fixed that time, or else I would have asked to have it later that you might know first. However, your prayers will be just the same, as there is no time before Almighty God.

“Pray for me hard, dearest mother; I value your prayers and dear mother's blessing more than I can say. Offer me to God, now that I am to be entirely devoted to Him. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The Profession was, for some reason, deferred till the 12th of May.

"Beloved father is as dear as ever—no one ever had so very dear a father. It is a great pleasure for me having him here.

"Your own Son,

"BERTRAND."

From this time to the summer of 1869, Father Wilberforce was fully occupied with exterior work and the study of theology. He was given charge of the night school, as has been seen, and assisted the parish priest in his labours among the people. But though his superiors found him very zealous and earnest in all he did, the special aptitude for apostolic work which so greatly distinguished him later on, does not, in these earlier years, seem to have made itself specially apparent. In his position as a professed novice and junior Religious, there was probably not much scope for anything of this kind, as he would necessarily have remained more or less in the background.

In letters to his brother during 1866, mention is made both of his work and his health. On the 27th of January he writes:—

"I am as busy now, what with observance and studies, and my schools for the parish, as I can well be. That is the reason I cannot write oftener.

"On Sunday evenings I hold readings for the men of the parish in the schoolroom. I shall read them *The Clifton Tracts ; The Golden Reign of Good Queen Bess!* Protestants come, and there have been sundry conversions, and more threatening.

"Thank God, I am *perfectly well*, and up to work, and have not had any dispensations—except two or three—[which he names in detail] since our Lent began on September 14. I do not mention this as a silly boast, for there is nothing whatever in it to boast of, but merely to show how healthy our life is, and what a mistake it is to think that such things cannot be carried out in the nineteenth century.

"Pray for me, for I sadly need prayers. *Oremus pro invicem.*"

"April 10, 1866.

"You will before this think I have given up all idea of sending you an Easter letter. But though now at least a little 'after the fair,' if not a whole week, I must hasten to wish you all Easter joys and graces. . . .

"We had a very good Holy Week, and the singing and ceremonies were done with more precision than last year.

We had no real palms, so had to content ourselves with branches of willow—I think—or hazel, or I don't know what. . . .

“On Easter Sunday morning, in type of the Resurrection, we carry our Lord through the cloisters in solemn procession, up through the church to the altar. It is just about the real time of the Resurrection—between one and two on Sunday morning. Several persons came to the church for it. This ceremony is peculiar to the Order, I believe. . . .

“The ‘Northcote Trial’ has come out in a separate form now, much fuller than the newspaper account. It is a disgraceful thing on the other side. Did you see ‘Law’s’ letter in the *Tablet* about it, saying how much more peremptory and severe they were at Eton? Eighty boys were all flogged at one time by Dr K—— for going to Windsor Theatre, without much *proof*—legal proof—and Law says ‘what a terrible expense for poor K——, if all the eighty had prosecuted him for assault, and got their cases!’

“Easter Monday was a dreadful day! I had to amuse the night school on Selsley Hill in the evening. It went off, however, satisfactorily, better than one of the balloons we sent off, which stuck in a tree near the church.”

Father Wilberforce took his solemn vows on the 16th of May 1868, and in July 1869 was sent to take charge of the church and mission at Beeches Green, Stroud. Here his apostolic gifts began to develop, and he made several converts to the Church. One of these, then a young girl, describes his singular power over souls, and at the same time testifies to the earnestness and perseverance with which he followed up such work. Having sown the good seed in a soul, he never of his own accord relinquished his care of it. There are instances of this in his letters, and some of his correspondents have themselves acknowledged that his efforts to restore or keep a soul to the right path were unremitting; in some cases pursuing it, as it were, for years together—and that in the midst of the heaviest stress of mission work and bodily suffering.

The life at Stroud must have been one of great poverty. The Sunday Offertory—about fifteen shillings—was almost the only means of subsistence for himself and his companion, together with a few vegetables occasionally sent over from the monastery garden.

Father Bertrand, however, used to amuse his brethren in after years by describing the very simple way in which he managed things: he “just bought what was wanted, and then sent in the bills to the Provincial!”

During a retreat which he gave at Gloucester, Father Wilberforce writes to his mother reminding her of the approaching Feast (the 10th of October) of St Lewis Bertrand, and begs for prayers:—

“GLOUCESTER, *Oct. 6, 1871.*

“Pray that I may be a good Friar-Preacher, and persevere to the end as such, for that, thank God, is my only earthly desire for myself. It is a high and glorious vocation when really lived up to, but like everything worth striving after, is difficult to attain. And pray for us all, for all our Province, that we may always grow in good discipline, and do God’s work and His Holy will. The miracle at Soriano gives me great hopes that God will more and more bless our Order, through our Holy Father’s intercession, and will make it revive everywhere, if the lapse of time has anywhere injured it. It is old, but renewing its youth like the eagle. There is a work for the old Orders, which have borne the heat of the fight for centuries, and God does not mean them to die out. I trust St Lewis will gain us a blessing. By his next Feast, I hope to have his ‘Life’ ready, but there is a good deal to be done still before it is finished. . . .

“It seems odd that I should be giving a retreat to Friars! [the Franciscans]. How the world wags on—we shall soon be in another; and all, I trust and pray, in the Light of God’s Countenance for ever!”

There is an interesting letter, written about this time, to one of his family, in which reference is made to a sad and well-known apostasy that had caused much scandal and grief to many souls:—

“I am very glad you did not read ——’s letter to Dr Newman. . . . I am very unhappy about it altogether, but I think you have hit on the explanation. . . . The only thing is to pray for him, and that I do. It is most miserable to see one I have loved and revered in such a state of mind, and I trust it is only a temporary kind of possession. . . .

“Harm I cannot say I feel it has done me. These things are tremendous warnings. As Dr Newman so wisely says: ‘A thousand difficulties can never make *one doubt*’; and if —— has gone from the first to the last, unless he is mad, the process must have been a voluntary one. If so, it only makes one cling more closely to the Pope and our Lord, lest one might be tempted to the same. It makes one more careful, more inclined to pray, to distrust self, and to hang on to God only. As to Faith, it rests on the voice of Peter, not on any

human friend, however beloved and however revered, and though all I ever loved or revered were to fall away, with God's grace I would hold on tight to the Pope. This is what I say, on the supposition that poor —— falls from the Faith which God and our Lady avert! . . . His letters betray a misery of mind that is dreadful. It is clear that doubts bring nothing but misery even here below."

Father Wilberforce's strong clear faith made him always keenly susceptible to the outrage done to Almighty God by defections from the Church, whilst at the same time he never failed to apply the lesson of such fallings-away to himself and to those whom he directed, regarding them as incentives and warnings to stand ever more and more on one's guard, and in humility and fear to pray for the gift of perseverance. These feelings are expressed in another letter, which is worth quoting, and which we give in this place, as connected with a similar subject, though it in fact belongs to a much later date. One whom he had known well for many years suddenly left the fold of the Catholic Church. It was a great blow to Father Wilberforce, and in reply to a letter of sympathy he had received on the occasion, he wrote:—

"Many thanks for your kind sisterly letter. I am, indeed, sick of heart. It is not only most horrible, as

1st, "An insult to the Sacred Heart ;

2nd, "Damnation to himself ;

3rd, "Scandal to others ;

but it is perfectly inexplicable, except as a black hallucination and diabolical delusion !

"He can give no reason . . . except that he does not believe in the Pope and the Roman claims! 'That he is entirely lonely and without a friend;' but he has always taught that God only is sufficient, and he should practise it. . . . He actually says that since he left the Church, his 'love of God and confidence in Him have increased, his horizon is wider, the light purer,' etc., etc. This shows clearly how deceptive are our feelings. He feels a certain satisfaction in doing his own will, and in believing or disbelieving what he likes, and he mistakes this for love of God and the light of God. The *only* way not to deceive and delude ourselves is to OBEY. To obey the Church, as the voice of God, and to submit and to think with the Church.

"'All things work together unto good to them that love God,' and so this may teach us to subdue our own wills, to love to be guided, and always to pray that we may persevere.

It makes me see why the saints were so urgent in praying and telling others to pray for perseverance. If God withdraws His grace we fall at once into darkness.

“Do make reparation to the Sacred Heart, and pray for him.”

In the December of 1871, Father Wilberforce was, rather unexpectedly, elected to fill the office of Prior at St Dominic's, Haverstock Hill. Knowing how greatly the news would interest his mother, he wrote at once to tell her:—

“December 1871.

“MY OWN DEAREST MOTHER,

“I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed dear A——’s letter, and all the cheering news contained in it, and how pleased I shall be to read the one from Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> It is such a great blessing to find the journey has hitherto been so successful, and a weight is taken off one’s mind. . . .

“The ‘secret’ is that the Fathers of London have elected me Prior!—or rather postulated for me to be made Prior, as I have not been long enough professed to be actually elected. It certainly was a surprise, and I cannot yet quite realise that it is so. I hope you will always pray that I may strive to be humble. Poor miserable —— is indeed a warning to all! But to be Prior involves so many spiritual duties and responsibilities that a man who has any real idea of his vocation has an immense preservative against that subtle temptation. I feel it would be almost like being vain of being able to consecrate or absolve! If God gives me the office, for which I certainly never sought, He will give me the grace necessary for it. This is one’s consolation.

“I shall be immensely glad to get back into strict convent life: I can never feel at home out of it. I should be very sorry to ask to be sent anywhere, but when, without my doing, I am put into the convent, I am rejoiced. But of course I should have preferred to be a subject, rather than to be Prior. It seems very odd!

“January 1, 1872.—I got a letter from Father Provincial to-day—a very kind one indeed—in which he says he has written to the General, and expects his answer in about a fortnight. I expect to be in London by the Purification at latest. To get into community life again will be a very

<sup>1</sup> Mr Wilberforce, whose health was fast declining, had been advised to try the benefit of a sea voyage, and had, not very long before, started with one of his daughters for Jamaica.

great happiness, as well as advantage to me. I am just the person who needs it."

The next three years were years of hard work to the young Prior of St Dominic's. To a character like his the burden and responsibility of government would be heavy; in addition to his duties as Prior he had the care of the Parish, and for two years was also master of the lay-brothers. Nor did his office of superior exempt him from apostolic work, and during his *triennium* he took his share in giving some large missions.

Added to all this were the anxiety and grief caused by the long illness and death of his beloved father. The beneficial effects of the latter's visit to Jamaica were but transitory, and soon after his return home he became a confirmed invalid, and suffered much.

Mr Wilberforce had made immense sacrifices for the Faith, giving up wealth and position in the world when he became a Catholic; in those days the liberal professions were closed to ex-Anglican clergymen, and for many years after his conversion his life was one of great anxiety—not for himself, but for his wife and children. In his deep humility he thought that he had not done enough for them, and feared lest before God his life should be found empty of all good works. In these interior trials his Dominican son was evidently his confidant and support, and the extracts we have been allowed to make from Father Bertrand's side of the correspondence show how intimate was the friendship between father and son.

"ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY,  
"August 22, 1872.

"MY OWN DEAREST FATHER,

"Make somebody write a line to say how you are, for I am anxious to hear.

"God knows, my dearest father, the exact weight of the Cross He is now laying upon you, and immense is the merit you will, I am sure, gain by calmly, humbly, and peacefully resigning your dear self into His loving Hands, and you will feel His Everlasting Arms bearing you up. We must resign and sacrifice to Him the use of all the members of our body, and our liberty of going hither and thither at will, and as His captives remain as long as He pleases unable to walk about. It will sweeten the privation to you to think that you are the captive of His Love. He did not come down, or wish to come down, from His Cross one moment before it

was the Will of His Father, and I know you wish to leave all to Him.

“What a lovely feast the Assumption is; more beautiful every year, as the day we hope for and wait for, the hour of our own entrance, even with our bodies, into heaven, draws nearer. *Expecto resurrectionem Mortuorum*. It seems to help us to get over the undefined feeling of strangeness about the unseen world, to remember that two real human bodies are there. And especially when we reflect that one of those bodies was that of a creature, and one of our own race and kindred, that it belonged on earth to ‘our tainted nature’s solitary boast.’”

“January, 1873.

“I have only time for one short line, but I cannot let the New Year begin without a greeting. May every blessing and grace be yours this year, my beloved father, and may our Lord fill you with holy joy and gladness.

“It strikes me that a great deal of your trouble at having ‘done nothing,’ is a mistaken and merely human view of regarding spiritual things. You forget that every prayer is an ‘action’; every resisted temptation is an ‘action’; every good desire is an ‘action.’ Even if you had *really* ‘done nothing,’ yet now, in your armchair, you can every day do countless actions, truly meritorious of Eternal Life. Remember, God is a God of the Present, as Tauler so beautifully and so constantly says, and He does not so much look at what you were, as at what you are NOW.

“Every act of resignation in low spirits is an action worth one thousand external actions with human excitement.

“I must stop: with the utmost love.”

In another letter of about the same date he says:—

“You have also the great happiness, through God’s Grace, of seeing all your children united around you in the same Holy Church. So we must not forget to thank God over and over again for the multitude of His tender mercies shed upon us all. Life is very short for us all, and the Love of God is very sure and very real.”

On the 17th of January he wrote to his mother, sympathising with her in the suffering caused by an attack of the heart

—the premonitory symptom, no doubt, of the complaint which was to terminate fatally not many years later. He says:—

“The very place where you are suffering will recall the pains of that Sacred Heart you love so well, and which loves you with an infinite love, and will make you unite your sufferings to His. An illness of that kind is very distressing and harassing, but then it is all the more meritorious. If we offer ourselves to God it is after all sweet to suffer something for Him, as an act of love and self-sacrifice. . . .”

Mr Wilberforce had evidently answered his son's New Year letter, for at the beginning of February we find another from Father Bertrand in which he develops at full length the subject he had only touched upon in his former note:—

“February 4, 5, and 6, 1873.

“. . . As to what you were speaking of in your letter, viz., the difference between Christian resignation and the ‘faith without works’ of heretics, the difference is essential. But every heresy has some mixture of distorted truth; it is in fact a distortion of the truth, and generally arises from a man taking up one idea and riding it to death, forgetting everything else. The faith without works system denies *Faith* altogether. They mean by ‘faith,’ not the theological virtue, but the conviction that all sins are forgiven, whether repented of or not, because Christ died. ‘*All sin,*’ as I heard a preacher say; all sin, whether those you have done, or those you are going to commit. *Forgiven*—not in the Catholic sense, but covered and hidden by Christ's merits, as by a garment. If you have not this insane conviction, or do not deceive yourself into thinking that you have, you will certainly be lost, even if you lead the life of St Paul or St Dominic. If you have this conviction, or can deceive yourself so much as to think that you have, you will infallibly be saved though you were to lead the life of Judas or Henry VIII. To such diabolical nonsense we all with Holy Church say a hearty anathema.

“Christian resignation, on the other hand, teaches us first to hate and detest and turn from every Mortal Sin, and to be ready rather to die than to commit one again.

“2ndly, As far as possible to hate and turn from every Venial Sin, at least every deliberate one, as displeasing to God.

“3rdly, To confess our sins with sorrow and *confidence*.

“4thly, To acknowledge with true and *peaceful* humility that we are nothing, that without our Lord Jesus Christ, we can do nothing for salvation, that we deserve in justice to be cast out of the kingdom: that of ourselves we are vile and worthless and full of miseries.

“5thly, Not to rest here, but to go on immediately to immense confidence in the Love and Mercy of Jesus Christ, to remember that He not only died for us, but is ready, if need were, to die again singly for each one of us, to remember that we are in His Church, which is His Body; a Member of His Body; and that therefore our imperfect sorrow is accepted, because it is Christ’s sorrow, our prayers because they are His, etc., etc.

“Then, as to works, every supernatural action, though of the mind only, is a work, and when in God’s Grace, a good work in the full and true sense of the word ‘good.’ For a supernatural work, meritorious before God, it is necessary that the act in itself should be either good or indifferent, *e.g.*, almsgiving, prayer, or walking, eating—the two first being in themselves good, the two last indifferent in themselves. Then there must be no circumstance that makes the act sinful, *e.g.*, circumstance of time, as eating before Communion, etc., etc.; giving alms from stolen property, etc. The act itself being good or indifferent, and no circumstance vitiating it, if the agent is in grace and occasionally makes acts of charity, meaning to refer himself and his life to God, he merits for Eternal Life by all his good and indifferent actions. They all become *good works* in the supernatural sense.

“Then, as to the reference of our actions to God as our End, of course the more actual that reference is, the better. But virtual reference is sufficient for merit. Those words of St Paul, 1 Cor. x., 31, *Omnia in gloriam Dei facite*, contain a precept and a counsel. The *counsel* is to do all things, as far as we can, actually for God’s glory. But this is not a precept: it is *better*, but not *necessary*. As a precept, it is the same as the precept of charity, of loving God above all, and is therefore satisfied by occasional acts of charity, and the actions of the day being good in themselves. St Thomas clearly teaches this. He says that if a man is in grace he need not actually intend in each action to seek God, but it is enough if he has a rational intention, and that no circumstance vitiates the action. And this, remember, is not to make the action not sinful, but meritorious of Eternal Life, *i.e.*, a good work.

“So it is, when you, who have been living in grace, have

heard Mass or made an act of charity, and then written an article for the support of your family, to teach some truth, to occupy time usefully, etc., all of which are good motives. The action of writing is referred *ad finem convenientem*, and therefore you, being in grace, it is referred virtually to God by the act of charity in the morning, and this is meritorious. Of course the more actually it is referred to God the better, according to the counsel of St Paul. For this reason are we taught to offer to God in the morning all the actions of the day. But an act of charity is sufficient.

“So the conclusion is that you will find that our dear Lord, who is most anxious to find merit in our actions, will see an immense number of really good *works* in your life, my dearest father, which works, if small in the sight of men, will not be insignificant in His Eyes. He desires so ardently to find things to reward. It would be most injurious to Him to think that He is not anxious to give us full measure, *running over*. He whose mercy penetrates even into the abode of mortal sin, and prevents the punishment of it being as much as strict justice would demand, will, if we may say so, catch at the least opportunity of reward.

“Therefore put aside all *trouble*. Have as much contrition and humility as possible, but not *trouble*. ‘Every troubling thought is from the devil,’ says the sweet and wise St Francis of Sales. And trouble and spiritual worry are not contrition, neither are they pleasing to God.

“If you say: ‘I might have done so much more’; it is no doubt true, but who does not feel that? Throw yourself with humility and confidence on our dearest Lord, and all will be well. . . .

“Send me your blessing, my own beloved father, for whom I daily pray in the Holy Sacrifice.

“Your most tenderly loving Son.

“Nothing so much as theological teaching brings out the infinite mercy of our good God.”

The life of this loving and beloved father was failing fast. At the beginning of March Father Bertrand paid a short visit to Woodchester, where his family were then living, and found Mr Wilberforce in a state of great weakness, and evidently not far from the end. He was obliged, however, to return to London, and a day or two afterwards wrote to his mother:—

*“March 12, 1873.*

“Your dear letter I was rejoiced to get, though it contained no better news of our beloved one, whose figure is always before me. It was a great pain to leave you all, but I felt it was right to do so. I am sure I shall be able to visit you again, and to make, I trust, a longer stay.

“I feel so intensely for you, my own dearest, although I know that you are constantly uniting your sufferings with our Lord’s on the Cross, and offering yourself in sacrifice. We must always remember that, dearly as we love him, there is One that loves him even more, and infinitely more, even He who died for him. If He calls, we cannot hesitate, however great the sacrifice may be. He knows the best moment, and heavy as the Cross is just now, He has lightened it by many mercies. I am most thankful our beloved one is free from sharp, violent pain, and though langour and depression are hard to bear, pain would be worse.”

In April Father Wilberforce went back, and remained at Woodchester till all was over. Mr Wilberforce had obtained leave for Mass to be said in his room, and thus had the consolation of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, offered for him by his own son, during the last week of his life.

Cardinal Newman, also, must have paid his old friend a farewell visit, for he says in the memoir before quoted, “In these last months his very life was prayer and meditation. . . . He calmly spoke to me of the solemn, unimaginable wonders which he was soon to see. Now he sees them. Each of us in his own turn will see them soon. May we be as prepared to see them as he was!”

On the last morning of his life on earth Mr Wilberforce received Holy Viaticum from the hands of his son, and calmly expired on the 23rd of April 1873, at the age of sixty-five. He was buried in his Dominican Tertiary’s habit, and lies in the peaceful churchyard at Woodchester. Here, five years later, his wife was laid to rest beside him, and here, at a distance of a few yards, now repose the mortal remains of the son he had so generously given to God.

On receiving the news of Mr Wilberforce’s death, Dr Newman immediately wrote to express his sorrow and sympathy with the mourning family.

*To Mr Wilfrid Wilberforce.*<sup>1</sup>

“THE ORATORY, *April 23, 1873.*”

“MY DEAR WILFRID,

“Your telegram told me what I had expected to hear. I sent on its tidings to Father Ambrose, who is in London.

“There never was a man more humble than your dear father—never one who so intimately realised what it was to die—and how little we know, and how much we have to know about it. Now he knows all: he knows all that we do not know. He has the reward of all his prayers; there is an end of all his fears. He has served God with a single aim all through his life, and he now understands how good it has been to have done so. I have known him most intimately for forty-seven years, and he has always been the same.

“Of course I shall say Masses for his soul; but I wish and pray that each of us, when our time comes, may as little need them, as I think he does. None of us are fit to enter God’s Holy Presence, but he has been preparing himself for it all through his life.

“May God sustain your dear mother and all of you—but I don’t doubt they will have abundant strength and consolation in their trial.

“Ever yours affectionately,

“JOHN H. NEWMAN.”

The last letter of 1873 is addressed to Father Bertrand’s sister, who was leaving home to enter Religion.

“*Dec. 18, 1873.*”

“I must send a line to greet you, as you arrive first at your new and chosen home. ‘This is my place of rest for ever, for I have chosen it,’ or rather God has chosen it for you, my dearest.

“Our Lord will give you, after the first human feelings of the sacrifice are over, many and great consolations, the hundredfold He promised here below, and afterwards Eternal Life. Make up your mind from this day to put your whole soul into one work, to make yourself a perfect Religious. You are in a good Convent, where holy discipline really

<sup>1</sup> This letter is printed with the kind permission of the Cardinal’s executors.

flourishes, or I should have warned you to avoid it, but I most entirely believe that the Rule is really kept, and that the best examples will surround you. Throw yourself into everything with generosity and love.

"It will be much easier for you than for me. You will be in heaven ages before me, while I am low in purgatory. Though we have the advantage of saying Mass and giving the Sacraments, how far less are your responsibilities, how much more surrounded you are by protection. We have to knock about the world without being of it; to be in it, to fight it, so pray for me.

"I must now go to the Confessional, to hear and absolve some of the 'Abominable Sins of the world.' Pray for a poor wretch who in November stamped and beat his mother to death, and was condemned here yesterday to be hanged. He will be allowed a week. He is a bad Catholic, but I hope will repent.

"Pray for the Redemptorist Father who died to-day, and for

"Your most loving Brother in J.M.D.,

"F. B. W., O.P., lest I, preaching missions to others, should myself become a castaway."

## CHAPTER III

1875—1878

TOWARDS the close of his term of office, Father Wilberforce's health gave considerable cause for anxiety. The pressure of mission work, in addition to other cares, had greatly told upon him, and his brain was thoroughly overworked. He succeeded, however, in keeping up till the expiration of his Priorship, in February 1875, when he went to stay with his uncle, Mr William Wilberforce, at Surbiton. There is no doubt that he laid down the burden with a sense of relief, though he used often to say, in later years, that he had been very happy as Prior, and those who worked with and under him valued his religious spirit and earnest desire of maintaining regular observance. Just before the end of his term, a lady wrote to him, expressing a hope that if re-elected, he would say with St Martin: "*Domine, si adhuc populo tuo sum necessarius, non recuso subire propter eos laborem.*" Father Wilberforce sent her the following note in reply:—

"MY DEAR CHILD,

"There is not the slightest chance of my re-election, and as I am not St Martin, but an ass, I should consider myself already reprobate, if I could suppose myself necessary to anyone."

On the 12th of January 1875 he writes to his sister:—

"As you say, the sense of one's own utter worthlessness and want of correspondence with God's graces, a sense that grows with years, is often a suffering. But we must make it a source of practical humility, and realise our own nothingness, and the truth of our Lord's words: 'One is good, God.' I used to fancy that vanity, especially in external works, would be a danger, but really, now, though I do not want to

deny its danger, it seems as if two grains of common sense must take away all temptation to vanity."

From Surbiton he writes again :—

"2 SOUTH BANK,  
"SURBITON, *March*, 1875.

"I was delighted, though by no means surprised, to hear that you have been accepted for Profession, and I thank God with all my heart for His Mercies to you. . . .

"As I told you, a year's noviciate opens the eyes of the soul, and makes faults more plainly seen. The Blessed Maria Crocifissa had a vision of her own unworthiness and nothingness the day after her Profession; she saw the *Fomes Peccati*, the capability of evil within herself, and what she would have been, were it not for the grace of our Blessed Lord. She was filled with horror and self-hatred, and at the same time, with immense thankfulness and love to her loving and adorable Spouse. She wondered at the charity of her Sisters, who loved her in spite of what she thought they must see in her. So we must try to realise our own deep unworthiness, and to trust in and love our Blessed Lord the more."

*To the Same, on her Profession.*

"April 15, 1875.

"I need not say that I feel greatly disappointed at not being present at your Profession, but Father Provincial thought I had better stay quietly here, and so there is no help for it. We must console ourselves by the consideration that the sacrifice will be pleasing to God and that obedience is the first duty of a Religious, whether Nun or Friar.

"My absence will not make me think less of you, my own sister, on the great and solemn occasion of your consecration to our Blessed Lord, as a professed Nun. What a privilege and happiness is yours, to be chosen out of millions to be the true spouse of Jesus Christ, dedicated to Him, heart and soul, for ever. Everything earthly sinks into nothing when compared to this immense privilege. 'You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.' I am sure your heart will be overflowing with gratitude to Him for the multitude of His graces and mercies. No better pledge of His love could be bestowed on you in this life."

Father Wilberforce benefited much from the change and complete rest at Surbiton, and some time after Easter was able to return to the monastery and resume work. Woodchester now became his headquarters, but he was often away on missions. In August he wrote to his mother:—

“CROSS HAYES HOUSE,  
“MALMESBURY, *Aug. 14, 1875.*”

“. . . Many thanks for your dear letter on St Dominic's day. We had a good sermon from Father Akers, who is a great friend of mine. He is a Tertiary, and would much like to be a Dominican altogether, if he could make up his mind it was God's Will he should leave his new mission at Homerton. He is just building a church there, and doing great good. He is a man full of zeal and piety. Before his conversion he was chaplain to the nuns now at Mill Hill, and came into the Church a fortnight after them. When he was on the point of reception he went to Forbes, the Bishop of Brecon, and Forbes took him to Dr Pusey. He thought Dr Pusey would at once floor his difficulties by his learning, but could get no clear answers. His point was 'I hold all the teaching of Trent now, but I feel I only hold it as an *opinion*. I could change it to-morrow, and the Anglican Church would be very well, nay, better pleased. Can I hold these doctrines on *authority*, and as of Divine Faith, in the Church of England?'

“Dr Pusey could not answer: he shuffled about, asked what he would do if he were a Greek (not much to the point), and at last got angry and said there was no use in talking to him. So Akers went away, more shaken than ever, and from that moment it was only a question of time. He had looked on Pusey as a kind of 'Father of the Church,' and when he would say nothing, Akers felt as if all the ground had been cut away beneath his feet. . . .

“I feel very well, thank God—so very different—and I have not had those sudden attacks of 'mortal illness' of late!

“I said Mass yesterday morning for Sir Hungerford Pollen at Rodbourne. What a nice man he is: I enjoy a chat with him.”

*To his Sister.*

“ST THOMAS', WATERLOO,  
“NEAR LIVERPOOL, *Aug. 24, 1875 or 1876.*”

“I have just been giving two retreats to the nuns at Mount Vernon, as I think I told you, and am now here, to

supply for three Sundays. Waterloo is a 'genteel suburb' of Liverpool. The church is very fine and the altar simply grand. An apse, with more than life-size statues of the four Evangelists, and St George and St Thomas of Canterbury, round the apse wall, and a grand altar of marble and alabaster.

"The other day I went to Preston, which I have long wanted to see. Thirty thousand Catholics there; eight churches and magnificent schools. Saint Walburga's spire is the finest thing in the town.

"After supplying here, I am to go to Blackburn to join in a three weeks' mission in St Mary's, and I beg your prayers for the work, that we may convert the people and do good and not harm.

"There is a nun at Mount Vernon, who is a true Sister of Mercy. She has charge of all the sick-visiting and poor-seeing department, is a wonderful nurse, and seems to enjoy all that is naturally loathsome. She has nursed many priests. One poor man, Father —, had rheumatism and put himself into the hands of a German quack, who *punctured* him all over as a cure! It cured him by death. His flesh mortified, and he was in a terrible state when this sister found him in a Protestant lodging, sitting on a hard chair, with no one to nurse him, but a miracle of patience. She got a bed for him, for he could not go upstairs, and nursed him till death. One day his heel came off bodily in her hand!

"She told a most interesting story of a young priest who was with me at Ushaw, and was afterwards stationed in Liverpool. He caught fever from—perhaps—over-zeal in attending a poor man who was dying of malignant typhus in a miserable cellar. He was nursed by this Sister of Mercy, and she said the time of his illness was to her 'as good as a retreat.' Father A— was sensible all through, which is unusual with typhus, perfectly patient, and so strictly obedient that he might have taken a vow to obey his nurse. She heard him constantly making ejaculations of tender love to God, and to our Lady Immaculate; he seemed to be quite aware that he would die, and told the priest who attended him, several times over, to be sure and bury him on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

"The night before his death a strange thing happened. He had not been able to sit up at all since he went to bed, as he was so weak. This evening he seemed so much worse that the sister thought he would go during the night, and asked the priest to stay with him, which he did. In the

middle of the night they suddenly saw Father A—— slowly sit bolt upright, with his hands clasped before him, and his gaze fixed, not on them, but straight in front of him. Then, in a very loud strong voice, he cried out very slowly: 'Death! death! death! at half-past eight to-morrow morning.' He then lay down and said no more. The sister and the priest looked at each other petrified, and she said afterwards that the effect of those words and tone in the dead of the night was indescribably awful. Next morning Father D—— went to say Mass for him, and just as he returned, poor A—— breathed his last, exactly at half-past eight, as he had predicted the night before.

"After his death another curious thing happened. The funeral took place on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, as he had said, so, of course, all the church was in white. The sister told her companion to try and get some flowers if she could. There was a dilapidated old greenhouse on the convent ground, with all the glass broken and long disused, and the sister, searching for flowers, looked in here, though with little hope or thought of finding anything. But there, to her great astonishment, she saw six beautiful white lilies, in full bloom! She gathered them with delight, and they were placed round the coffin of the holy young priest, the martyr of charity. The sister fully believed they were miraculously sent by our Lady.

"That is beautiful, is it not? 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.'

"Would you have liked to be alone with him, when he sat up in that way?

"I have no idea when I shall be in your neighbourhood again, nor where I am to go after Blackburn. I have only slept about six or eight nights in any house of ours since the 1st March, so if 'those who travel much abroad seldom become holy,' what is to become of me? So you must spend all your time in praying for me. As you never go abroad, I hope you are just growing a saint."

In the year 1877 Father Wilberforce was appointed chaplain to the Religious Community of St Dominic's Convent, Stone, where he remained for about eighteen months. Here he made many friends, both in the community and the parish. Though another Father acted as parish priest, Father Wilberforce assisted him very actively, and was constantly about among the people. He made himself truly their friend, and entered into their little joys and sorrows with heartfelt sympathy, and when, in later years, he visited the convent,

the sight of that attenuated white-robed figure, with the transparent face, kneeling in his favourite corner by the Blessed Sacrament altar, never failed to evoke words of welcome and affection. When, in December 1904, the news of his death was spread abroad in the town, not a few of his former parishioners shed tears of sorrow, and one old man spent the whole day in weeping for him whom he called "his true friend and a real saint."

There is a home for incurables at Stone, served by the nuns, and here Father Wilberforce was a constant visitor. A great sufferer himself, he seemed to have received a special gift for consoling sufferers, and nothing delighted him so much as to comfort and minister to those whom he called "the sick and sorry."

In after years Father Bertrand gave several short retreats to the patients at Stone, and it would be difficult to say whether the preacher or the patients enjoyed them the most. "His instructions were very simple," says one who heard them, "but had a strange power of moving the hearts of his hearers. He spoke often of the Passion, and generally concluded each exercise with the *Anima Christi*, and the ejaculation repeated several times over: 'Oh, sweet Jesus, who suffered for me, give me grace to suffer for Thee!' As he uttered the words he seemed to be identifying himself with each sufferer present in the ward, and to be offering up their trials and pains individually to our Lord."

Father Wilberforce's letters of spiritual direction, properly so called, date from this period, and henceforth form the chief portion of his correspondence. The number and variety of these letters appear to have gone on increasing year by year, in proportion as the sphere of his labours grew wider, and his gifts, as a director of souls, became more generally known and appreciated.

From Stone he wrote in February 1877 to a young lady who had consulted him on the subject of her vocation, and had asked his advice as to the right way of meeting the opposition of her family. The counsel he gives may be of use to other souls placed in similar circumstances:—

"I do not think there is any necessity for you to go home before you enter the convent, and it would probably only add to your difficulties to do so. It is not like a question in which you had an obligation of obedience to your father. You are of age, and under the circumstances you owe him no obedience about the matter of your vocation; in that case there would be no hope of your entering religion at all.

He would sooner give his sanction to your entering the army or navy, I should think.

"No doubt, in looking back upon the very trying circumstances of your past life, you will see many faults, and wish that you had always been patient and forbearing. But do not let this discourage you. God gives you the vocation to the Religious Life freely, as an effect of His mere goodness and love, so do not think it impossible because you do not deserve it. We do not deserve to be Christians at all.

"As long as you go on *trying* not to be discouraged, all will be well. We cannot always command success. The natural feelings you describe in leaving those you love can be got over, by God's grace; there is no harm in feeling them, but better you should. And be not cast down because you feel no pleasure at the thought of belonging altogether to Jesus Christ, but comfort yourself by the thought that you do it to give Him, not yourself, pleasure.

"What you express I can perfectly understand, and I am certain there is nothing in these feelings to cast any doubt upon your vocation—rather the contrary. If you did not feel that you could never attain to the ideal of a Religious, it would show either that your idea of the state was low, or that you had too much confidence in yourself. So cast yourself on God, who says, 'With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

"You are going through a season of trial, and it is all the better. It will purify your motive and make your vocation all the stronger. Those that go through a dark valley before they enter Religion, often have less trouble and perplexity during their probation.

"I was very much pleased with the boys at Edgbaston [where he had been giving a short retreat]. The boys struck me as a remarkably nice gentlemanly set, and there is a good spirit among them.

"I am sorry, of course, to leave Woodchester and my convent life, but it is very nice here too. As a Religious, however, I have not to ask myself where I should like to be, but the happiness is that we know we are where God wills, if we obey.

"If you can get to the church, you may go to Holy Communion on five days in the week. What Father Faber says does not apply to you, and as you are preparing for Religion, you want strength and light. You will find both in Holy Communion.

"Patience, courage, generosity, prayer. Meditate on the Passion of our Blessed Lord."

*March 5, 1877.*

“Keep up your courage. Entering Religion is rather like conversion to the Faith, or a good death—a step into the dark: a step in Faith. Lean on our Blessed Lord, and the dark will be light. ‘Cast all your care on Him and He will nourish you.’

“Of course it is extremely painful to be obliged to make others suffer. But consider how often that must be done in this world. Hardly anyone marries or enters Religion without making others suffer. No one joins the Church without making others suffer. No one goes to India or the Colonies, to sea, or to the wars without making others suffer.

“When my mother became a Catholic, people tried to keep her back, and succeeded in making her heart bleed, by describing the pain it would be to her mother. She was then her mother’s only surviving child.

“Again, consider that these things are always worse in the anticipation than in the reality.

“You are called selfish for desiring to enter Religion when it will cause suffering to those dear to you. Of course the supernatural enters here, and our Lord’s words: ‘He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.’

“‘I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.’—St Matt. x. 55.

“‘And everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My Name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting.’—St Matt. xix. 29.

“But even without all the deep strong thoughts of these Divine Words that never pass away, that are as true and powerful now as on the day they were first uttered; even on more natural principles, is it improper selfishness? What are you asked to do? To sacrifice your happiness and peace of mind for life because your poor father may make others uncomfortable if you do not. But the suffering is brought on them only indirectly by you.

“If you had an invalid mother or sister, depending on your exertions, however earnestly you desired to enter Religion, I should say it was your duty to remain in the world. The present case is entirely different.

“You are asked to wait indefinitely—until your father’s death. Suppose he should live, as we hope, ten, fifteen, twenty years more, how know you that then you could enter Religion? The probability is that you could not. For my own part, I do not like the idea of a child waiting in that

way for the father's death. It is not desirable in itself, and would be hurtful to you.

"God is demanding of you a severe, sharp sacrifice: a generous act of faith and confidence, and He will support you and crown you.

"My advice is, go blindly on, in confidence and love, and offer up all the pangs of the sacrifice, all the misunderstanding of motives, all the anguish of making loved ones suffer, to God, in union with Christ on the Cross. Remember how our Lord occasioned pain to His Blessed Mother. He might have removed her from the world before the Passion.

". . . It is very easy to sit quietly here and write 'Keep up your courage,' but I know how difficult it must all be, and how dark. You have but one refuge. 'But I am needy and poor: O God, help me. Thou art my helper and my deliverer: O Lord, make no delay.' And, 'Arise, O Lord, help us and redeem us, for Thy Name's sake.' And in the words of another psalm, I say to you, 'Deal manfully and let your heart be strengthened, ye that hope in the Lord.'"<sup>1</sup>

The last letter of this correspondence is dated:—

"April 12.

"MY DEAR CHILD,

"You will have heard by now, or will soon hear, of the kind letter Reverend Mother has had from your poor father. It is really wonderful, and shows how right you were to conceal nothing. He actually says he had rather you were at —, than that you should go out as a governess; 'though, of course,' he adds, 'I consider a vow to be a violation of one's duty to God.' That is a pity; but we must pray for him.

"You have nothing now to do but to put yourself for time and eternity into the hands of our good God, and you will be safe.

"Thank Him very much, and receive this as a pledge of help in all future difficulties that may in any way arise."

*To his Sister, on the Anniversary of her Profession.*

"April 15, 1877.

"It is indeed a happy and blessed anniversary, another year of your spiritual espousals with our Blessed Lord Him-

<sup>1</sup> Psalms lxi. 6; xliii. 26; xxx. 26.

self, and a whole year nearer the day when you will see His face and hear His voice, and know Him even as you are known, face to face. He is indeed, as the Church to-day reminds us in His own words, a good and faithful Shepherd, and Religious are the chosen lambs of His flock and the objects of His tenderest solicitude. Like a good Shepherd He defends us, and feeds us, and if we wander from Him, He seeks us over rocks and mountains till He finds us and brings us back. I think those words of St John x. 28 are so very beautiful: 'No man shall pluck them out of My Hand;' and again, 'No man can snatch them out of the Hand of my Father.' There is such security in those assurances.

"Do you know the 34th chapter of Ezechieh? I always think that our Lord was thinking of that and referring to it when He said, 'I am the Good Shepherd.'

"I often think that the great difference between the old Religious of former days and ourselves, was the much greater idea they had of the necessity of the penitential spirit. I do not mean more austerity, that was more a fruit and outcome of what I mean, but the state of contrition and a deep sense of sin. No doubt Religious in every age are modified and acted upon by the prevalent spirit of the age in which they live, and certainly our age is not the one of penitence. A contrite and humble heart is what we always ought to be crying out to God to give. That, we are sure, He will not despise.

"Do you notice how much more the old books speak of 'compunction' than the new, and compunction is what I think modern Religious often lack. Cassian says, or rather the Abbot Moses, in chap. xvii. conf. 1: 'Let us, likewise, oftentimes chant the psalms that we may excite true compunction.'

"But what a man I am to talk. It is so easy to talk and so far harder to do. But I would beg you on your bridal day, my sweet sister, whom I love, to pray that our Lord would give me some compunction. It must be glorious to be full of it. Better than gold and silver and many precious stones.

"Do you read the Scriptures much? Is it the custom among you? It was among the old Religious. We have so many books now that we often forget the Book of all books.

"I would advise you to read the psalms often in English, it will help you much to say your office well. And always remember that it is the Church speaking by your mouth."

*To his Brother.*

“STONE, *June*, 1877.

“It seems long since I wrote to you, but I have had little time.

“Last Saturday I returned from Prior Park. Have you been there? It is a wonderfully beautiful place, a grand stone mansion, built by Ralph Allen, a rich ‘Bathite’ in last century; it stands on a hill outside Bath, looking down on the city, which is one of the finest in England, and is surrounded by splendid timber. The portico in front is very grand. Pope, the poet, used to visit there, and a walk is called ‘Pope’s Walk,’ still.

“The retreat went off very well, thank God!

“The other day an old Biddy came to confession, and I told her to say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys ‘for the Pope.’

“‘Before *what*, your Riverence?’

“‘Anywhere you like,’ I said, ‘for the Pope.’

“‘Is it *before the pump*, your Riverence?’

“When I could speak, I answered: ‘FOR THE HOLY FATHER.’

“‘Oh! and is it for our Holy Father? Shure and I won’t forget *him!*’

“I could only sit and laugh, and Biddy laughed too.”

*To Miss Wilberforce.*

“STONE, 1877.

“Kingsley and men like him are indeed a puzzle—a riddle—the answer to which will come from the highest authority *in die illa tremenda*. By-the-by has it ever struck you how many prayers for the dead seem more for the living than for the dead? The Church prayers I mean. ‘*Ne me perdas in illa die.*’ ‘*Libera me de morte æterna,*’ etc.: This often puzzled me, for it is quite superfluous to pray that a soul in Purgatory may not be lost at the last day, may be delivered from eternal death, or (may be) placed on the Right Hand—and yet the Church is constantly doing it. I was talking to Father Fairfax the other day and we both agreed that the probable explanation is that God foresees the

prayers that will be offered; they are all present to Him, so that these prayers avail for a happy death as well as for suffrage after death. I see no other explanation of prayers offered for the dead, and yet asking for their deliverance from the danger of hell.

"I preached at Rugeley on St Joseph's evening to a very good congregation. The priest, Mr Duckett, is a very pleasant and zealous man, and has three dogs—two mastiffs chained up, that I should not care for, but the third is one of the jolliest retrievers you ever saw, named Nero. He is brown, large, very strong, and has only been known to be cross once, when the mastiff bit his ear. I had made friends with him during the mission a year ago, and he remembered me again. I do not much care about spaniels; they have stumpy tails and get very fat.

"I went to a meeting here for petitioning Parliament to close the public-houses on Sundays. A very low church parson spoke very dully about the 'Sabbath,' so I made them laugh. In the middle a drunken man came up and could not find the door, and had to be seized by the police and shown out. He turned out to be the reverend lugubrious parson's man-servant!"

During Father Wilberforce's residence at Stroud he had become acquainted with the Community of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin, then stationed at Gloucester, and had taken much interest in their work. When he became Prior of St Dominic's he exerted himself to get them removed to London, and they were eventually established in England's Lane, Haverstock Hill. Father Bertrand always remained their friend and was looked upon by the community quite in the light of a founder. The following letter was written to one of the Sisters during her last illness:—

"STONE, *June 20, 1877.*

"MY DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST,

"Reverend Mother tells me that you are to receive to-morrow the Last Sacraments, in preparation for the last summons from our Blessed Lord, when it is His will. God's will be done! I will say Mass for you, my dear sister, to-morrow, and I will beg our Lord to help you, as He knows best how. I will put your heart and soul into the Chalice at the time of Consecration. Every day I will say nine Hail Marys in honour of the glorious Queen of the Angels, that she may command the angels to encamp round about you

and defend you in life and death. This does not mean that I will do no more, but that at *least*. He who has begun a good work in you, will carry it on to the end, and perfect it Himself.

“So courage, hope in God, cast away every discouraging thought, and put all your confidence in Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Invoke the nine choirs of the glorious angels to your help, and our Holy Father St Dominic.

“We shall not forget you, dear sister, and when you see our Lord, do not forget us, who have to fight on longer, till we all meet one day with Him and for ever.

“God and our Lady bless you.

“Yours affectionately in J.M.D.

“Father BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

Several of Father Wilberforce's letters of spiritual direction are addressed to a person in service, whom he had received into the Church, and in whose welfare he never ceased to take interest. The correspondence is continued almost to the end of Father Bertrand's life.

*To A. B.*

“STONE, 1877.

“Do not mind what you saw in the letter; it was not meant for you to see, and as you saw it by mistake, take it in a humble spirit, as sent by God. You would have been pleased if it had happened to be in praise of you, even though not deserved, so now take it as a humiliation sent by God to you. We cannot grow humble without humiliations, and therefore, as we cannot please God without being humble, we should be glad when humiliations come to us.

“Trust very much in God, and remember that the least actions done for Him are really very great and worthy of an eternal reward. So offer up all your actions, thoughts, words, etc., to Him, in union with those of our Blessed Lord.”

To the same, on the subject of detraction, he writes:—

“June, 1877.

“I am sure, my dear child, you will see the necessity, for charity's sake, to say as little as possible about the faults of your present mistress. You need say nothing more to Mrs — than that you were not comfortable.

"We must not expose hidden faults, or we fall into the common sin of detraction. And servants are under a still stricter obligation, because they see the inside of people's houses, and thus are in a position of confidence."

*To the Same.*

"December, 1877.

"Thanks for your picture, which is very pretty indeed and will remind me to pray for you. I trust you will have every grace from the Infant Jesus at the Feast of His Birth.

"I am sorry you do not find yourself comfortable in your present place. Have you any prospect of another? Certainly your second letter is not a happy one, and I should advise you to leave if you cannot be happy, because it will make you ill again. You are not strong.

"You are not the kind of person to take too much to drink, and I hope your mistress did not really suspect you of such a thing. I should think not.

"It is right to speak the truth, and good to be straightforward, but you must always remember that there are two ways of saying things, and that often *silence* is a great virtue. Father Faber says that a man's most precious merits often are the things he has *not* said.

"Let me hear how you get on. God bless you."

At the close of this year Father Wilberforce wrote to his sister in religion :—

"STONE, Dec. 31, 1877.

"When you get this, another year of our short fleeting life will have gone. It is a solemn thought, and I always feel it to be very solemn to begin another year. I do not think it a *merry* time. A year is a great portion of our short course, and another year with all its sins and shortcomings and imperfections has gone, flown away with so many benefits from God unthankfully received, so many inspirations neglected, so many graces wasted, so many opportunities of virtue allowed to slip by; more, probably much more, than half my life done, and nothing yet done for God. And this year that is gone is not departed for ever, it will return, every moment will return, before the judgment seat of our Lord.

"I feel when I think of all this, like the barren tree planted in the fair garden of God's Church, and how these

many years God has come to seek fruit and has found none, nothing but the leaves of good resolutions, or rather of good wishes and inefficacious desires, and much rotten fruit of sin; but after the tree has been planted in the most sheltered spot of the Religious Life, where the sun of justice continually shines down upon her, and after she has been watered day by day with the Precious Blood, still no fruit, no fruit. Where is the fruit of prayer, humility, charity? That charity, that real love, that is the end of the Religious Life?

“Have I not reason to fear that the axe of justice is laid to the root of the tree, ready to cut it down for the fire? ‘Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?’ Perhaps this very year that decree went forth, and yet another year vouchsafed. Why? Because the Infant Jesus on His straw, in the real poverty of His manger, has stretched out His hands for me. Those weak arms of a poor Babe, which are the infinitely strong arms that made and support the world, have been extended for me. Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant, has interceded for me.

“God grant that I may profit by the mercy of God, and turn to Him with my whole heart.

“When we feel weighed down by our own unworthiness and misery, and by all the sins and imperfections that make us fear to present ourselves before God, the great and only consolation is to remember that we are members of the body of the Infant Jesus. ‘After all,’ as dear St Teresa said when dying, ‘after all, O Lord, I am a child of the Church!’ That is the joy, for it means I am a member of Christ, and ‘Christ and His members,’ as St Augustine says, ‘are one Christ.’ Therefore His actions are ours, His sufferings ours. Truly He has brought us ‘plentiful redemption,’ and He is our life and hope, our strength and goodness, and in Him we have life everlasting. What indeed would the world be without Jesus Christ?”

In the January of 1878, Father Bertrand received the tidings of his mother’s death. Though Mrs Wilberforce’s health had been failing for some time, the end came very suddenly. She had gone to bed apparently in her usual health, but shortly after midnight roused her daughter, and asked for a restorative. Some time afterwards, Miss Wilberforce, who had fallen asleep, was again awakened by a call from her mother, whom she found sitting up in her bed, and evidently dying. She roused the house, and priest and doctor were sent for, but Mrs Wilberforce had breathed her last before they could arrive.

The blow was a terrible one to her son. He was just going to say Mass when the telegram arrived, but though at first quite stunned, he recovered sufficiently to offer the Holy Sacrifice, and then started at once for London. For many years afterwards he could not speak of the anguish of that day, and of the arrival at the desolate home where the mother he had loved so tenderly was lying cold in death.

The body of Mrs Wilberforce was taken to Woodchester, and soon after the funeral Father Bertrand returned to Stone. It was long, however, before he quite recovered from the shock of his mother's death, and those who knew him best were conscious of a change. An increase of gravity, and in his direction a deeper spirituality, were evidently but the reflection of an interior change in his own soul. He probably expressed something of this when, some years later, in reference to a similar occurrence, he said: "It is impossible to be brought face to face with the sudden loss of a dearly loved one, without its affecting one's whole life. Death, after that, becomes a reality."

But in the midst of his own sorrow he did not forget those under his care, as we find from a letter addressed to a novice, at whose clothing he was to have presided.

"21 BRUNSWICK GARDENS,  
"KENSINGTON, *Feb.* 20, 1878.

"MY DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST,

"So the happy and long wished-for day has arrived, on which you are to receive, more than ever before, the sweet yoke of the Lord, when the white scapular of our Holy Father, the pledge of our Lady's love and motherly protection, is placed on your shoulders. 'Praise the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever.'

"Well, my dear child, how very much you have to be thankful for, and how your heart must swell with deepest gratitude and loving joy, when you think how good the Lord has been to you, giving you thus the assurance that His mercy will endure for ever.

"When you look back at your life, and see how many strong influences there were to draw you from the Faith, you cannot but see with what a very special providence God has drawn you to Himself, in spite of yourself. This is the reason for future confidence.

"Now you wear the holy habit of Religion, the outward mark of a consecrated spouse of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom you hope soon to bind yourself for ever by vow. You are His now, not only by creation and redemption

which you share with all, not only by the call to the true Faith, to the body of Christ, which is common to all Catholics, but by that peculiar and wonderful call to follow Him wheresoever He goeth, to be His own consecrated spouse. May you persevere bravely to the end, so that hereafter you may sing that song that is not given to others, even among the saved, to sing.

“But before that, as you know, you have to bear our Lord’s burden, which is His Cross. You have it now on your shoulders, and you must bear it patiently, sweetly, faithfully, and with true love to the end. Then He Himself will be your reward exceeding great.

“You have a precious year now before you, a short one, but a momentously important one for you. The lesson that you have to learn in it is to dwell with God, to walk before God, and thus to be perfect. Study above all mental prayer. I shall say Mass for you to-morrow.

“I should have greatly liked to be present, but these things are not arranged by us, and God can make my absence far better for you than my bodily presence.

“God ever bless and keep you, and lead you on to perfection.”

In March he writes to console his sister in her loneliness:—

“STONE.

“I had intended to answer your very touching letter before, and to try all I could to comfort you, my own dearest sister. But after all, nothing I can say can take away the terrible void you feel, and the longing for the beloved one. ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life,’ is the solid consolation, and you must rest on Faith, and the thought that it is God’s will must be best in the end. To bear a trial like this may be more in His sight than many great works done in His service; there is so little of self in it—in fact, none. It is all self-denial, self-abasement before God, for His sake.

“I know what you mean by not realising that the dear one is close by. But does anyone actually realise that, much and always? There must be the blank. The great longing of the saints is to *see* God, though by Faith He is with them. And the holy suffering souls feel the pain of the void in not *seeing* God. You also want sight; you want to see her beloved face and hear her voice, and no amount of feeling that she is near you would make up for that. There is nothing but to go bravely on for God, resting on Him.”

*To the Same, when in Retreat.*

“July 24, 1878.

“I was glad to hear . . . of your retreat, because you need a time of rest for the mind, a time of quiet, and I am certain many graces will be given you during these days of prayer.”

“. . . You must have recourse more and more to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, our loving Father and Master; ‘My father and mother are gone from me, but the Lord hath taken me up.’ You have a greater claim than ever on His sweet mercy, now that both our parents are gone. I am sure that in the silent hours of the retreat He will speak words of love and consolation to your heart, and you will pour affections of love into His Sacred Heart. His love lightens every cross and drives away all darkness—the true personal love of His Sacred Heart.”

## CHAPTER IV

1878—1883

FATHER WILBERFORCE, as has been said, did not remain long at Stone: in the course of 1878 the ecclesiastical authorities placed the mission under the clergy of the diocese, and the Dominican Fathers left, Father Bertrand being assigned to Newcastle-on-Tyne. Though his departure was a great loss to the community, it is certain that had he remained at Stone, the loss both to the Order and to the Catholic Church in England would have been still greater. The sphere of labour was too limited, and there would never have been sufficient scope for the exercise of his missionary gifts. Again, as he himself said, the life of a convent chaplain or of a parish priest would have been "too comfortable" for one who had given himself to God, as he had done, for the salvation of souls. Father Bertrand's vocation, like that of the apostles, was "to labour and painfulness, to journeyings often, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst and weariness." Sometimes, in moments of fatigue or depression, he would call himself *Frater Vagabundus*—a title which might perhaps have been applied with equal propriety to his favourite St Paul.

With Father Wilberforce's departure from Stone began that long course of missionary work which was not to end till death came to release and give him rest. Henceforth the record of his exterior life consists chiefly of lists of missions and retreats, broken only by attacks of illness and pain. The addresses given in his letters carry us all over the country, and show how unceasingly the work went on.

Soon after leaving Stone he writes to a novice, on the subject of detachment and the sacrifices of the Religious Life:—

“BARTON-ON-HUMBER,

“Nov. 15, 1878.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“I was so glad to hear from you once more. If I can ever be of any service to you, I am sure you will never doubt my willingness to help you in every way I can.

“As to the arrangement about —, it came very suddenly on us all. However, God disposes things often very differently from what we should have expected, and the only thing in this weary world, the only light in the darkness, the only support in the conflict, is the sweet and good will of God, our dear God. He is so wise, and so powerful too. The great difficulty is to seek God’s will for His sake, because it is His will and because He is God. Our perfection consists in one thing, one simple thing: in being subject to God; and the more utterly subject we are to God because He is God, the more perfect we are.

“‘All that is right which seems most wrong,  
If it be His sweet will,’

says Father Faber.

“It is very natural that you should feel the loss of one who, by God’s grace, helped you to enter Religion . . . and who was with you during your first year of probation. It is, of course, a trial. But it is a trial by which God means to teach you that no one is really necessary except God Himself. He can help you through one person to-day, and another to-morrow, and this He is showing you. The work is supernatural and from His grace, and therefore independent of outward means, though it is His way to use outward means. So it must teach you, as I know it will, to lean more entirely on God, and God alone.

“I am therefore rejoiced to hear that instead of giving way, as if you had merely lost the society of an earthly friend, you saw God through all, and went to the Blessed Sacrament, and made an offering of all to the Sacred Heart. It was accepted, be sure of that, and even if afterwards human nature rose, and you felt desolate, still that was only the involuntary suffering, and did not take away the merit of your act of sacrifice. So renew your offering, and sacrifice all to God.

“What you describe about your spiritual duties is only a state of desolation, which will make them far more meritorious to you and more pleasing to God, if you quietly and trustfully persevere in them for His sake.

“Perhaps there is imperfection in the will, which causes

that desolation, and you say you do not know how to mend it. You must continue to pray quietly but earnestly for the grace of detachment and love of God alone, and His grace will do the rest.

“We must make up our minds, all of us, to suffer quietly for God, as the *Following of Christ* so beautifully says: ‘So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, that through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God.’ Read that wonderful chapter 12, Book II., and chapter 6, Book III.

“The question, of course, naturally rises often, when you see the real sacrifice entailed and demanded by the Religious Life, ‘Can I do it?’

“I answer for you, and you must always answer resolutely, ‘Yes; I can certainly, by God’s grace. Without Him I can do nothing, but I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.’ Do not fear: God, who in His own way and at His own time began His good work in you, will Himself perfect it.

“It would not be robbery, after your profession, to *feel* what you feel now. Nature cannot be overcome at once. Strive and desire, though both *calmly* and *quietly*, and all will go well. You must not be in a hurry. Neither is it well to look on, for you cannot see ahead, and you cannot estimate the grace God will give you.

“I perfectly understand you, but you must not be afraid. Trust in God, in His strong right hand, and He will without the slightest doubt help and guide you. ‘Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.’

“You must strongly and resolutely resist the temptation to brood within yourself, for it would do you very great harm, and could not in any way benefit you. Use all the help God gives you, and be resigned if He takes it away.”

The letter breaks off suddenly, and is concluded some time later:—

“ST CHARLES’ CHURCH, JARRATT STREET, HULL,  
“Dec. 3, *St Francis Xavier’s day.*”

“See what a time I have kept this letter: it was very idle of me to do so, but very like me.

“I have finished my mission at Barton-on-Humber, and since then I have been preaching to the men of the Confraternity of the Holy Family here. There are two small chapters of secular tertiaries here: one for men, one for women, and they meet to-night for the absolution from faults against their rule, and I shall try to give them a few

words of encouragement. Two of the priests are tertiaries, one a good German, who speaks English very well. He was twice in prison for the Faith, and then banished out of the country. What an honour that would be! greater than any worldly distinction.

"Next Sunday I am to begin in South Shields a week's special sermons for the men of the Holy Family, and to help to prepare the children for the Sacraments. You must help me by your prayers.

"It is the greatest consolation to know that any soul has been helped by what God has given me the grace to do. . . .

"The past must not make you miserable, but sorry. Be as contrite as you can, but not miserable; the two things are widely different from each other."

*To A. B.*

"NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,  
"May 28, 1879.

"DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Do not for a moment think I am angry; if I were, I should at once write to tell you so, and the reason why.

"I like your writing to me for I am always glad to hear how you are getting on; and I think I have always answered when there was anything on which you required advice. But sometimes a priest is very busy. I have preached something like 120 sermons and instructions in the last three months, and have been engaged very much in the confessional and in other ways, so that it has been very difficult to write letters. It is not easy now to write, for I have pinched two of my fingers in the door of a train.

"I hope you will keep up carefully to your duties for God's sake, for it is the will of God, and what did any of us come into this world for, if not to do the will of God? The fact of being downhearted ought not to keep you from your duties, for where can you expect to get help and consolation except from our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "Come to Me all you that labour and are heavy burdened."

*To the Same.*

"SEAHAM HARBOUR,  
"June 16, 1879.

"You must remember that we should not go to the Holy Sacraments to please ourselves, but to do God's will and to

please Him, and if you remember that, you will go even if you do not feel inclined to do so.

"More grace is often got when people go to please God, when they do not feel a wish to go themselves.

"Each fervent Communion we make, with faith and love, makes our eternal salvation the more likely. 'If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.'

"I wish you every blessing, and remain, etc.

"P.S.—My fingers are well, except that the nails are black and will come off. But they do not hurt now. Thank you very much for remembering me in your prayers. I will not forget you."

*To the Same.*

"NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,

"Sept. 19, 1879.

"I am very glad to hear that you are trying to be less careless in your religious duties. We owe all to God, let us love Him, and love Him always more and more, for He and His love alone can help us when everything else fails us at death.

"The words you ask me about are quoted in the *Imitation* from St John's Gospel: 'If any man hear my words and keep them not, I do not judge him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.' The meaning is that if we know the truth, the doctrine of Christ, and act against this knowledge, we cannot be excused at the last day by ignorance, but our very knowledge of the truth will judge and condemn us. If we know the voice of God, and conscience urges us to do certain things, and to lead a good and always better life, to pray, etc., and we slight this, neglect it, harden our hearts, turn a deaf ear to God—then at the judgment the very inspirations and good desires we have had from God will condemn us for not following them."

During the time of his residence at Stone, Father Wilberforce had shown extreme kindness to a young girl in the town, who was slowly dying of consumption. Day after day he visited her, cheering, praying with and strengthening her, through the weary months of sickness, with unflinching patience. His visits were the chief support, not only of the invalid, but also of her old parents and the devoted sister who nursed her. The latter still loves to tell how the kind Father would often appear unexpectedly in the little home and bring out

from under his scapular a plate containing some little dainty—his own portion of what had been served on the presbytery dinner table—which he had carried off to tempt poor Teresa's failing appetite.

About a year after his departure from Stone the sick girl died, and Father Bertrand wrote to console her sister in her grief.

*To B. H.*

"OLTON, SOLIHULL,  
"Oct. 23, 1879.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Your letter telling me of the death of poor Teresa came to me here, and of course, knowing the state she had been in so long, it was not a surprise to me.

"Poor dear child! She had a long, tedious, and trying illness, that was a heavy cross laid on her by our Blessed Lord, not in anger but in love.

"He intended it to purify her soul and make her more fit to enter the next world, to which He has at last called her.

"You may be quite sure she is now glad and thankful that God was pleased to allow her to suffer so much, for she sees now what a blessing it is to suffer with Christ, and how it is not possible to reign with Him, unless we have first suffered with Him and for Him.

"I am so very much delighted to hear that she was able to have all the Last Sacraments of Holy Church. Her illness made me fear that her end would be very sudden, and that she would not be able to have the Last Sacraments. Thank God it was not so! This I am sure is a great consolation to you and to her poor father and mother.

"The only real consolation when those die whom we love very much, is in the hope that they died in God's grace, and with a true hope of eternal rest.

"You must pray for Teresa, and I will also. Of course I have done so. When I can, I shall say Mass for her soul. We must not forget her. It is very unkind and uncharitable to think that people go straight to heaven, and because we love them to leave them without help in Purgatory. But it is happy to think of them there, because, though they suffer, they love God purely, they cannot sin, they are certain of heaven.

"You have also great consolation in remembering that you did all you could for your poor dear sister in her illness. What would she have done without Bessie? God will reward you for all you did for her, and for all you do for your

parents. Keep up your courage and work on, and God will help you.

“Give my kindest remembrance and my deep sympathy to your dear old father and also to your mother.

“Ever, dear Child in Christ,

“Yours sincerely,

“Father BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.

“How consoling to think that poor Teresa was called away on St Teresa’s day, on the feast of her own patron, who no doubt was there to help her.”

*To his Sister on the Anniversary of her Profession.*

“TAUNTON, April 15, 1880.

“MY VERY DEAR SISTER BRIDE,

“I must wish you with my whole heart, every Grace and Blessing on the anniversary of that most happy day of your consecration to our beloved Lord and Master, as His own Bride—the Bride of the Lamb. What a sublime and unspeakable dignity and rank that will be in the Invisible Kingdom: the consecrated and faithful Bride of the Everlasting Lord, the Son of the Eternal Father Himself. He has chosen you, not you Him—St John xv. 16.

“How intimately can every Religious take to his or her own soul those splendid words of Isaias, chapter xliiii.: ‘And now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob (O Religious Soul), and formed thee, O Israel—O Bride: FEAR NOT, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name: *thou art Mine.*’

“‘Fear not’ is what our Lord Himself said again, after His resurrection. ‘Fear not, it is I.’ And He says the same to you and to me, and to us all. Fear not, though you see many imperfections and failings; yea, you might rather fear if you saw them not. Fear not, if you even fall into faults, ‘for I have redeemed thee.’ You have in Me (and we Christians can add, ‘in Thy Blood’) the redemption of your sins, the inexhaustible everflowing fountain of the Saviour, to wash away all your faults. Then those sweet lovely words: ‘I have called thee by thy name.’ It is sometimes difficult to realise that GOD, the Immense and Infinite, who rules all, before whom all the nations of the earth are but as a drop out of a bucket, that He can care individually for *us*; for you, as you know yourself to be, for me, as I, alas! know

myself to be. So He says: 'I have called thee by thy name,' a proof that He knows and cares for us, as distinct people standing out before Him. Not only for the Race, of which we are minute units, as one grain of dust is of the mighty earth, but as particular individual people, and He has a personal knowledge and love of us.

"'Thou art *Mine*.' So we are safe under His Wing, unless by our own deliberate and wilful and conscious rejection. And, as long as we strive to be faithful Religious during life, when we are asked as we die: 'Who are you?' we can say; 'I am Thine, Thy Bride, Lord.' And instead of hearing: 'Amen, I know you not,' we shall hear: 'Fear not; for I have redeemed thee and called thee by thy name; thou art *Mine*.'

"Dearest Bride of Jesus Christ, to you I say: Persevere, and pray for me."

Another letter to the same sister, also dated from Taunton, is in a different style. In the intervals between his retreat-instructions to the nuns, Father Wilberforce paid a visit to the Courts of Justice in the town, and writes:—

"I thoroughly enjoy the Courts, and if I were not something better, I should have so much liked to be a barrister. One woman witness was great fun; the barrister for the defence teased her and made her so cross. When he had done with her the name of the next witness, 'John Cutler,' was called out, and *she* answered, 'Yes, Sir, he did!' (*Great laughter*.) The Judge, 'Now, what do you think that gentleman said?' 'I don't know, Sir.' 'Oh,' said Hawkins, 'I suppose that was why you answered him?' 'Yes, Sir.' (*Roars of laughter*.)

"There was a man also who prosecuted another for stealing his watch chain, and who was made to confess that he had got dreadfully drunk on the day of the Election, and had gone to a shed and spent the night sitting in a wheel-barrow! He got well lectured by the judge, and did not get his expenses paid.

"Did I ever tell you about the old man at Shepton Mallet, here in 'Zummerzetshire,' who was utterly run away with by something or someone? It is a true story. He was an old man about eighty, quite paralysed, so that he could not stand at all by himself. A fine young lady of seventy-four, his sister, lived with him. One splendid summer afternoon, when all the people were haymaking, the sister got two of the neighbours to help her to carry the old man downstairs,

and they put him in an armchair near the open door, to enjoy the sun. The neighbours left, and the sister went upstairs to make the bed; about ten minutes after she came down again, and found the chair undisturbed, a greatcoat that had been thrown over the old man lying on the chair, but he was gone! Gone, and utterly gone, never to be heard of again in any way whatever. None of the haymakers had seen him, no one particular had been by, no struggle had taken place, no noise had been heard. Strict inquiries were made on oath, but from that day nothing whatever, good, bad, or indifferent, was ever heard of the poor man. The impression was that the evil one had carried him utterly away! He was inclined, I believe, to passions, when language that the Promoter of the Faith in a process would have objected to, sometimes issued from his mouth, and people talked of things in past years and compacts with the evil one, etc., but then people will talk at Shepton as elsewhere, and are apt to be very wise after the thing has happened and are then remarkably accurate prophets! Anyway, gone he was, that was certain, and to this day no vestige, even so large as a grain of sand, was ever found of him."

*To a Religious.*

"SEAHAM HARBOUR,  
"Aug. 25, 1880.

"So Self is still alive! It is not easy to kill the old fellow, and I feel him kicking very often. But, my dear sister, we must console ourselves by remembering that when he kicks, it is a sign he is opposed. He would not feel inclined to kick, if he were not; all would go smoothly down the stream. So have courage, and the rough places will become smooth, and the crooked ways straight, and with your eyes you will one day see the Salvation of the Lord whom you now love without being able to see. Pray for me."

To A. B., who had asked if, as a Catholic, she might listen to the preaching of the Salvation Army:—

"SEAHAM HARBOUR,  
"Sept. 18, 1880.

"DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"I hope you will be living near a church soon. As to the Salvation Army, I would advise you to leave them alone, and not be seen listening to them. I daresay it would

not do you harm, but it might be a bad example to others, and we cannot tell whether listening to heresy might do us harm ourselves. To pass on and leave them alone can do no harm, therefore it is better.

"It is a great and wonderful blessing to be in God's Holy Church, and to be taught by the Church, and not left to ourselves, or we should be as silly as they, poor things, and talk as much nonsense. We must thank God for the gift of Faith, and pray that we may live and die in God's one Holy Church.

"There has been a fearful explosion in the coal-pit here; 180 men and boys killed, poor fellows, and about 16 of them Catholics. Pray for them and their poor sorrowing widows and orphans, and friends."

*To his Sister.*

"DURHAM, *April 21, 1881.*

"Death has been busy in public as well as private life. Poor old 'Dizzy' is gone, and Sir Hungerford Pollen and Frank Charlton here in the north; and your sister, whose body I suppose you have already committed to the earth, and whose soul I hope is in heaven.

"Years go by. Our life must be like the Gospel of today: St Mary Magdalen at the Sepulchre, seeking our Lord with the ardent desires of her soul, not distracted from that, even by the beauty of angels, and having Him, near her, though hidden, as He is near us under the guise of trials and under the veil of the Blessed Sacrament unseen. Then, if we go on seeking Him alone with love and desire, at our death He will call us by our name, and we shall throw ourselves at His feet, saying, 'Master! My Master, my Lord, my King, my God!'"

*To a Religious.*

"CATTESHALL MANOR,  
"GODALMING, *July 31, 1881.*

"Keep up your spirits. Remember there is no lesson harder, and yet none more important in the spiritual life, than to disregard utterly all *feelings*, and not to be guided by them at all. Feel what you like, but love God.

"You may feel, as David says, 'like a leathern bottle in the frost,' *sicut uter in pruina*; as cold, hard, stiff, dry, uninteresting,

etc., etc., etc., but still all you do will please God, if the WILL is right.

“‘I feel like a leathern bottle in the frost, but I have not forgotten Thy Law.’—Ps. cxviii.

“Courage! Those things we hate are easier done for God.”

On the 14th of October 1881 Mother Mary Imelda Poole, who had succeeded Mother Margaret in the government of the convent at Stone, died at St Marychurch, Torquay, after a very short illness. The funeral took place at Stone on the 19th, and Father Wilberforce, whom Mother Imelda had much loved and esteemed, was asked to preach the funeral discourse. He was at the time giving a mission at St Chad's, Birmingham, but went over to Stone for the day.

Knowing Mother Imelda's great devotion to the holy angels, Father Bertrand chose for his text the words of St Raphael on taking leave of Tobias and his son, and on them preached one of his most beautiful sermons.

The following letter of sympathy was written the next day to a Religious of the Congregation in one of their more distant houses :—

“ST CHAD'S, BIRMINGHAM,  
“Oct 20, 1881.

“I have been thinking of you all, and of you in particular, during this time of sad trial. It has indeed been a most severe and grievous blow. God has taken away from you the dear and loving mother, whom you all loved so tenderly and so justly. To have her removed so very suddenly is indeed a most stunning blow. I read to them at Stone yesterday, when I had the great and unexpected privilege of speaking about that dear soul in the Church, the words of the Archangel, St Raphael, which seemed most appropriate from her lips : ‘Peace be to you : fear not. For when I was with you I was there by the will of God : bless ye Him, and sing praises to Him. It is time that I return to Him who sent me’—Tobias xii.

“The words of the angel, to whom she had such devotion, are what she would say to you all. It is as if an angel had been suddenly withdrawn.

“It was God's will to give you that beautiful soul for many years, and though it is only natural to ‘lie prostrate for three hours,’ when the blow comes, you must after that, ‘rise up and bless the Lord,’ for all His wonderful works.

"I found dear Mother Prioress<sup>1</sup> looking a good deal worn of course, and pale, but very calm and resigned. She bears it very nobly, but she feels the blow intensely. Its greatest weight falls upon her, and I fear she will feel it more than ever in a short time. But God has many ways of comforting holy souls.

"The ceremony yesterday was extremely solemn and touching, and I was wishing you could all have been there. You at Bow have been the worst off, for the sisters at St Marychurch had a Requiem when the dear body was departing to Stone, and the Stoke sisters came over.

"Father Provincial was able to come, I am glad to say, and Fathers Dominic and Albert. The last is here, and we went together, for four are giving the mission, so we could be spared.

"You are all very desolate, I am sure, and little thought, the last time the dear mother paid you a visit, that it would be the last. We never know, in this world of change and uncertainty.

"It was very pleasant to see Stone once more, though the occasion was so sad. You must write and tell me how you all are.

"Before long we shall all have gone, as your dear mother has, but I only hope in the same degree of holiness. She was a most holy soul, pure, innocent, full of strong faith and tenderness.

"How are your babes? Good, I should think, poor little chicks, though I daresay troublesome sometimes, as it is the nature of small ones to be.

"I wish you every blessing, and to all the community, and remain,

"Affectionately yours in J.M.D.,

"Father BERT: WILBERFORCE, O.P."

It appears to have been Father Wilberforce's custom to note down in his *Ordo* every mission and retreat that he gave, or took part in. Some of these lists have been preserved, and one may be quoted, which will give the reader some idea of a Friar-Preacher's work.

<sup>1</sup> Mother Francis Raphael Drane, who succeeded Mother Imelda as Prioress Provincial of the Congregation, and whose *Memoir* Father Wilberforce brought out in 1895.

The entry for 1884 is as follows :—

*Jan. 6 to 20.*—Mission at Sheffield.

*Jan. 27 to Feb. 10.*—Mission at Hull.

*Feb. 24 to March 16.*—Mission at Manchester.

*March 23 to April 6.*—Mission at Brighton.

*April 21 to April 23.*—Boys' Retreat, Lord A. Douglas.

*April 23 to May 3.*—Retreat, Poor Clares, Baddesley.

*May 12 to May 16.*—Retreat, Loughborough.

*May 22 to May 31.*—Retreat, Carisbrooke.

*June 22 to July 6.*—Mission at Barton-on-Irwell.

*July 9 to July 13.*—Retreat at Stone.

*July 16 to July 22.*—Retreat, Good Shepherd, Manchester.

*July 25 to Aug. 3.*—Retreat, Nuns, St Marychurch.

*Aug. 5 to Aug. 9.*—Retreat, Orphans, St Marychurch.

*Aug. 19 to Aug. 28.*—Retreat, Sisters of Mercy, Brighton.

*Sep. 15 to Sep. 24.*—Retreat, Fathers, Woodchester.

*Oct. 4 to Oct. 13.*—Retreat, { Nuns, Stroud.

*Oct. 8 to Oct. 12.*—Retreat, { Children, Stroud.

[These two retreats must have been carried on together.]

*Oct. 19 to Nov. 2.*—Mission, Walsall.

*Nov. 19 to Nov. 23.*—Mission, St Chad's, Birmingham.

*First Sunday of Advent to the Fourth.*—Three weeks' Mission at Burnley.

It is wonderful how in the midst of such work Father Wilberforce managed to write any letters at all, and still more so that he should have kept up the immense correspondence of which we are now reaping the benefit. But we know that he was not only a writer of letters, but of books also; even as early as 1869, he published his *Sketch of the Lives of the Dominican Missionaries in Japan*, and the *Life of Saint Lewis Bertrand* appeared in 1881, whilst we find from his journal that he began his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* in 1883, though this was not brought out till many years later.

But in spite of all this mission work, he seems rarely to have found himself too busy to answer those who applied to him for advice or who needed direction, or even to interest himself in matters of deeper spirituality, as we see by the letters given below.

*To A. B. on the necessity of Prayer.*

“ 1882 [month uncertain].

“ We must remember that we pray, not to please ourselves but God, and to do His holy will. If we keep this great principle in our minds and guide ourselves by it, we shall pray whether we feel inclined or not. If people pray to please themselves, then they leave off directly it ceases to

give them the pleasure they seek, but if we pray in order to please God and to do His will, we shall go on persevering in prayer in spite of anything we may feel.

“Without prayer salvation is impossible. Without prayer it is certain you or anyone else will fall into sin. This is the reason the devil does all he can to make people give up prayer, for he knows well that if they do, he can make them do his will or their own, instead of the holy will of God, which is their only good.

“I will pray for you certainly, but, as I have told you before, there is no use if persons will not pray themselves as well. I will pray that you may have the grace to pray.

“Read a good book too.

“God bless you.

“P.S.—Bray is indeed a lovely place. I remember it well, though I have not seen it since I was a boy, but we lived for some time at Kingstown.”

*On Contemplation—To the Reverend R. Buckler, O.P.*

“CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD,  
“HAMMERSMITH, July 5, 1882.

“CARISSIME PATER,

“I am so glad you occupied my cell.

“When finished, I shall read the treatise *De Charitate* with great pleasure and I hope profit. I should make a distinction as to contemplation. *Contemplatio est duplex, ordinaria et extraordinaria*. Neither can be merited *de condigno*, but *de congruo contemplatio ordinaria mereri potest*. That is, as you so well put it, you will not merit it, but you will find it by God’s goodness, if you remove the obstacles. But the same is not true of *contemplatio extraordinaria*. That you cannot say *will* come, however much the soul is disposed. It may, or may not. Both contemplations, ordinary and extraordinary, are both *cherubica*, that is, intellectual, or *seraphica*, that is, affective. The difference is that the ordinary does not exceed the laws of God’s providence in the supernatural order, but the extraordinary does exceed them.

“Ordinary contemplation is intrinsically supernatural and infused.

“Both are passive, though the *will* acts. It is the memory and intellect that are quiet and passive.

““We must not, however, fancy that in this silence the powers of the soul are so suspended as to be entirely inactive.”

—*Life of Father Balthasar Alvarez*, vol. i., p. 156. That life explains contemplation very well, as you doubtless know.

“Speaking of contemplation, it says, page 167, vol. i.: ‘This vocation and this aptitude are not given to all who lead a spiritual life, and those who are deprived of it should not aim so high, it would be in them great rashness and a culpable pride.’

“Have you read Father Balthasar’s life? It is deeply interesting, being an entirely *spiritual* life, and as it is written by Luis da Ponte it is of high authority. It is quite a spiritual treatise.

“Pray for me, my dear Father, for I am indeed in sad need of prayers.

“Ever your affectionate Brother,

“BERTRAND.”

*On the same Subject.*

“TREFOREST,

“PONT-Y-PRIDD, July 15, 1882.

“MY DEAR F. REGINALD,

“A nun writes to me saying: ‘When I say the Divine Office, I think all the time He is by me, and I keep making acts of love without paying any particular attention to the words, only considering my Lord near me. Is that a good way? As to my method of prayer, when I go into the chapel, I am so conscious of our Lord’s presence, I tell Him hundreds of times I love Him, and I look at Him, knowing and feeling He is close by me, and that thought makes me so happy, I want nothing more. Everything seems to merge in my mind into the Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament.’

“Would you approve of this?

“It seems to me that there are two species of contemplation; one ordinary, for which we can look, the other extraordinary, which might be given, but, on the other hand, may not be, even to well disposed souls.

<i>Ordinaria</i>	{	1. Cherubic or intellectual.	{	Certain prayer of silence or quiet.
		2. Seraphic or affective.		Certain abstraction from earthly things. Union.
<i>Extraordinaria</i>	{	1. Cherubic.	{	Prayer of quiet or silence, with locutions, etc.
		2. Seraphic.		Rapt, extasies, visions, transformation. Mystic Nuptials. Union.

"It does not so much seem to me that the rapt, etc., are an accident of contemplation but of *extraordinary* contemplation. Nor should I be inclined to call extraordinary contemplation an accident of contemplation, but a distinct species of it.

"I certainly think we ought to be always disposing ourselves for essential contemplation. I like the sentence from Baker you quote about cleansing the fountain.

"Do you not think that the soul quoted at the beginning of this letter is in *contemplatione ordinaria*, and should try to grow in it, but may probably never be meant to have any *contemplatio extraordinaria*?

"Some fear that to-morrow we shall have a riot in this valley, between Welsh and Irish, like the ones in Tredegar, but I do not believe it myself. So if you hear my head has been broken, pray for me.

"I remain,

"Your very affectionate Brother in Christ,

"BERTRAND."

*To A. B.*

"HAMMERSMITH, *July*, 1882.

"I am giving a retreat here, as I intended to have told you before. It ends on Wednesday or Thursday, so I could see you in the church at Haverstock Hill on Thursday or Friday evening after the evening service.

"When you feel your mind troubled and tempted, it will always be well to go to confession, because a good, earnest confession will obtain a special grace from God to cast away temptation. You need never be afraid to explain any kind of temptation, whether against faith, or anything else, because often the very fact of mentioning these troubles drives them away.

"Never give way to the fear of going to confession. You need not fear about the other Fathers knowing anything, for I never mention your name to any of them. Why should I? Whoever told you that they hear about everything, talked nonsense. Do they think we talk over together things said to us by people about their own souls? Nothing could be more untrue."

*To the Same.*

“LEICESTER, *Sept. 6, 1882.*

“I also am grieved, and was so at the time, that you did not go to confession. I did my best to give you the opportunity. Of course you are unhappy, how could you be otherwise? You must take care, my dear child, and not trifle with your soul and Almighty God, because Eternal Salvation is too serious and important a matter to be trifled with.

“Put away at once all foolish papers and novels; they can do you no good whatever, and only fill your mind with silly, worldly, and vain thoughts and desires, if not even worse. They are a snare of the devil. Put them away. Our Lord revealed to St Teresa that she would have lost her soul for all eternity, if she had gone on reading idle tales and romances she was once fond of and read.

“Then turn to God and pray. Do not say: ‘I cannot pray,’ for that is never true. You can always cry out to God for mercy, and ask Him to help you, if you like. Everyone can. It only wants the *will*. Say a hundred times over from your heart: ‘Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!’ Then go at once to confession to receive God’s pardon for any sin you have fallen into. If you cannot go to — —, go to another church, but go at once, and do not put it off. Remember it is God’s will, and that is enough. Surely if you have sinned against God, it is a very small thing to confess it to one priest. Say out at once what is on your mind, say that you did not accuse yourself of it at your last confession, and the difficulty is over. If you repent really, this is not difficult to do. Ask God to give you grace to do it.

“Remember the wonderful grace and favour God did you when He brought you into His Holy Church, and be grateful. Show that you are grateful by your obedience, and by trying really to serve God. ‘What does it profit a man to gain all the world, and to suffer the loss of his own soul?’

“Be determined to save yours.

“I hope you will be able to tell me you have burnt the silly papers, and have made a good confession, and are saying your prayers.”

*To the Same.*

“LEICESTER, *Sept. 15, 1882.*

“DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“I am indeed sorry to hear that you have been resisting the grace of God. He has given you much

grace, and you must really try to correspond with it, or He may take it away. 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He will take away'—St John xv. Not to go to confession when you feel that it is God's will you should, is to resist His grace, and to refuse to bear fruit. Do so no longer, my dear child, but ask God's help, and go at once to receive His pardon."

*To his Sister.*

"October 13, 1882.

"I will send this to-day, as I start for Ripon to hear confessions there, and preach on Sunday. . . .

"It is not peculiar to you to find it easier to make mental prayer alone. I find the same, and I daresay others do also. Partly, perhaps, because the time is different, partly from a certain novelty, and also in your case, before our Lord exposed, a grace on that account.

"The retreat was a great pleasure to me, and has united us still more, heart to heart, in our beloved Lord, and we must try and help each other on as far as we can, and be determined to meet in God for all eternity. What else is worth a moment's thought?

"It is a good thing to know exactly what you mean by 'the love of God.' I wonder what definition you would give of it. People often get discouraged by not knowing exactly what they mean, and they fancy they do not love Him, when really they do. I like Father Baker's definition. Love in general he defines to be 'an internal complacence and inclination to an object from the goodness or beauty that is believed to be in it.' The love of God he says is 'seated in the superior soul,' and is 'a quiet, but most resolute determination of the superior will to seek God, and a perfect union with Him.'—*Sancta Sophia*, treatise ii., sect. ii., cap. iii., no. 1. It would be well to meditate and digest well every word of this definition, so as to know it thoroughly, and not to be misled.

"Your loving Brother,

"F. B. W.

"P.S.—A fair is going on in the town, with the most vulgar pictures outside the booths. A lion-faced lady, and a man eighteen years old, weighing 40 stone, etc. Would Mother Abbess like the lion-faced as a novice!"

*To the Same.*

“BISHOP'S HOUSE, SALFORD,  
“Sept. 7, 1883.

“. . . Sister F. A.<sup>1</sup> will now know clearly how grand and blessed a thing Religious Life is; so grand in its beginning and fresh graces, so far more exalted in its termination in God, though the soul often does not realise its real nature, under the clouds of daily trials and uphill progress.

“Persevere, my dearest, in that kind of prayer from St Alphonsus. Acts and Petitions are the pleasing things, and what we should attend to chiefly in mental prayer. If you do not thoroughly mean all that St Alphonsus wants you to say, it teaches you what to aim at, and what to desire and pray for. You mean them, or desire to mean them, at least imperfectly.

“I would recommend you to read during the retreat *The True Spouse*, by St Alphonsus. Have you ever read it? If you have the French, it is nicer, as unhappily the English translation is very poor, and puts ‘shall’ for every ‘will’ right through. ‘If you don’t pray you shall be damned.’ But the work itself is simply admirable. The more one reads it, the more is seen in it.

“Pray for me, please,

“1st, That my sins may be forgiven.

“2nd, That I may conquer one particular fault.

“3rd, That I may love God.

“4th, That I may die a good death.”

*To a Novice about to be received to Simple Profession  
in the Order of Preachers.*

“HOLY CROSS, LEICESTER,  
“November 6, 1883 (probably).

“MY DEAREST BROTHER IN CHRIST,

“It would sound exaggerated if I tried to tell you how much I was pleased to get your letter telling me you had been received to Profession. *Quod felix faustumque sit!* Religious Profession is indeed a happy, though so solemn a thing.

“I also had often thought of writing, but you can readily understand that it is rather a delicate thing to write to a simple novice, at least so I feel. During that time you ought

<sup>1</sup> One of the community, lately dead.

to be influenced by one, the Novice Master, and one at a distance, especially one who has had the great pleasure of standing in the relation that I did to you, had better keep silence. I am glad your Profession will be on our Lady's great day, and I hope to say Mass for you then.

"Above all I rejoice to hear you say that there is no doubt in your mind that God wills you to be in the Order of St Dominic. I never for a moment thought the Cistercians the one for you, and I felt sure when you mentioned it that if you went there you would not remain. But as you noticed, I never in any way *advised* you to enter the ranks of our holy Order. My doubt was about one of the modern Orders, for I knew that you were at first only acquainted with ours. But now having tried, and feeling called to it by the will of God, I say with all my heart, *prosperè procede et regna*. The *regna* must in this world be over self by mortification and prayer and faith, and if you persevere *usque ad finem*, in eternity by glory and peace with God.

"Your experience was mine and I daresay that of most. The trials I anticipated and dreaded vanished like phantoms, those I never dreamt of came. This I have often said and can honestly say. We know not beforehand what we are about, often, and if we only trust in God He leads us, but often as we least expect—always with love. You will never be a Carthusian, but certainly peace, except in humility and resignation and love of God with temptations, you would never get. Peace is for Heaven; we belong to the Church militant.

"I heard a report about the Matins. Whichever way it is settled in Rome will be the will of God. I always enjoyed the midnight very much.

"I remember well the vivid impression the *Life of Bd. Henry Suso* made on me in my novitiate. It is a wonderful book: its danger is the beauty of the poetical side of the life. You must modify that by books that hold up the daily humdrum, though spiritual life, as that is the raw material of sanctity. After all, I always go back with the utmost profit to the infamous translation of practical Rodriguez. I wish I could read the original instead of a bad translation of a translation.

"My fraternal love to all at Woodchester. Pray God that we may both persevere *usque ad finem*: that is the one thing necessary.

"Yours lovingly in our Lord,

"Father BERT. WILBERFORCE, O.P."

## CHAPTER V

1883—1886

WE propose to devote the greater part of this chapter to giving some extracts from Father Wilberforce's notes relating to his own spiritual life. Though but fragmentary, they give us glimpses into his interior history which are worth much, revealing as they do the earnestness of soul and humble perseverance with which he strove day by day to overcome himself, and to attain to union with God. It is encouraging, too, to see that whilst he taught others to aim at that conformity to the will of God, which constitutes true perfection, he never ceased to make it the standard of his own conduct and the object of all his efforts.

The first two extracts carry us a little further back than the date we have now reached. In May 1868 he wrote :—

“ Christian and Religious Perfection must manifestly be in its essence, something quite independent of all exterior things, otherwise everyone could not become a perfect Religious. But everyone is called to perfection in his own state. Perfection, therefore, in itself is completely *interior*, and independent of exterior things. If it were otherwise, then health or certain employments, or certain places, would be necessary for perfection. Now, God alone is independent of all exterior things. God alone, therefore, is our Perfection.”

During a retreat Father Wilberforce made at Woodchester in 1870, there occur the following notes :—

“ It is very important to combat sudden outbursts of fretfulness, irritation, and even anger.

“ The reason these things afflict the soul is the utter want of mortification of spirit and of desire to suffer for and with Christ Jesus our Lord. I am ready and willing to rejoice with Him, but not to suffer with Him. And yet to suffer

with Him is the sign of love, and to be willing to rejoice, but not to endure, is the evident proof of *self-love*.

“To combat and overcome these things :—

“1. We should diligently consider them beforehand, and anticipate them, so as to forearm ourselves. Many occasions can be foreseen with a little care, *e.g.*, I know I am going to see and deal with certain people.

“2. At the moment fly to God. Force the mind to remember His infinite love and goodness, and that in love to my soul, He has provided this opportunity of patience, sweetness, self-denial. Determine not to throw down the Cross that Jesus Christ wills should be laid upon my shoulders.

“3. Cut off the causes of the trouble. For instance, indifference to duties and works, as long as one is working for God, is the great element of peace. If I want to read and God calls me to the confessional, to a troublesome person, or to the sick, what matter so long as I am doing God’s will? If I want to work, and have instead to suffer illness, what matter, as long as it is the holy will of God?”

A small manuscript book which Father Wilberforce always carried about with him, contains the following reflections and rules :—

“Good desires are very necessary, nay, essential ; nothing can be done without them. ‘God ordinarily confers His signal favours only on those who thirst after His love’ (St Teresa). ‘No one has ever yet become a saint except by strong and fervent aspirations after holiness,’ says St Alphonsus. But desires are vain and empty if not coupled with practical exertion. Desires that never result in anything cannot be in the will ; they are mere inclinations of mind, admiring what is good, but are not true and resolute desires. Of these false desires the Holy Ghost says : ‘Desires kill the slothful’ (Prov. xxi. 25). He who truly desires to be holy, desires the means of advancement. ‘According as our resolution is, will the progress of our advancement be’ (*Imit.*, Bk. I., 19).

“1. Mental prayer and especially meditation on the claims God has to our love, and on the love He bears us, particularly in the redemption.

“2. Frequently to renew our desire, resolution, and intention of advancing in Divine Love.

“3. Constantly and carefully to search out the faults and defects of the soul.

“4. Frequently to ask oneself with St Bernard : ‘Why

did I come here? Why did I leave the world? Was it to lose my soul by sloth and tepidity, or to be a saint?’

“5. To call to mind the fervour and earnestness with which we began, and to renew it constantly.

“6. Not to be disheartened when we see how little progress we have yet made, but to begin now. ‘Continual efforts after perfection are considered perfection’ (St Bernard).

“7. Constantly to look at the example of the most fervent, and to try to imitate them, and, in particular, to try to imitate the saints.

“‘How do saints become saints?  
By self-denial and self-conquest.’

“‘If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’

“*Rules—*

- “1. In general strive to learn to refuse to nature everything not necessary.
- “2. Strive to give to self whatever he would refuse without reason, through whim or mere inclination.
- “3. Self asks some minutes of rest after being called.—Refuse even a second.
- “4. Self wants to consult ease or comfort in sitting or lying.—Do not listen.
- “5. Self wants to indulge comfort of posture in prayer.—Refuse.
- “6. Self suggests that prayer might be shortened.—If possible, prolong it.
- “7. There is one bit on your plate self most fancies.—Offer it to Jesus.
- “8. Hunger makes your mouth water.—Wait a little. Eat slowly.
- “9. Self feels ‘down’ and ‘low.’—Sing.
- “10. Self is grumpy and cross.—Laugh.
- “11. Self longs to speak, to say a sharp thing.—Be silent.
- “12. Self tempts you to be melancholy.—For love of Jesus be sweet and joyful.
- “13. Self wants revenge.—Do good.
- “14. Self is offended with someone.—Look kindly at him.
- “15. Self wants to say an unkind thing of someone.—Say a kind one, or be silent.
- “16. Self wishes to avoid meeting someone.—Take him to the meeting.

- " 17. Self desires to speak bitterly.—Make him speak kindly.
- " 18. Self wants to take a slight revenge, to pay someone out.—Be obliging and polite.
- " 19. It costs self-love something to do an obliging thing, or it goes against sloth.—Double reason for doing it.
- " 20. Everything seems to make you impatient.—Be equal in your humour.
- " 21. Self seems all alive, and in great eagerness to speak or act in haste.—Wait ; let the storm pass.
- " 22. Self wants to walk quickly, to recite quickly, to do this work or this thing quickly.—Go more slowly.
- " 23. Something is said around you that excites curiosity.—Do not listen ; offer it to our Lord.
- " 24. There is some interesting object or something that every one is running to see.—Do not look ; go not one step to look.
- " 25. You much want to pick this flower.—Leave it.

"The best devotion is to do our ordinary duties with the utmost perfection. In what does the perfection of an action consist? 1st. In the pure desire to please God. 2nd. In promptness, punctuality, attention, and exactness.

"The following means will help us to do our actions well:—

- " 1. The presence of God.
- " 2. To do it as if it were the only thing you had to do, and as if your salvation depended on it.
- " 3. To do it as if it were the last of your life. '*In omni opere suo, dicat sibi: si modo moriturus esses, faceres istud?*' (St Bernard).
- " 4. To think of that day only, helps weak souls.
- " 5. To remember that habit makes all things easy.

"We neglect easy duties prescribed by rule (*i.e.*, Silence), which give no pain, and yet we undertake works of penance, but very soon we omit both."

In the September of 1882 Father Wilberforce was assigned to Holy Cross Priory, Leicester, which place continued to be his home till 1885. In 1883 he began to keep a journal, which practice, however, he seems only to have kept up for a few years. Amongst the entries there are several on the subject of his mental prayer.

On the 12th of September 1883, the day after his return to Leicester from a heavy mission at Manchester, he writes:—

“One hour and a quarter of mental prayer. God gave me a light to see the absolute necessity of aiming vigorously at cleanness of heart: ‘Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.’ What more could be desired? The means are watch and pray. Felt led to make more of the Beatitudes, and to meditate on them. I have seldom prayed or preached on them.”

A few days after this he records having preached at the “opening of the organ at Newcastle. Gounod’s Mass of the Sacred Heart. In afternoon at St Joseph’s, Sunderland. Preached on Mortal Sin. ‘How great is the multitude of my sins, and how great Thy Mercy to forgive,’ was the subject of my mental prayer. What should I feel about a friend that had treated me as I have treated our Lord? May I now be *all* for Thee.”

“*Sept. 17, thirty-five minutes’ prayer.*—On Conformity: saw clearly that to be holy, this must come down to the small actions. One thing I feared, and tried to make special acts of Conformity. Read Rodriguez.

“*Sept. 18.*—Light to see more clearly that the Perfection to which I am bound, as a Religious, to tend, is that of doing my daily and ordinary actions with the utmost care and perfection. This is so clear, so undeniable to the intellect, but how hard it is practically to remember it, and to act up to it. If the light God gives me does not affect my actions, how shall I answer for its use?

“*Sept. 19, thirty-five minutes.*—On Sacrament of Penance, especially in regard to this mission [Sunderland]. Resolution to be punctual and patient, and to take these two for examination.”

The Sunderland mission ended on the 30th of September and the journal for October merely notes one mission after another, though through them all he never seems to have omitted either his mental prayer or the close watch he was keeping over his daily actions. One day he speaks of having “said Matins in the train” as “disgraceful,” though one would have thought that under the circumstances it was at least excusable.

On the 17th of November Father Wilberforce returned to Leicester and entered into a retreat which was being given

by Father Henry Bartlett, his former novice-master. This retreat was evidently a fresh starting-point in his spiritual life, and formed one of those landmarks which we so often find standing out in the lives of the servants of God, marking distinct steps in their progress upwards.

He writes on the evening of the first day :—

“Renewal of true interior fervour the object of the retreat. Neglect of grace is the true cause for fear.

“*Nov.* 8.—The words of Bd. Angela of Foligno came strongly to my mind early in the morning, or rather the words of our Lord to her: ‘He who has been called by Me to higher ways, and is wilfully content, through sloth, with lower, will be abandoned by Me.’

“Abandon not me, O Lord, in spite of my sins! Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me! Remove not my candlestick out of its place, as I deserve. When I weigh all the graces I have received from God, and remember how little I have corresponded, I am filled with shame and fear. But there is still time to be fervent, and the desire proves that God has not abandoned me, for that desire, being good, must come from Him. Arise, my soul, shake off the bonds of tepidity, and be in truth, all for God.

“*Nov.* 9.—The meditation on the abuse of grace most useful. This is the serious matter. How true is that word, ‘I cannot answer Thee one in a thousand,’ when I think of the graces of every kind I have received, and the small return I have ever made. This should be often thought of with contrition, yet with confidence and hope.

“To-night began a general confession.

“*Tepidity.* What it is. A wilful spiritual languor and falling away.

“*Evils* :—1st. Injury to God; injustice of the return for so many and such great favours. St Ignatius appeared to a certain person, and said that if the blessed could mourn, they would do so for those who fall away from fervour.

“2nd. Injury to self; gradual falling till the abyss is reached.

“3rd. Injury to others. We influence others chiefly, *a*, by word, *b*, by example, *c*, by prayer.

“*a.* What words of fervour can the tepid Religious say to others?

“*b.* His example is disedifying and injurious.

“*c.* If his prayers for himself are tepid, what must they be for others?

“*Nov.* 10.—Finished my general confession; the second

one since I came to Religion. The first was at my clothing. I tried to make it as I should wish to have done on my deathbed.

“*Nov.* 13.—Determined to take as subject of examination, the ordering of time for God, and the doing at each time, having forecast, what I feel interiorly will please God. This cuts up curiosity by the roots, and if I am faithful, will in a short time, work a great change in my life. Surely it is worth the little trouble of the particular examination. Now, having made a new start with a general confession, by Thy help, O Lord, I will be faithful, and I trust that Thy goodness will make my work for souls truly and solidly fruitful.”

At the end of the “Notes” of this retreat there is a list of what he styles “various easy but most beneficial acts of mortification,” which he resolves to practise as a rule of life, and examine himself upon frequently. They are headed by the prayer :

“Direct my steps according to Thy word ; and let not iniquity have dominion over me.”—Ps. cxviii. 133.

“1. To relinquish any useless project, to which I may feel strongly inclined ; and sometimes to suspend my action, in the case of its being a good and useful one, so as to act not from impulse, but principle.

“2. To deprive myself of some gratification, or the satisfaction of curiosity, concerning anything whatever, *e.g.*, St Francis Borgia, while hunting.

“3. To restrain anxiety to hear news, and still more, to read news, and the common rumours, especially if against the character of others.

“4. Not to indulge in raillery in conversation, however harmless and agreeable, particularly with those I do not so well like.

“5. To withhold sometimes a facetious remark or harmless joke, which might please others or make them think me amusing, particularly if at all uncharitable or encouraging to vanity.

“6. To aim at silence after confessions at night, on missions, as far as I can.

“7. To behave kindly and politely to those I dislike, or who have spoken or acted against me ; and not to avoid them. If I can, to do them a kindness.

“8. Not to seek delicate food ; not to eat with avidity ; always trying to mortify myself in some thing. Not to complain of food, remembering the gall our Lord took for

love of me, and the aloe juice St Lewis Bertrand used to flavour his food.

"9. Never to occupy myself with vain and useless thoughts, although harmless in themselves; and as far as possible to restrain the wandering imagination.

"10. To guard my eyes carefully, never allowing them to rest upon any dangerous object. Books, shop-windows, etc., merely vain objects.

"11. To avoid complaints to those in whom I confide in order to relieve my heart of its burden."

The "ordering of his time for God" was evidently a matter of constant effort and self-examination through the whole course of Father Bertrand's life. To attain it he had to struggle incessantly with a disposition that was naturally inclined to indolence. That he did struggle there is ample testimony in his private manuscripts, where he takes himself to task for every fault of "idleness," "waste of time," or "vain curiosity to hear news," with unsparing energy. It is true that in the management of his time, he never became "systematic," but, now that we can read the record of his life, and realise the amount of work, apostolic and literary, that he accomplished, in spite of continuous suffering and constant attacks of illness, we must certainly acknowledge that very few moments of that life can have been wasted, and that his time was indeed most truly "ordered for God" and His glory.

From some entries in his journal it would seem to have been about this period that Father Bertrand first adopted the practice of always having some book of solid or useful reading on hand, to occupy his free moments, and it was very probably now also that he began the custom of making notes, expansions, and translations of what he read. Many years afterwards he told a friend that he had first taken up this practice as a matter of self-discipline, in order to give himself some definite object of work in the intervals between his missionary labours, and to cure himself of what he called "a habit of hanging about doing nothing." The translation of *Blosius' Book of Spiritual Instruction* and the *Commentary on the Ephesians* were begun in this way, and it was only by what may be called a happy accident that the former ever saw the light. But in addition to his published writings Father Wilberforce left a great number of manuscript notes for retreat conferences, sermons, thoughts on the psalms, translations, etc., which we hope his religious brethren will one day put in order and give to the world.

Another result of his constant use of the pen when reading was the development of a great power of retaining what he read and thus of storing up in his mind a wonderful variety of knowledge. Humility and simplicity prevented his parading this in any way, but sometimes it revealed itself quite unexpectedly, and his hearers would be surprised to find how all-round and "up-to-date" were the knowledge and the interests of the unassuming Dominican friar.

At the end of the diary for 1883, Father Wilberforce records that from the 14th of November to the 3rd of December, he had "a quiet time at Leicester," during which he read "to page 36 of Cornelius-à-Lapide, on St James: 200 pages of Döllinger's *Church and Churches*: in Scripture, the two Books of Macchabees, and Jeremias up to chapter xlv.; Epistles to Hebrews; St James; St Peter I. and II.; St John I., II., and III.; St Jude; and two chapters of Apocalypse.

"Also 40 pages of Vol. II. of *L'Autre Vie*, by l'Abbé Elie Méric (very interesting).

"First part of *De Jure et Justitia*, Gury; and some light reading."

To this he adds: "During this time two visits to the Free Library, which ended in nothing but lost time."

A little later, at Woodchester, we find the entry: "Learnt some of St John (1 Epistle), by heart, and began to read Vol. III. of Natalis Alexander's *Theology*, that I may keep up some every day, if only two or three pages."

"*Durham and Ushaw*. Read Hope Scott's *Memoir*, and first vol. of Molesworth's *Reign of Queen Victoria*." During some heavy missions there occur notes of his having learnt different portions of Scripture by heart, "as a rest to the mind."

The last work of 1883 was a retreat to a large confraternity of women at Leeds, followed immediately by one to the men. The diary notes that he and his *socius*, Father John Procter, heard two thousand confessions, but goes on to record that he was dissatisfied with himself, as there had been "much waste of time, and consequent depression."

The next year, 1884, opened with a mission at Sheffield, and is thus recorded:—

"Special appeal to [some Religious] for the first work of the year. Nature shrank a good deal from this. The mission was to the people round the chapel of ease, St William's in the Croft. The first two days we visited them. About 1100 confessions. The people came in very good dispositions. This was partly owing, no doubt, to the priest, a good zealous man, and very much to the prayers that were

being said. More interior strength and calmness. Better in confessional. Secured prayer on almost all days."

At the end of January, "To Lincoln, where I met Father Procter and saw the cathedral; most superb. The clerestory of the choir and the central tower grand beyond description. Went on to New Holland. On the 27th, began the mission at Hull with Father John Procter. My cousin had been at Hull about a week before, to unveil a statue of William Wilberforce in the Town Hall. A great difference between our two visits to Hull, in all circumstances!"

We have seen above how the missions of this year succeeded each other without intermission, and it is not surprising that scarcely any letters belonging to this time exist. To A. B. he writes:—

"LEICESTER, *August.*

"We will talk over the trouble you are in when I am at ——. In the meantime meditate on these words of Holy Scripture: 'There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace'—Ecclesi. iv. 24.

"'He that hideth his sins shall not prosper: but he that shall confess and forsake them shall obtain mercy'—Proverbs xxviii. 13. If you feel the weight and misery of sin, lay it down at the foot of our Lord's Cross.

"I will help you in every way I can, but all will be vain unless you *pray*.

"The Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the thoughts of minds. If thou seek Him, thou shalt find Him, but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever.'—I Paral. xxviii. 9."

*To the Same.*

"EDGBASTON [*date uncertain*].

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"I have not time for more than a line to tell you I did get your letter at ——. I understood that you had written it in temper, and were sorry for it, but you must try and restrain yourself. If we had nothing to try our patience, where would be the merit of being patient?

"The Saints were patient and even joyful under all kinds of calumny and bad treatment. So must we *try* to be. God will help us if we meditate on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ

“I hope you will not find it necessary to leave your place. God bless you.”

*To a Religious at Stone.*

“ST PATRICK'S, WALSALL,  
“October 23, 1884.

“You must forgive me for not having written before, but I must send you now, in the midst of the mission, a short note to say how glad I am to hear the good news contained in your letter. I have thanked God, and will.

“I remember well telling you that God did not call you for yourself only, but also for your family. Be faithful, and you will find how true that will be.

“On Monday I had the happiness of seeing the dear old bishop. I went to Oscott, and he was so kind as to send word for me to go to his room. He was better then: the more acute symptoms gone. But he is still in danger, I fear. He was very like himself, though in a white nightcap instead of a mitre. He said he was interrupted in writing his book on *Patience*, and now has to practise it, and to keep all sadness far away by resting on God. It is a tremendous thing to account for a Diocese for so many years, but he has done much for God. He has suffered a good deal, but was not then in much pain, but he sleeps little, and feels the weariness of life in bed.

“You have not sent me the list of subjects for the meditations of the last retreat by the Father, C.S.S.R.

“Father C—— R—— is to be professed as a Redemptorist on All Saints' Day. Pray for him, and for *this mission*.”

“LEICESTER, Nov. 5.

“Many thanks for the Notes of the retreat. Tell me why you do not think the Redemptorist style would suit me. In what does it differ?

“The Walsall mission ended last Sunday; it was a very stiff one indeed. Over 1000 confessions, and it was in a very poor part.

“I have no prospect of rest before Christmas. St Chad's, Birmingham, next Sunday, for a fortnight, and on the Sunday after that ends, one at Burnley for three weeks.

“Pray for the missions, and for the Fathers who give them.”

The mission at Burnley here referred to is mentioned in

Father Wilberforce's journal as a "very fatiguing and trying one," and was followed by a short retreat to a religious community. On his return to Leicester at Christmas he received orders from his superior to leave the latter place for Woodchester, and there in the beginning of February 1885 he made his retreat for the previous year. In the course of it he wrote these few lines:—

"On Monday, February 9, these words of the *Imitation* came as a grace to my soul: *In omni re attende tibi quid facias et quid dicas, et omnem intentionem tuam dirige ad hoc quod Mihi placeas, et extra Me nihil cupias vel quæras.*"

Some useful words of encouragement occur in a letter dated

"LEICESTER, Jan. 3, 1885.

"Human direction can only point out to you what to do; this has been many times done, and you know it all as well as I or anyone else can tell you. The whole matter is to do it, and no one can do it for you. It is a personal struggle.

"Almost the only other thing that can be done is to encourage you that you may have energy and perseverance for the fight, as great courage and indomitable perseverance are quite necessary. We should have that quiet dogged determination that is one of the best features of John Bull's natural character. So you must avoid as a pest all low spirits and discouragement, which the saintly Bishop Grant used to say was the modern form of possession of the devil, and which the Bishop of Birmingham the other day said was the most subtle and offensive form of egotism. We *must* not be cast down because we fail and fail and fail. We all do the same I suppose. At least, I do certainly. But one thing I am determined on—never to give up and show the white feather.

"Our Lord is giving you graces that you may be saved, and not barely saved, but that you may have a very high place in heaven. So go on faithfully and humbly plodding onwards from day to day, 'casting all your care upon Him, for He hath a care of you,' and victory will at last be yours.

"I see no necessity nor advantage in rigidly following the meditations laid down in any book, any more than you are bound to eat of every dish at a well supplied table. Take those that best suit you, and leave the rest. Sometimes one text will be good enough for a long time. If you recognise

that you are proud, make many earnest petitions for humility and then try to humble yourself: you will succeed at last."

His retreat over, Father Wilberforce immediately began the Lenten missions, the first being one of three weeks' duration at Devonport; then to Chester, calling on the way at the convent, Taunton, where he saw his cousin, "dear Sister Mary Annunciata" (who was dying), "*for the last time*. She was wonderfully cheerful. Mother Abbess told me she had never seen so fervent a soul. She is formed on *Sancta Sophia*, 'her book,' that she read and re-read, and though naturally most warm-hearted and affectionate, she is the most detached soul I ever knew."

"April 13.—Went to Father — at West Hartlepool. Found that the Provincial had told him I was to stay a fortnight. Preached to his confraternity, and on Sunday, etc. He has done a wonderful work here already, being thoroughly disinterested, and all for God and not self. *Bonus Pastor*, who feeds his flock, not himself, and thinks more of giving them the Word of God than of filling his own pockets."

From Coventry Father Wilberforce went to Baddesley Clinton, to give a retreat to the Poor Clares. He was a great favourite with this holy community, and had preached their retreats several times before this. One of the Religious has sent the following reminiscences of his visits:—

"In 1882, Father Bertrand gave us a retreat. He was then in good health, and stout; very different in appearance from the frail-looking man of later years. He was always cheerful and humble, but rather absent-minded, and not nearly so punctual as he afterwards became. It happened once while he was here, that he overslept himself, and so was late in beginning Mass. During the day he sent for Mother Abbess to the *grille*, and then, with the greatest humility and simplicity, acknowledged his fault and begged for a penance.

"On another occasion, when he happened to be here in May, a whole troop of children accompanied him to the woods to gather flowers. At the usual hour the convent bell rang for benediction, and we all assembled in choir—but there was no priest. For a very very long time we waited, and at last, when our patience was nearly exhausted, there was a ring at the door, and there were the children, hot and rather frightened, led by Father Bertrand, who walked quietly off to the sacristy to vest. It seems that the children had heard the bell and wanted to hurry home, fearing to be late. 'Oh,

don't trouble, dear children,' said Father Bertrand; 'they can't possibly begin without me.'

Of the retreat in 1885, Father Wilberforce has himself left an account, which is touching in its humility and self-abasement. If he had not yet learnt to be always punctual, he was nevertheless evidently advancing in another and a higher virtue.

"July 7.—The retreat at Coventry ended, and the same day I went to begin the retreat at Baddesley Clinton, and arrived at the convent walking, my portmanteau wheeled in a small cart by a boy. The chaplain had been a student in the Olton Seminary, when I gave the retreat there in 18—something.

"He went away during the [present] retreat, an example for chaplains of convents always to follow, as it leaves the priest giving the retreat much more free, and also far more quiet. The latter helps the retreat very considerably.

"I felt intensely ashamed at the thought that I, a Religious in name and habit only, must preach penance, prayer, detachment, love of God, to these really fervent, penitential, contemplative nuns. It was humiliating; so I had to make up my mind to say boldly what I knew to be true, however much I was thus condemning myself. Couldst not Thou, O Lord, say to me, *De ore tuo, te judico!* Give me grace to begin to do what I so often have to tell others, knowing its truth!

"God must have sent me here to teach me what Religious Life really is, that I might see religious virtues in practical life, and not merely in books and in theory. These holy nuns leave the very idea of 'comfort,' in any one way, by day or by night, outside the door, when they enter the convent. Their prayer is continual and their devotion to God complete. How happy must their deaths be, after so fervent a life.

"The 'Out-Sisters' teach the village school at the gate of the convent. The chapel is a public one for the congregation.

"The Hall, Baddesley Clinton, is a most interesting specimen of the old English country-house. The moat still remains. The house is built enclosing a quadrangle, or at least forming three sides—I forget which at this time—for I am writing in May 1886. The front is of the time of Edward IV. Here the Derings live. Mr Dering not only had got, but had *read* the first volume of the new edition of St Thomas. He had read also, twice carefully through, the *Contra Gentes*, as well as the *Summa*. How many of us

Fathers could say the same? I cannot, for one. Yet it would seem at first sight more congruous that the Dominican friar should have done so, rather than the squire and novelist. Thus is my idleness and ignorance put to shame by laymen, as my religious practice is by the Poor Clares.

“Was not this the lesson God meant to teach me by sending me to Baddesley? If, instead of learned and fervent, I am ignorant and tepid, grant at least, that I be humble, O Lord, and earnest in Thy Love!

“During this retreat I was perfectly quiet, being quite alone in the house, without even a servant. On the Sunday I had the work of the mission as well as the retreat, but it was not heavy.”

“*July 16.*—Having finished the retreat to the Poor Clares, I left at once and went to Manchester, where I began the same evening one to the penitents of the Good Shepherd. The priest away, the work was continuous, but most satisfactory. The penitents fervent, and the sisters full of charity, zeal, and good sense; in fact, *Sisters of the Good Shepherd*.

“I may mention that they had, since July 1885, moved to their new home, an old country-house, standing in its own grounds, on the Rochdale Road, and in every way well suited to their requirements. The bishop<sup>1</sup> had secured it for them after considerable trouble and anxiety, a success that he attributed solely to the intercession of St Joseph. He walked out to tell the sisters late on the evening of 31st March, that they might hear the good news before St Joseph’s month had ended.” [This entry was apparently made in 1886.]

Soon after the retreat at Baddesley, Father Wilberforce was seized with the first of those violent attacks of pain, caused by *biliary calculi*, to which he was henceforth to be continually subject, till, in the year 1889, a cure was effected by means of the German waters. His first attack is described in the journal:—

“*July 30, Thursday.*—Went to Stonyhurst [to preach on the Feast of St Ignatius], walking up from Whalley, and bathed in the college swimming-bath.

“*July 31.*—After breakfast, as I was about to set to work on my sermon, I was seized with a violent attack of what I afterwards discovered to be gall-stone. The pain was very severe, and lasted about an hour and a half, the infirmarian bringing me various medicines as sedatives, that I might be able to preach. The pain ceased about ten minutes before the

<sup>1</sup> Bishop, afterwards Cardinal Vaughan.

time, and I preached for more than an hour on St Ignatius, the Christian warrior. The boys most attentive, which was a favourable sign for me. The Fathers expressed themselves very kindly."

From Stonyhurst, after preaching a second time on St Ignatius, in Manchester, Father Wilberforce started on a round of retreats, including Stone, St Marychurch, Kensington Square, Haverstock Hill, etc., and one in Liverpool, to the students of the Training College, Mount Pleasant, which he says was "close work, but eminently satisfactory, as everything is in that magnificent institution. Everything organised to perfection."

In November he went to Altrincham for a mission, during the course of which he had a severe seizure. "On the Feast of All Saints," he writes, "I began the mission to the children, Father Sadoc being appointed to join me on the second Monday for a fortnight's mission to the people. This was more than the number of Catholics in the place warranted, but God overruled the arrangement, for on the 5th of November, when Charles Burke dined with us, I was taken ill, and on Friday I was worse. I just managed to finish the service for the children in the evening, and then went to bed. On Sunday in bed all day : Burke preaching in the morning. On Monday Father Sadoc came.

"*Nov. 11.*—Went to Hinckley, the journey, owing to my having been put into a wrong train, being seven hours long. Confined to bed for some days, I remained at Hinckley, gradually recovering, till the 12th of December, on which day I went to Newnham Paddox.

"At Hinckley I read a *History of Malta*, Torrens' *Book on India*, 2 vols. of *Life of St Alphonsus*, half of first vol. of his *Theology*, several of the English Lives of the Saints, and several light works—Scott and Bulwer, etc.

"Remained at Lord Denbigh's during the rest of the month."

From this time forward, we find notes in journal and *ordos* of continually recurring "attacks," some very severe, others of a lighter nature.

His sufferings at times were so acute as to render the use of strong sedatives necessary. A relative describes how, on one occasion, when Father Bertrand had arrived at the convent in order to give benediction, he was suddenly seized with one of these terrible attacks. "He just managed to stagger into the guest-room, where he fell flat on the floor. His groans could be heard across the courtyard, and the large

drops of sweat were rolling down his face. Of course we had no benediction, and he could not return home that night. For some days he remained very weak and shaken, but when in after years, I referred to that 'dreadful pain,' he only smiled, and replied: 'That was child's play compared with the pain of later attacks.'"

Another time, as Father Wilberforce himself related during a very heavy mission, the agony became so intense that morphia had to be administered. Under its influence he lay for about an hour in a state of semi-unconsciousness, on the top of a chest in the sacristy. At the end of that time he was roused to go and give catechism in the church.

"And did you do it?" he was asked.

"Well, I got through somehow; but what I said, or what the children said, I hadn't the faintest idea!"

But in spite of the suffering, the missionary work went on, to all appearance as vigorously as ever.

Father Wilberforce must naturally have possessed a splendid constitution, and was endowed with a recuperative power that was certainly extraordinary. Those who witnessed the state of complete prostration to which he was reduced during these illnesses, have marvelled to see how he would rise from his sick-bed and go forth to the pulpit and confessional, displaying at such times even more than his wonted energy. On the other hand, it cannot be doubted that this was in great measure due to the power of a resolute will. He had vowed to God that in His service he would work until death, and work he did, the poor body, willing or unwilling, being driven forward by the unflinching spirit.

We can scarcely wonder that, amidst this unceasing round of work and pain, we come across slight indications in Father Wilberforce's notes and correspondence, of a feeling of utter weariness and of a longing for the peaceful life of a contemplative, in which, alone with God, he could pour out his soul, and find rest in prayer.

In one of his *ordos* we find the following note:—

"Father — to B. W. 'With regard to your pious desire of sheltering yourself in the cloister, it is, I think, a temptation, and in following it, undoubtedly you would do your own will. The devil only would be glad to see you out of apostolic work.'"

Some years later he told a person who had expressed a similar wish, that "it was only the devil who would be pleased," and then repeated the above advice, which, he said, had been given to himself.

Another holy soul also wrote to him, that "it is positively God's will that you should be in the Dominican Order; . . . your salvation depends, or depended, on it, and you have a work to do in it. I do not think this is any exterior or active work, but may be exercised by communication with others who are zealous, but perhaps chiefly by your missionary labours."

Father Wilberforce has noted these remarks as "prudent and useful," and no doubt such words would encourage him to take up the cross which had been laid upon him by his Lord, and to carry it valiantly to the end.

Nevertheless all this physical suffering and what we may call "artificial" vigour, told greatly on the whole system. He lost flesh; the boyish spirit of fun which he had so long retained, seemed crushed within him, and in many ways he became an altered man. A former penitent, who had become a nun, and had not seen Father Bertrand for some years, failed at first to recognise him, when about this time he called at the convent.

"Even as he sat talking to me," she wrote, "I could scarcely believe it was he, so completely was he changed from the strong, vigorous-looking man I had formerly known."

Later he wrote to the same friend:—

"I have been very ill since I saw you. The doctors want me to go to Germany, but this rests with Superiors. It is for them to decide.

"The doctors tell me that this disease causes the greatest pain the human frame can bear. So as God has given me the pain—blessed be His Holy Name—you must pray that He may increase my patience."

This was probably written early in the year 1886, when, after several very severe attacks, his Superiors decided to send him to Germany for the benefit of the waters. He therefore started for Karlsbad on the 21st of May, in the company of Mr Edward Bellasis.

## CHAPTER VI

1886—1889

THE travellers took nearly a week to reach Karlsbad, making several halts on the way. At Antwerp they, of course, visited the cathedral, and also heard Mass in the church of St Paul, "formerly," says Father Wilberforce in his journal, "the Dominican Church, where there are statues of a large number of our saints, carved in wood. St Lewis Bertrand was among the number. Relics, too, of St Dominic. The church is cruciform and *flamboyant*. The calvary outside very interesting.

"From Antwerp we went on to Malines, where we dined just under and opposite to the grand Cathedral Tower. I asked for the *Hotel de la Grue*, in which we had stayed in 1850, but it no longer exists. After dinner we saw the cathedral, much restored since 1850. It is a solemn grand church, rather Early Pointed in style. The tower magnificent. The triforia in the choir are panelled in much the same style as those in Gloucester Cathedral.

"We went to the convent of the Poor Clares, in the chapel of which we four brothers and sisters were received into the fold of Holy Mother Church. The Mother Abbess remembered it perfectly, and was glad to see me. The present chapel, a very fine one, had been built since then, and I said a prayer of thanksgiving in it. How little did I realise as a child the wonderful grace there given me, with all it implied!"

They stayed a night at Louvain and then went on to Aix-la-Chapelle, where they spent a few hours on their way to Cologne. Of the former place, Father Wilberforce writes:—

"The month of May services were going on in most of the churches, and they were crowded, all the people singing

and joining with one voice in the prayers. We were both greatly struck by the look of the people. No sign of the hideous squalor and degradation of our manufacturing towns. Everyone neat, clean, and respectful. Being in my habit, I was saluted on all sides, and numbers of little children ran up with outstretched hands. The treasures and relics of the cathedral were most interesting, but what delighted me most were the full churches and the looks and manners of the people. No sign of drunkenness, nothing like our hideous and diabolical gin-palaces."

"*May 25, Cologne.*—I rose early and went into the cathedral. High Mass *pro defunctis* was celebrated. Then with Bellasis to the parish church of St Andrew (?), where the relics of Blessed Albert the Great are preserved, and said Mass at his altar. The chasuble used by the saint was hanging by the altar. After breakfast we visited the cathedral, the magnificence of which cannot at first be taken into the mind. A grand sacred poem of itself. . . . Of the other churches I particularly admired the tower of St Martin. We crossed the bridge of boats and saw the city and cathedral from the other side of the Rhine."

The next stopping-place was Nuremberg, which seems to have particularly interested Father Wilberforce, though he laments that the old Catholic churches should be now in possession of the Lutherans. "One, however," he says, "is very little changed; images and pictures of our Lady and the saints left undestroyed. We saw also the highly interesting and complete museum of art and antiquities. To walk through this quaint old city, not yet entirely changed into the set modern type, is most delightful."

The travellers arrived at Karlsbad on the evening of the 27th of May. "The first view of the place from the station," says the diary, "is not inviting, and we were disappointed."

Of the stay at Karlsbad not much of interest is recorded in Father Bertrand's journal. He met several English acquaintances, and made friends with many of the foreign visitors, but during the first few weeks was evidently unfit for any greater exertion than that of strolling about the gardens and country round, and following the general routine of the place. He says, "I felt depressed and disgusted to find only one Catholic church for this town, alas!" On the other hand, he was delighted, in one of his rambles on the hills, to come across a well-carved crucifix standing high up, overlooking the town. He had been ordered to abstain from all study and head-work, and his reading seems to have been confined

to such books as the Karlsbad Library could furnish; some of Anthony Trollope and Mrs Oliphant—always favourites with Father Wilberforce—are mentioned, and of the latter's *Agnes* he says that "it is highly interesting and thoughtful, though mournful; true to nature, a most striking work"; whilst another of her books, *He that Will Not when he May*, is remarked on as "good, but not in any way equal to her *Agnes*, nor, in fact, to *Harry Joscelyn*."

Before leaving Karlsbad, Father Wilberforce paid a visit to Eger, where there is a Dominican Priory, but unhappily at the time when he was there, no community to fill it. He thus describes what must have been rather a melancholy visit:—

"I was received at the convent of Saint Wenceslaus by the Prior with great hospitality. The convent is a large building with cloisters, etc., but gloomy, no particular style, and as there are only two Fathers, the Prior and another, the effect is mournful. The church has seven altars, besides the High Altar, and images of the saints, but all in the worst taste. In the centre hung a large representation of a rosary, with an image of our Lady in the middle. The Fathers, besides serving this church, teach in schools in the town. The convent was founded in the time of St Hyacinth, and was an imperial foundation, but has of course been rebuilt entirely probably more than once. Cells large: all buildings, etc., ready for a large community.

"The next day, the 24th of June, Feast of Corpus Christi, said Mass at Eger. Afterwards coffee in my room—'*nicht kurgemæs*'<sup>1</sup>—and at ten the procession from the large parish church. Troops and all the civil and military officers. We were there in habits with the convent cross carried before us, and the Franciscan conventuals, and the '*kreuzherren*.' The procession went into the large square, which was filled with people. The high red-roofed houses with tiers of dormer windows were highly picturesque. Five altars, at each a gospel referring to the Blessed Sacrament was sung, and '*A fulgore et tempestate, libera nos*,' etc.; '*A peste, fame et bello*,' etc.; '*A flagello terræmotus*,' etc. Guns fired from barracks at every benediction.

"Dinner at twelve, with meat. At supper the night before, none—only a little for me. (I found at Karlsbad that there is a general dispensation from the Holy See for all *Kur* patients to eat meat even on Fridays, so I did not abstain. This notice is proclaimed by the bishop on the

<sup>1</sup> Not according to the rules of the *Kur*.

church door.) Afterwards, two priests from Karlsbad called, and we went to see Wallenstein's house, or rather the house in which he was killed during the Thirty Years' War. It is now a museum. Then with the prior to Franzensbad, where there was nothing to see except the iron-water, shops, and the *Kur* band! The prior hurried us away there much against our wills, as there were several interesting things to see in Eger. Returned to Karlsbad, and had supper at the station, and afterwards an attack of the gall-stone pain."

"*June 30.*—Heard Mass, not having woke till 9.45:—the first time this kind of thing has happened since I have been in Karlsbad."

"*July 2.*—After dinner walked with Father Concenius<sup>1</sup> to Pirkenhammer, and felt miserable at seeing no church there. All supposed to go to Karlsbad!"

Father Wilberforce left Karlsbad on the 3rd of July, having had leave from the Provincial to see both Prague and Vienna, "and as much else as he could, within reasonable distance," before returning home. He says:—

"The first part of the journey very like the country round Karlsbad. From Komotan we crossed a large plain fringed with hills. At Priesen there is a large church, though only a village compared to Karlsbad.

"Later plenty of hop grounds, just like those in Kent. The villages are very neat and clean, with red roofs and buildings in good repair. Up a long winding incline, and then hills and pine woods, and immense stretches of birch woods; enough to supply all the English public schools for years! We went down into Prague, which lies in the valley, with the Moldau winding through its midst. Arrived at 5.30, and drove to our convent of St Egidius."

Father Wilberforce seems to have been much struck by the Benedictine monastery of "Emmaus" which he visited. He says: "It is the most interesting church and convent I have seen in Bohemia. The church is an example of what may be effected in the way of judicious and artistic decoration. It is a Gothic church, built in the fourteenth century, but not a fine specimen; no clerestory; nave and aisles. The adjoining monastery was built by the Emperor Charles IV.; it had collapsed like the others, a few old Fathers of private life being left in 1880, when it was given to the expelled Benedictines from Beuron in Germany, the same congregation that has settled at Erdington. They have restored the

<sup>1</sup> A German priest then staying at Karlsbad.

church with the utmost taste, and ornamented it with frescoes by themselves, in lovely style. It is by far the most devotional church I have seen yet, except the Cathedral of Prague—and even perhaps more *devotional*, though not so historically interesting as the cathedral itself. I went for vespers at three. The monks, about twenty, walked in, *processionaliter*, in very religious style. The vespers were most devoutly sung, with organ; the antiphons chanted.

“Afterwards I examined the church. On the Epistle side of the building, adjoining the monastery there are no windows, so the blank wall offered good opportunity for frescoes. Four lines of them, representing [different mysteries in the Life of our Lord, and figures of the saints]. Most devout and artistic figures. Near the entrance door is painted, on the Epistle side, the Apostles’ Creed in Czech (Bohemian, a Slavonian language allied to Russian), and on the Gospel side, the same in German. Clear Roman letters, black on gold ground.

“Near the High Altar there is an interesting fresco of our Lady in glory, with Christ and the saints, and below, the mystic staircase, up which St Benedict is going in glory to heaven, and the inscription: ‘*Congratulamini mihi omnes qui diligitis Dominum. Hæc est via qua dilectus Domino cælum Benedictus ascendit.*’

“The convent is a most solid erection, in good style and excellent repair. The chapter room most religious, and on the spot in which the Religious stands to accuse himself is a round piece of marble with the inscription, ‘*Justus est prius accusator sui.*’

“The cloister is broad and light, also with frescoes; the corridors ornamented with most instructive inscriptions. ‘*Cultus Justitiæ Silentium,*’ and ‘*Opus Justitiæ Pax,*’ from Isaiah xxxii., were two that struck me particularly. The library large and well-stocked. Altogether a true monastery and most attractive and interesting.”

From Prague Father Wilberforce went to Vienna, where the churches, etc., seem on the whole rather to have disappointed him. Of the cathedral he says: “The spire looks much grander from a distance than when seen near; the church is dark, and as the nave is the same height as the aisles, the effect is to diminish the size. Most of the windows are filled with the Munich picture glass, which is not the style I prefer.

“. . . I went into the pretentious *Karlkirche*, a large classic structure. . . . An utter waste of material, money, and

space, and the effect elaborate ugliness meaning to be beautiful. A portentous failure."

From Vienna he paid a visit to Gratz, which is described in the journal:—

"*July 11, Sunday.*—I started for Gratz with the [Austrian] provincial and the prior, after dinner. The first part of the way is flat, through a highly-cultivated plain, with many villas and villages. No work was going on, being Sunday. Presently the train began to wind up a long zig-zag road, gradually climbing the mountains that lie between Austria proper and Gratz. The rocky crags and mountains, with deep valleys, large tracts of firs, with an occasional castle or château, were extremely fine. The road is admirably engineered. At Ste Marie, the highest point, there is a hotel, and a statue in the station of the engineer. The ascent took an hour, with a short train and a very heavy and powerful engine. From Ste Marie to Gratz we ran along the banks of the Mur, amid hills on both sides, clothed with trees. At a little station we were joined by the Dean of the Chapter of Gratz, a very pleasing-looking man.

"We arrived at Gratz at 8.45 and drove to the convent, the prior having met us at the station. The Fathers were at the door, and received the provincial with the most manifest and cordial delight. They all accompanied us to the meat room, where we had supper, they all standing round talking to us. We went to bed about 10.

"*July 12.*—Said Mass about 6.30. After coffee went into the large garden, into which the convent opens. It is of immense size, with one delicious walk, shaded with beech trees. There is a large space wired off, in which were rabbits, fowls, ducks, two chamois, or small deer—quite a little menagerie! . . . Father William, a Tyrolese, took me out to see the town. We passed through the large and long public gardens, laid out in the best style, with all kinds of native and exotic trees, and where a fountain of great size and beauty was playing. The main path, which was very long and winding, was beautifully shaded by dwarfed beeches. We ascended the *Schlossberg*, or citadel, a steep and high hill in the centre of the town, with a tower upon it, and a bell that rings at 7 A.M. and 7 P.M. to give the people the correct time. This citadel was strongly fortified in past times, and Napoleon could not take it by assault, but had to starve the garrison out. From the top a truly magnificent panorama presents itself. All round the foot of the hill lies the town, with neat houses and red roofs, and no smoke. Many

churches, among them the Franciscan church, is large and fine. Beyond the town, through which flows the river, lies an undulating green, with many houses and villas, and beyond, on every side, mountains, some covered with trees, some clothed only by green turf. Distant and higher mountains peeped over the shoulders of the lower hills that formed the framework of the smiling valley, in which lies the town. Altogether it is an extremely beautiful and striking view.

"On descending we went into the cathedral, a Gothic building formerly belonging to the Jesuits; a fair church, but wholly inadequate and unworthy of such a town as Gratz. We also visited the Church of the Angels, which formerly was ours, and is now the chief parish church of the town.

"In the morning, going up the hill of the Schlossberg, we met General Khum, a highly distinguished officer in the Austrian service, and commander of all the troops in Styria. He speaks English well, and told me he had read Shakespeare twice, and considered him by far the greatest dramatic writer of the world.

"*July 13.*—To the Lazarist Church, a poor structure. One of the Fathers took me to see a chapel, with large waxen figures of the Agony in the Garden. He spoke of it as '*belle*'; I thought vulgar and hideous. He said the people like it, and in that sense it may be good, but anything in worse taste it would be difficult to find!

"This [the Dominican] Convent is a large, plain, simple building. Though it cannot boast of any architectural beauty, it is built well in solid style. . . . The cells, only on one side, are large and commodious, and very lofty, with large windows. Furnished simply but sufficiently. Every cell has a tall white Austrian stove, and all have double doors, so with this and the paved cloister, all is very quiet. I should say that the garden about equals ours at Woodchester with the two fields, or thereabouts.

"Mass with music every morning at 6, and many attend. It is a parish church, but as it is a house for simple novices and students, the parish is worked by three secular priests, who do not live in the convent. The *curé* is an oldish man, an honorary canon; the first curate, a Doctor of Philosophy, a very nice-looking man, intelligent in face; he told me that he spends regularly two hours a day instructing in the school.

"Matins are recited at midnight, followed by a quarter of an hour's meditation, a passage being read aloud in German. Prime at 5, followed by Community Mass. Then all the students, etc., leave the choir and have breakfast at 6. A

cup of coffee and milk, with one little round roll of bread, about 2 ozs., no butter. On fast days half a roll. Then studies. Tierce and sext at a quarter to twelve, followed by dinner and recreation. None, vespers and rosary. Study 6.30, compline, and half-hour's meditation. Supper at 7.30, followed by recreation. Walk for students twice a week.

"Good library, with several English books. Good collection of works on Scripture. The Fathers have the use also of the University Library, from which they can take books for use to the convent.

"This is an excellent convent for students—quiet, retired, convenient. About forty in community.

"When Father Anselmi came from Italy, sent by Father Jandel, there was one Father only to look after the vineyard. The convent was a barracks. This was in 1857. *Deo Gratias.*

"*July 14.*—Returned to Vienna in the evening with Fathers Provincial and Prior, over the Semmering mountains.

"*July 15.*—Said Mass in the chapel of St Stanislaus. It was the room in which, when ill as a boy, and refused by those who had charge of him the assistance of a priest, he received Holy Communion from an Angel, assisted by our Lady and St Catherine. A lady from Ratisbon was there, and asked me to say Mass for her family, and invited me to Ratisbon.

"In the afternoon went to the Belvedere Gallery of pictures, then to the Votive Church for Benediction. The spires appear to me rather low, and certainly the High Altar is unworthy of the church. The baldachino seems to me a mistake, as it cramps the altar, which is also too far back, and the sanctuary far too small. But it is a lovely church.

"*July 16.*—In afternoon went with Father Sub-Master, a Frenchman of the Toulouse Province, to the Redemptorists. Called on the rector, and visited the tomb of Blessed Clement Hofbauer, which was adorned with flowers. He entered the congregation when St Alphonsus was still living, and died in 1820. The church is an old Gothic one, and one of the most interesting in Vienna. It is long and very narrow, and there is a curious bend to one side, to the south, if the orientation is correct. The tower is high and very picturesque, with carved stonework at the top. There is so little old Gothic in Vienna that one is glad of small favours.

"*July 17.*—In the morning went to Baden-bei-Wien to visit Father Bernard Lubienski, C.S.S.R. He met me at the station, and we drove to the Communal Spital, where

he has a room, and is staying for his health, acting during the time as chaplain. He was working in Poland, and was seized with inflammation, followed by complete paralysis, but the baths here have greatly benefited him. Now he can celebrate every day. Had interesting talk on religious topics. After dinner, went with him in train to the hills. Lovely view of hills clothed with trees, rather like those round Karlsbad. Benediction.

"*July* 18.—Said Mass in the chapel of the hospital. Went round the wards. . . . Talk on religious and spiritual things with Father Lubienski.

"Returned to Vienna on the 19th.

"*July* 20.—Letter from Father Provincial, recalling me. He congratulated me on being made 'Preacher-General!' I had known nothing of the petition, and never dreamt of it.

"*July* 21.—The convent at Vienna is a building of vast size, and a great part is let for different purposes, but as this part is entirely walled off, no inconvenience, but considerable income, results. Formerly there were nearly 200 Religious in the community, and their garden then extended over the land now used as drill-ground for a large barracks, just by the convent, and down to the vineyard. The site is very ancient, for there has been a convent here since the time of St Hyacinth, but the present building cannot be older at most than the end of the seventeenth century. The old refectory is let as a printing shop, but the present one is, I should say, larger than ours in London, and the roof, which is solid stone, barrel-shaped, is painted.

"The observance is very good, and two points I particularly noticed were the silence and quiet of the house, and the remarkable cleanliness of every part—and this not only in the main corridors, but in every little passage.

"There is a sung Mass, or a Mass with music and exposition every morning, and before it, while another Mass is being offered, the rosary is recited aloud by the people. The community have nothing to do with this.

"The choir is mounted high up above and behind the High Altar, and most indevout, to my mind, is the effect. There is a little plain altar with crucifix and picture of our Lady, but besides that, nothing except hideous bare boards. No sign of the High Altar or the Blessed Sacrament can be seen, and to one used to our English choirs this is a great privation. I trust we shall never have the choir behind the altar.

"For *Salve* the community has to file down an iron corkscrew staircase, and then down a stone one, the singing

stopping to allow this uncouth operation to take place. All sing both parts of the *Salve*, and all shout very loud, so that there is no relief.

“Exposition, at least of the Ciborium, during the parochial Mass, seems universal in Germany.

“*July 22.*—Started by the 8 train from Vienna for Ratisbon *viâ* Passau. Very hot. The first part of the way pretty, country hilly, with much wood. Passau is a very interesting looking town, with three rivers uniting and running into the Danube.

“Arrived at Ratisbon at about 8 P.M., but was not met by the chaplain of the sisters, as they had promised at Vienna. I waited a short time, and then, as all cabs had gone, went on foot with a porter to find the Dominican Convent. He took me to the old convent once belonging to our Fathers, now a seminary, and there a priest came downstairs, and informed me in Latin that there had been no Fathers there since 1803! At last I made them understand I wanted the convent of sisters, and got there. I was led by the porter into a room where a number of women were saying their night-prayers. These turned out to be the extern servants of the sisters, and one of them went and found the priest, who knew nothing of my arrival, but invited me very kindly to remain. The sisters had been written to about me, but thinking I was not due till August, had said nothing to the priests. Supper was got, bed prepared, and a ‘countess’ sent for, who could talk English, and who turned out to be a young German lady, who had been educated at the convent in Walmer. She talked English well. During the night a severe thunderstorm. The next morning the sisters were much distressed at their mistake.

“*July 23.*—This convent is one of the Second Order, and though the sisters have schools, they cannot speak to any stranger at the *grille* without leave from the bishop. It was obtained for me, and after saying Mass I had an interview with the Mother Prioress and another. A priest from the seminary came as interpreter, for the nuns knew nothing but German. He afterwards took me to the seminary church, that of St James, an ancient church, which until not many years ago belonged to the Scotch Benedictines. Who were these Fathers, and what is their history?

“The cathedral is very fine, and some of the stained glass particularly good. We also went to the interesting church of St Emeranus, and to the town hall, which is interesting as representing the time when Ratisbon was an important free town. The prisons are terrible.

"July 24.—Said Mass, and after breakfast went by myself to our old church of St Blase, and studied it all the morning. In general plan it is exactly like our church in London, except that it has not the lateral chapels. High Altar modern, carved wood in good style. The long chancel ends in an apse with five tall narrow windows. Statues of our saints each side of the Altar. Hideous organ in a most ghastly modern wooden gallery defiles the west end, with detestably hideous stair in Epistle aisle."

The journal here breaks off abruptly, and the journey home was probably made by the shortest possible route.

One letter only, belonging to the year 1887, has been preserved. He writes again to his correspondent, A. B., on the subject of confession.

"SOUTHAM, RUGBY,  
"June 15, 1887.

"You must try and get over your difficulty about confession. You will do so if you carefully reflect before the Blessed Sacrament on the *reason* why you keep away.

"Is it to please *God* or to please *self*? Your conscience will immediately tell you it is to please yourself. Then you know what our Lord says: 'If *any* man will be My disciple let him deny himself.'

"Here, then, is evidently one of those occasions on which self-denial is not only a good thing, but *necessary*. You must beg and pray for grace to deny yourself.

"Then consider what it is that makes confession so difficult to you. It is that you do not like to acknowledge your sins. Why? Because it hurts your pride. It is pride then that keeps you from confession. Now pride is the first and worst of the capital sins, the one most hateful to God, and the one that makes us most unlike Jesus Christ and like the devil. So it is a vice we must all take the utmost care to fight against, or it will be our ruin.

"The difficulty of fighting against pride is that it is so difficult for a soul to see it. But when it comes out in an external way it is easier, and in you it has broken out in the way of rebellion against confession. So do not be overcome. Overcome pride and imitate the humble heart of our Lord.

"Nothing will more help you on to heaven than to overcome pride, the root of all evil. Of course confession is not meant to be a pleasure, and I can assure you it is more penance to sit for hours hearing confessions, than it is to go to confession."

During his retreat of this year, which took place in September, Father Wilberforce wrote :—

“I was much struck by the exercises on ‘The Kingdom of Christ,’ ‘The Two Standards,’ ‘The Three Classes of Men,’ and ‘The Three Degrees of Humility.’

“How true is it, that to acknowledge oneself vile and worthy of contempt is no more humility than to see the necessity and utility of self-abnegation is to be mortified, or to see how penitent for sin one ought to be is to be contrite ! It is quite easy for anyone who is not a fool to see and acknowledge that he is worthy to be despised, but to desire it and to love it is the virtue and the difficulty. How very many Religious perfectly see and know that they are vile and worthy of contempt, by reason of their sins, etc., yet vehemently desire praise and honour, and hate and fly with horror from contempt, or the least shadow of it. I deeply feel that this is my case. It is impossible not to see what I *deserve* in the way of contempt, just as it is impossible to deny that I deserve sharp punishment for my many and great sins, but that does not make me humble, any more than the latter makes me a mortified man. If I could once really wish to be despised !

“I ought deeply and constantly to reflect on the example of Christ, and to ask myself seriously, what likeness there can be, if I persist in loving all He hated, and in seeking all He fled from with horror ; while I continue at the same time to detest what He loved, and carefully to avoid all that He deliberately chose ? He chose sufferings of mind and body, contempt, blows, ridicule, insult, poverty with all it entailed. Do I fly from these things, or seek them ? Do I hate or love them ? There is, indeed, a vast difference between admiring a virtue, and practising it when the time of trial comes. But the latter is the only thing that makes the soul holy. Yet how common the illusion of thinking oneself good, because the soul is so strongly attracted by the excellence and beauty of virtue, when seen at a distance ! *Facta non Verba.*”

In the spring of the year 1888, Father Wilberforce was again laid low by so severe an illness that a complete breakdown seemed inevitable. Another visit to the German waters was considered by the doctors to be the only hope of restoring his health, and as soon as he was strong enough to travel, he went to Bad Neuenahr, in Rhenish Prussia. Thence he writes to his sister :—

“HOTEL VICTORIA, NEUENAHN,  
“June 30, 1888.

“Your letter of Wednesday last reached me yesterday afternoon just before I went to give Benediction in the chapel of the Franciscan nuns, for SS. Peter and Paul. I must tell you about this Benediction before I forget. I found a red stole put out in honour of the apostles, which is against our, and I believe, the Roman rubrics. No cope—they had not got one, though the other vestments are very good. No veil. I felt a difficulty, as the Roman rubrics require these things, but hearing that the *Pfarrer* here always gave Benediction without them, I thought I would yield to Neuenahr rubrics. So in we marched, with two very reverent boys in red cassocks and cottas and a very large heavy thurible. The Monstrance was very pretty and good, as are also their chalices.

“I exposed the Blessed Sacrament and incensed. Nothing sung. I knelt quietly, and soon the sisters struck up *Tantum ergo!* After the first verse they stopped, and then a priest who is staying at the hospital began some German prayers in a very loud and sonorous way, evidently a good deal about SS. Peter and Paul. Then the nuns sang something in German; then he said another prayer; they sang again, and so on several times. Then he said in German a litany of the Sacred Heart—I did understand enough to know it was that—then *Pater* and *Ave* in *English*. Then the second verse of the *Tantum ergo*. After it I sang *Panem*, etc., but they did not answer, so I answered myself, and sang the prayer without a book, and then gave Benediction.

“I afterwards told the sisters that we in England had Benediction according to the Roman rite. They seemed much astonished, and said, ‘So do we in Germany.’ Not, in fact, at all.

“In Vienna I noticed that though they had Benediction in every church every afternoon, on ordinary days the whole was in German. I rather like some prayers said before the Blessed Sacrament in the vulgar tongue, but I like our singing and the Roman ceremonies. It is curious how much more they seem to have in many countries in the vulgar tongue before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, than we do in England. In Spain the priest goes into the pulpit and reads Spanish prayers at Benediction.

“I think by this time you have heard that I am to stay here and not go on to Karlsbad. The doctor quite approves, as he says that Neuenahr has made so fair a reputation for

itself recently in the cure of my complaint that he can take the responsibility of so advising. So here I am, and have been drinking the waters a fortnight to-day. Decidedly I am much better and more myself, and I hope in the next fortnight to make great improvement. The doctor recommends a hilly place after the cure, and when I said I had a brother and sister in the Tyrol, he replied, 'Just the very thing! Wash yourself well out with the water, and then go to the Tyrol for as long as your conscience will let you.' I have asked Father Provincial about it, but I cannot get free from here yet. It is an idle life, but God wills me to be idle just now, otherwise He would not will me to have gall-stones.

"Last Saturday we had a tremendous thunderstorm from 3 P.M. till after midnight. Very grand. The rain fell in sheets rather than drops, and flooded the lower part of the village. Two bridges washed away, but no lives lost.

"I was very much grieved to hear of the scandal in the parish that has troubled you lately. It is most distressing, and apt to be discouraging; only in work for souls we must start with the determination never to be discouraged. Human nature is so weak; and the work is done for God, and is laid up in His sight, even if the immediate effect of what we do is not very visible to us. 'God only' must be our motto if we are to persevere in work for souls. Of course, in a little place, where everybody and everything is known, it is ten times more distressing and discouraging. But *Respice finem.*"

The following devout little note on the *Agnus Dei* said in the Mass, is in Father Wilberforce's *Ordo* for this year, and is dated *Neuenahr, Feast of St John Baptist*:—

"The first reason why Jesus is the Lamb of God is because He is the Victim of Expiation, taking away the sins of the world: so the first thing to ask for is the perfect forgiveness of all past sin.

"The second reason is on account of the virtues He showed us so sublime an example of; *e.g.*, resignation, obedience, charity to others, etc., typified by the gentleness of the Lamb: so the second thing to ask for is the perfect Love of God, which includes all these virtues.

"The third reason is on account of the silent resignation with which He met death; 'like a lamb He opened not His mouth.' And therefore the third thing we should ask for is a holy and happy death, in the most perfect resignation of will. This will give us perfect peace."

At the end of the summer Father Bertrand did go to the Austrian Tyrol, and remained there till the following spring, often in much suffering but gradually improving in health.

On the 1st of January 1889, he wrote to a Religious whose sister was dangerously ill:—

“DOBLHOF, MERAN.

“. . . I feel the utmost sympathy with you in this trial. Of course I will pray for you. . . .

“Your feelings would naturally make you intensely anxious to run off at once and nurse N——, but no doubt many graces will come from the bountiful hand of our loving Father in reward for generously giving up feelings to act by reason and grace. He never lets any sacrifice we make for His sake, or even one good desire go unrewarded.

“I do not know how long your letter has been waiting in London, because you have put no date on it, but it was the only letter I had this New Year’s morning, and though so glad to hear from you, of whom I often think, I am sorry it should contain, I will not say, bad news, because, after all, no trial that comes from God is *bad*, but news that you have another cross to bear.

“Here I am still, vegetating under the mountains. In health I have been very greatly better lately. My illness was severe, though I believe not dangerous. Certainly, I suffered a good deal, and it was long before I could begin to get up strength and appetite and tone to the digestive organs; but lately there has been a most decided improvement and change for the better.

“I need hardly say that this illness has been a grace to my soul. Every trial that our loving Father sends always is, if we *try* even, allowing for many imperfections, to take it in patience from Him. I might no doubt have made much more of it, but I do feel it has been a grace in many ways, and I am thankful to say I have had great peace of mind during it. The very fact of being ill and weak and helpless makes one place oneself in God’s hands more completely, feeling one’s dependence on Him.

“The quiet time, with no one to think of but my own soul, has been a rest to the soul, that, after nearly twenty years of racing about from one mission to another, is a great benefit.

“I feel no anxiety as to the future. Whether I shall be strong enough for the same work or not, remains to be seen. But I daresay I shall be able to do something or

other, and what does it matter what it is, if only it is God's will, and if I can manage to do it for Him?

"I felt most deeply for all concerned in the sad affair of poor ——. That is the kind of trial and sorrow that is really afflicting. I felt so very much for the whole family.

"Poor dear —! It was a terrible mistake, and shows how careful we should be to oppose the first crafty suggestions of the evil one and of self, coming, as they nearly always do, to Religious, under the guise of an Angel of Light.

"You say no word of yourself (to mortify self-love, I suppose), but I trust you are well in soul and body? I wish you and all every grace for the New Year.

"Yours affectionately in Christ,

"F. B. W., O.P."

*To the Same. On the death of a father, who had been reconciled to the Church on his deathbed.*

"DOBLHOF, MERAN,  
"Jan. 24, 1889.

"I began a letter to you on the day that I received M. P.'s welcome card, giving me the glad news of the special grace God had given your dear father. *Deo Gratias et Mariæ.*

"It is indeed, most joyful news to hear that he received the Last Sacraments so devoutly, and at his own desire. I am deeply thankful for this mercy, and I know how intense is your gratitude to our Lord for this wonderful and at one time almost unlooked-for mercy. Now, all your anxious prayers have been heard, and after all the fears and obscurities of his life, God has given him the immense grace of dying in union with His Holy Church, and fortified by the Holy Sacraments.

"I need not say that I both have prayed and shall pray for him.

"Now you have a foretaste of the reward exceeding great that God in His tender love will one day bestow upon you to the full, with measure overflowing, for all the sacrifices of Religious Life, sacrifices in themselves so sweet with His grace. This foretaste is the full and *visible* reconciliation of your dearest father to the Church. When I advised you to make the offering to God of the immense satisfaction of *seeing* that reconciliation with your own eyes, in this world, I felt confidence that your prayers for his salvation would be heard, but I did not feel sure that you would be allowed to see that

it was so. Perhaps that offering was the reason why God did allow that reconciliation to be so full, so visible, and so satisfactory. Who can tell indeed that the very salvation of your father did not depend, in God's hidden counsels, on your faithful co-operation with His grace, calling you to the sacrifices of Religious Life. We cannot say for certain that it was so, but we can see that it was very likely.

"So you have indeed, great reason to thank God abundantly, and you have, in all that has happened, another strong motive to abandon yourself and all that belongs to you, into the loving hands of His Divine Goodness, confiding everything to His care 'for He hath a care of you.' 'We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good'—Rom. viii.

"For myself, I am thankful to say that I feel much better than I did some time ago, though I have been suffering of late from a local disturbance that has caused me a good deal of pain, and prevented me from saying Mass lately, but which I have every hope will be soon removed. But my general health, in the way of appetite, digestion, and strength, has been very much improved.

"I expected to return to England this week, but the Provincial wrote the other day, directing me to remain quietly where I am for another month, and then to report progress. I trust, at least, to be in England well before Easter. Whether I shall be able to work in Lent I do not know, but I trust if such is God's holy will, that my working days are not yet numbered. Yet it little matters, after all, whether one dies a few years earlier or later, as long as I can love God and die in His grace.

"What you say of the holy Vows of Religion I most strongly feel. It is heartrending to see people ever *wishing* even to be released from those holy and solemn ties that bind them so closely to our Lord as His own spouses, however unworthy. Once having said *usque ad mortem*, God forbid that I should ever, for one passing moment even, desire to retract, and to look back at the false liberty of the world. There must surely be great unfaithfulness before that state of mind can be even endurable. I am thankful to say that no temptation even, of that kind, has ever yet assailed me. Every day, as I grow older, I am more and more thankful to God for having given me the inestimable privilege of being a Religious. That we may both persevere to the end must be our constant prayer.

"Wishing you every blessing and grace.

"I finish this letter on Sunday, Jan. 27, at Bozen, being

on my way to Innsbruck on some business, and shall return to Meran in a few days. I went to the Franciscan Church this morning. The 6.30 Mass was crowded to the doors. Every aisle crammed as during a mission with us. A sermon at 7 A.M.

"The crowding of the churches is most inconvenient. Also the odious spitting is trying to the nerves and temper of John Bull! The parish church here is a fine one, finer than the one at Meran."

One of Father Wilberforce's brothers, who was with him during the time of his stay at Meran, has sent us some anecdotes of this visit. "I was with him abroad," says Mr Wilberforce, "at a time when severe illness had made work impossible. During one of his attacks, when he had been in acute agony all through the night, he said towards morning: 'I hardly like to ask our Lord to take away the pain, because it comes from Him.' And then I heard him whisper: 'Oh, God, have mercy on me!'"

"Later, he remarked, 'I dare not say, like St Lewis Bertrand, "increase my pain, but increase also my patience." I can only use the last words.'

"Early one morning he left his room with difficulty, and came to mine. He was evidently exhausted with long hours of pain, and felt no rallying power. 'I have come to ask you,' he said, 'if you see me in danger of death, to have me taken to the nearest Dominican house, that I may die with my brethren round me.' My promise to do everything he asked comforted him.

"Even in the midst of suffering, however, he was always ready with a joke. During this same illness, when the mere sight of food was abhorrent to him, he remarked with gaiety that he had at last attained to the state of mind recommended by St Bernard, who told his monks they should go to the refectory as to a penance. 'I most certainly do that now,' he said.

"Whilst never uttering a complaint, he would now and then show unconsciously how much he longed to be at work for souls once more. A great mission was to be given at Glasgow in the approaching Lent, and he hoped against hope that he might take his share in it. We, who watched him day by day, knew how impossible this was, but eagerness to do God's work buoyed him up. When the mission took place, I could see that his thoughts and prayers were there, though he himself was so far away. But his enforced idleness was cheered by one incident. An Irish servant who

happened to be in the town where we lived, was in great distress, as she was unable to make her confession. She knew no language but English, and there was no priest who could understand her. Father Bertrand soon found out that she would be only too willing to go to confession to him, and he lost no time in getting the requisite faculties. I remember his joy at being able to perform this little priestly act, and at the sight of his penitent receiving her Easter Communion.

"Nearly all who ever met Father Bertrand," adds Mr Wilberforce, "remember his humorous remarks and quaint sayings. 'It is easy enough to preach,' he would reply to people who expressed admiration for his sermons: 'the difficulty is to practise.'

"'Is it true,' I asked him once, 'that you have taken the pledge?' 'No,' he replied, 'I know so many who take it and get drunk, that I thought it would be a change to keep it without taking it.' For many years he practised teetotalism, till his health forbade his continuing it.

"He was fond of remarking: 'there are three kinds of preachers:—

"(a) The man who says his lesson. He does no good, but "gets through." If he converted a man, he would be mightily astonished. He never thought of that, but of "getting through."

"(b) The man who gets up his subject and speaks it, whoever is there. Like the man the Poor Clares told me of, who spoke of death to them, and reminded them that "their relations would be weeping round their beds"; especially, I suppose, their husbands and children!

"(c) The man who speaks to the people present. Heart to heart. Of course he must be well up in his subject, but direct it to his audience. He is the one who does good.'

"On one occasion Father Wilberforce was to preach at Gloucester. The sermon had been rather widely advertised in the neighbourhood, and among his hearers was a 'Scripture reader,' who came with the avowed intention of taking notes of the sermon, so that he might afterwards answer it. God must have seen that the man's heart was sincere, for the sermon convinced him of the truth of the Catholic Church, and he sought instruction. A few years afterwards he was ordained priest, and in the very church where the grace of faith had reached him, he said his first Mass. Father Bertrand was, of course, rejoiced to hear that God had thus used him as an instrument for bringing this soul into the true Church. 'I think,' he said, 'that our Lord lets us hear this kind of thing from time to time, to encourage us in our work.'

“On one of his many journeys he was addressed in the train by a gentleman, who evidently mistook him for a parson, and remarked: ‘I hear that Popery is taking great strides in England.’

“‘I am most delighted to hear it,’ replied Father Bertrand; ‘I spend my life in trying to make it take strides.’ A long conversation ensued, in the course of which the Protestant gentleman and the Religious exchanged cards. For some months afterwards, whenever Father Bertrand began a mission, he used to write to his fellow-traveller to inform him that he was at work, ‘making Popery take another stride.’

“At length he gave a mission in the very town in which the gentleman lived. In reply to the usual intimation, the latter wrote to Father Wilberforce, lamenting that he should be engaged on work which was ‘contrary to the Gospel.’ Father Bertrand replied by sending his correspondent the list of services and subjects of sermons to be given in the mission, inviting him to point out which part was contrary to the Gospel. What was the result of his letter we are not told.”

*To A. B.*

“STONE, *Sept. 21, 1889.*

“DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“As you are in a country where you cannot understand sermons, it is more necessary than ever to keep up some holy reading, spiritual reading every day, and I hope you manage to do that. The reading of spiritual books has often been the occasion of the grace of conversion to a holy life, as was the case with St Ignatius. And not only that, but spiritual reading was always one of the great helps to make the saints persevere in a holy life. St Dominic used to kiss his spiritual books and say: ‘These give me milk,’ the nourishment of the soul. St Philip Neri used to devote all the time he could spare to holy reading, especially the lives of the saints.

“The lives of the saints are not only most interesting, but most instructive. In other holy books we read what we ought to do, but in the lives of the saints we read what so many holy men and women, who had more difficulties and temptations than we have ourselves, have done for God.

“In reading their lives we feel ashamed to have done so little for God; and we shall feel pushed on to do more ourselves. While we read, we should lift up our hearts to God and pray. He will then speak to our souls.”

*To the Same.*

“WOODCHESTER, *Sept. 28.*

“I am glad you are comfortable in — and that you have heard of a place.

“You complain that you cannot realise the truth of our dear Lord’s Real Presence. It is a wonderful mystery, so that we must not be surprised that it is above our comprehension. God is so wonderful in all His works. So that you are only required to believe, without understanding how, that our Lord Himself, God and man, is really and truly and substantially hidden under the appearance of bread and wine. If you do not feel to realise this as you would like, do not be distressed, but make acts of faith in the mystery because God has revealed it. The best way to realise it better is to act up fervently to your faith, by praying every day earnestly, by going regularly to Holy Mass with devotion, and by going as well as you can to Holy Communion regularly and frequently. Staying away from Him does not make a soul realise His Presence, but going before Him and making acts of faith and love does.

“I hope you will try to throw off tepidity and carelessness that are so dangerous for salvation, and serve our Lord with love and fervour.”

*To the Same.*

“ST DOMINIC’S PRIORY,

“*Nov. 9, 1889.*

“I was vexed with you because I thought you were treating our Lord with indifference, which is a great insult to Him, and forgetting the interests of your own soul, which are *eternal*. Keep the great truths of judgment, hell, and heaven before your mind, and you will never be indifferent.

“Our Lord is worthy of *all* our love, and the psalm says: ‘Thou hast commanded that Thy commandments should be kept with *exceeding great care*.’

“But I trust I did not seem vexed in the confessional; I did not feel so. You are not *obliged* to accuse yourself of matters you did not consent to, for without free consent there is no sin, only temptation. But it is often useful to mention temptations for guidance, etc.

“I enclose a badge of the Sacred Heart. Wear it devoutly and often say: ‘O Sacred Heart of Jesus I implore that I may love Thee daily more and more.’

"It will renew your fervour.

"You do not give me much trouble, and I am very glad to help you.

"God bless you."

*To Miss Capes.*

"ST DOMINIC'S, Dec. 14, 1889.

". . . I am sorry not to have seen you the other evening.

"Father Rooke thanks you for the papers and message, both of which I have duly delivered. Your work seems an admirable one, and I trust will answer to your heart's content. It is a move in the right direction, and I hope other ladies will follow the same line in other parts of London.

"I hope Browning may rest in peace. To speak honestly, I have read very little of his poetry, and I must confess that what I have read does not incline me to read more. I do want to read a poem of his on Easter morning, that I have never seen yet. His ballad about the news being brought to Ghent is very fine. But this obscure poetry I confess I do not understand, no doubt from my stupidity. I have been tempted to doubt whether he always quite knew himself what he did mean!

"But I cannot look on obscurity as a beauty. To me it is a great defect. Shakespeare and Milton are not obscure, because they knew exactly what they meant, and said it as plainly as they could. St Thomas is lucidity itself, and when you have to batter your brains to guess what in the world the man can mean, and what the idea is he is trying to express, and even then can get only a faint glimmer of meaning, the question arises, is the game worth the candle? To me, a really great poet is one who conceives great ideas, and then can clothe them in simple, lucid language, so that others may enjoy them and benefit by them."

## CHAPTER VII

1890—1893

AT the beginning of the year 1890, it pleased Almighty God to deal Father Wilberforce another of those blows that struck so deeply into his soul, blows which, without doubt, were designed to draw his affections more and more from objects of earth, and fix them wholly upon God.

In the middle of January he received the news of the death of his married sister. The shock was wholly unexpected. Mrs Froude was living abroad, and her brother had not even known of her illness, which was very short, when the tidings reached him of her death. He seems to have felt her loss in some ways even more keenly than he had felt that of his parents. For many years this sister had held a very special place in his heart, and his grief was increased by the thought of the little ones she had left behind her. But his trust in God and submission to His holy will remained unshaken, and shortly after his sister's death he wrote a beautiful letter to an intimate friend who had sent him a note of sympathy :—

“ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY,  
“LONDON, *Jan.* 23, 1890.

“Your most welcome letter arrived to-day. Many most sincere and warm thanks for your kind sisterly sympathy in what is indeed a very terrible trial. God knows all, He can do all; He loves her and us, so I thank Him for doing what is good in His own sight. But the grief is very acute indeed, and the blow utterly unexpected. May His will be praised.

“My sister was *very* dear to me. We have always been a very united family, and a very affectionate one, and besides that, there are very few whom a priest and Religious *may* love with a tender love, and so most of my earthly love was concentrated on my sweet sister.

“Agnes was so bright, so clever, so sunny, as well as so sensible, and yet so loving, that her loss is very great to all. My grief is not merely selfish, however, it is for her children and husband as well, and for —, who very much depended on her.

“The only comfort is GOD. I leave it to Him. A thing is right because He does it: with us, we must do it because it is right.

“As He has taken the mother, He *must* give special graces to the children and for them. Our Lady, too, must have special care of motherless little ones, especially when their mothers loved her. May she protect those darling little ones.

“She was a most dutiful and loving daughter, a tender sister, a devoted wife, most thoroughly unselfish, a wise and prudent mother, a fervent Christian. I hope she can now say with her Patron: *Induit me Dominus cyclade auro contexta et immensis monilibus ornavit me.*<sup>1</sup>

“How good of you to pray on Thursday for her; you will go on, I know. Since I heard of it I have prayed for nothing else, and have said Mass for her every morning. Oh, may she soon go *in locum refrigerii lucis et pacis*.

“I did not know she was ill. . . .

“But ‘we *know* that all things work together unto good, to them that love GOD.’ Let us love HIM, for we know not the day nor the hour. Pray for me.”

Father Wilberforce entered the date of his sister's death in his *Ordo*, with the words: “*Et quæ paratæ erant introierunt cum eo ad nuptias,*” and on the following page we find a little meditation, which speaks for itself:—

“He who really wishes to love Jesus Christ must resolutely put his shoulder to the wheel and adopt the *means*:—

“1. Ardent and practical desires of true love.

“2. Resolute banishing of all other love which is not for our Lord. ‘He loves Thee but little who loves *anything* with Thee, that he loves not for Thee.’

“3. Frequent meditation on the Passion of our Lord.

“4. Frequent acts of love:—

“(a) Love of Complacency. Rejoice that our Lord is infinitely rich, happy, good.

<sup>1</sup> The Lord hath clad me in a garment interwoven with gold, and hath adorned me with priceless jewels.

- “(b) Love of Benevolence. Wishing all to love God, and praying for that, for His sake.  
 “(c) Love of Sorrow. Acts of contrition founded on love.  
 “(d) Love of Preference. Preferring God to *all*.”

In the following March he writes to Miss Capes :—

“ST DOMINIC’S,  
 “LONDON, *March 31, 1890.*”

“I was delighted to hear news of N——, and I will write. . . .

“I quite agree with your remarks about the idolatry of family affection. It is often a snare, and the more dangerous because so specious and good in itself. . . .

“My sister’s death was a great shock and continues a great grief, though I feel happy on her account. God will no doubt allow her to watch over her little ones from heaven. Who could wish her back into this ‘puzzling world,’ now that she has once got well out of it, and is, as we hope, with God, or on the way to His kingdom, ‘to eat and drink with Him at His table.’

“Certainly the time of suffering makes us thank God for the Faith. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.

“Pray for me.”

Exactly six months after his sister’s death, Father Wilberforce met with an accident somewhat similar to that which had ended so fatally for her. In his case it was brought on by a violent fit of sneezing, during a bad access of hay-fever, and an immediate operation became necessary, as the only means of saving his life. He was staying, when it happened, at the Convent of Mercy at Maryvale, and the sisters never forgot the impression he made upon them by his patience and simplicity, and especially by his continual prayer and use of ejaculations of love and thanksgiving, even when he was suffering the most violent pain. He had to remain at Maryvale for some weeks, and though the operation was successful, he nevertheless endured much suffering through the remainder of his life from the effects of this accident.

In August he wrote :—

“Thank God, I am much better : in fact, except that I am still weak, I am now quite well. God has been very good to me, and I hope to say Mass to-morrow for the first time

since July 14—five weeks exactly. Our Lord has given me a warning to get ready, and has said to me, ‘Watch.’”

In October, writing to another friend, he says:—

“Your letter during my illness was most kind, and I valued your prayers very much. The many good prayers offered for me got me round quickly and satisfactorily. Indeed the doctor says I shall be ‘a better man than before,’ which I hope will apply to soul as well as to body.”

The following extracts are from some letters of direction belonging to this time:—

*To a Convert Lady, whom he had received into the Church.*

“LONDON, Sept. 27, 1890.

“Pray write to me whenever it will be a comfort to you. There is no pleasure so true, in this world, as that of helping a soul to love our Lord more. And the fact that I was the porter who opened the door for you when our Lord brought you into His Church, gives you a claim on any little help I can ever give you.

“I am heartily glad to hear that you are fighting against despondency. St Alphonsus has a golden maxim that you must lay to heart: ‘No kind of inquietude, although for a good end, comes from God.’ From whom, then? Either from the devil or our own self-love, and in either case it should be rejected. *Feelings* of despondency and low spirits often come from nerves or liver, and then they must be borne with, as you would bear with a headache, as a penance, knowing that they will pass.”

*To another Penitent.*

“What you need is *fortitude*, and that you must ask for from the Holy Ghost with all earnestness. I do not mean strength to do things for God that are penitential, but the strength to *go on* and persevere in doing what you begin and what you well know is pleasing to God. You are full of good desires, but you must remember how the Holy Ghost in the Book of Proverbs says: ‘Desires kill the slothful.’ Desires are excellent, without them we shall do nothing, but if they end in mere *wishes*, they are not of much effect. They must be

*practical* desires, and we must pray for fortitude in carrying them out.

“Fight against pride with all vigour, as it is a most dangerous enemy. It has so much more malice than sins of other kinds.”

*To his Sister.*

“LONDON, Oct. 14.

“I wish you from my heart the best graces from our loving Lord, through the glorious St Teresa. She is indeed a star of the first magnitude, a true and valiant lover of Jesus Christ, and a resplendent example to all Religious. May she obtain for us to-morrow true union with the heavenly Vine, our dear Lord.

“E—— sent me your letter about the dear little ones, and I read it more than once and with tears. Our human nature is apt to cry out, ‘Oh, dearest God, *why?*’ But we must not even ask Him *why*. It is quite enough that it is His loving, sovereign, and august will. Therefore we can only thank Him for doing His own will in His own way, because it is His will. ‘What I do you cannot know now, but you shall know hereafter.’

“Darling little B——! My heart goes out to her. Sorrow has touched her early, poor little soul, and may it sanctify her, as it doubtless will.”

*To a Lady on Suffering.*

“Nov. 3, 1890.

“The best way to learn patience in suffering, which is a difficult though most important virtue, is to meditate much and lovingly on the Passion of our Blessed Lord. His example is most powerful and makes us desire to imitate Him.—1 St Peter ii. 21.

“To reflect on what He willingly endured for us makes us love Him, and wish to be patient to please Him.

“Again, in suffering which comes to us without our own will, we can be so certain that we are doing His will, in which is all holiness. When we work for Him there is a great deal of natural satisfaction in what we do, and it is more difficult to know that we are seeking God. But as suffering is completely contrary to our natural will, when we are patient, and much more, when we thank God, we know that we are seeking Him and His will, and not our own.

"Then too, the sufferings of this life, patiently borne, will atone for sin and add to eternal glory.

"Of course nature will cry out, but keep the will close to God. May the love of our Lord and His Holy Mother fill your heart."

*To a Religious.*

"Nov. 7, 1890.

"It was a great pleasure to see a letter from you, and the more so, as it held out a hope of my being able to do some good to your brother. . . .

"Thank God, I am very well now again. This month I am going to give a short retreat at Woodchester to the young women at the convent, and then a short one to the community at Maryvale. I hope we shall not repeat our experience there!

"For yourself, 'Transcension' will be most useful, and I should strongly advise you to follow it. You are too apt to dwell on your own miseries and imperfections, and so look away from God. Adopt it by all means. Of course it does not exclude constant contrition for past and present sins, offences and negligences, but it does turn your attention from these things to God, and this cannot but be an advantage.

"When examining for confession, choose two or three principal things and occupy yourself in contrition for those, leaving the others alone."

Father Wilberforce always attached great importance to the practice of early, and above all, of prompt rising as a condition of spiritual progress. When not prevented by illness, he was himself an early riser, and generally spent an hour in mental prayer before saying Mass. Occasionally, after a heavy mission, or when he was much weakened by suffering, he would oversleep himself, and great would be his disgust, and very sincere his remorse, when this happened. To go from his bed to the Altar made him, as he once said, "feel like a beast." He himself needed a great deal of sleep, and, like all delicate people, found it extremely difficult to rise early and quickly. The temptation to sleep in the morning, like his habit of unpunctuality, had to be fought with and conquered, so to speak, "at the point of the sword." He gained the victory, and for many years before his death had become as early and punctual as he had formerly been unpunctual and late. Therefore, he knew experimentally both

the difficulty and the value of what he so strongly insisted upon in his spiritual direction. But on the other hand, in cases of real delicacy or necessity, no one could have been more considerate in allowing and insisting on sufficient sleep being taken.

In a series of letters to one of his penitents we have some very energetic words on this subject:—

“*Jany. 6th, 1891.*”

“I trust that this glorious feast on which we contemplate the docility and faithfulness of the holy Magi, will give you the grace of fidelity and perseverance which you need.

“You must try and be very regular with your rosary, Way of the Cross, and other devotions, but above all imitate the Magi starting off at once when they saw the star, by rising at once every morning when you are called.”

“*Jany. 15th, 1891.*”

“Take courage, and in spite of the cold weather, get up. Do not make a resolution to do it, but *do it*. You cannot now get up yesterday, but you can to-morrow. Do it for the love of our Lord.

“Next Sunday is the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, and in that Holy Name, a name of power, of light, and of love, I call on you to rise in time, to pray and to be fervent.”

“*Jany. 30th, 1891.*”

“You know so perfectly what you ought to do, and I feel quite sure that God will give you the grace to do it courageously during this holy time of Lent that is now approaching.

“Be *determined* that between this and Easter Sunday you will not lie in bed one minute after you are conscious that it is time to get up, and if you do fail any one morning, give yourself a sharp penance, and be more determined not to do it again. In order to ensure this, mind to get to bed in proper time at night.

“Be able, for the love of our Lord, to tell me in your next letter that you have done this regularly and generously.

“You are right in saying that you cannot sincerely say to God ‘Give me Thy grace, I wish to be faithful,’ if you know that it is untrue, and you intend that it shall remain untrue. But you can say: ‘Give me Thy grace that I may begin to desire to be faithful to Thee.’ May God give you every grace.”

“*March 18, 1891.*”

“It is our duty to correct external faults; as they are easier than internal ones, and also seen by others, we should begin with them.

“I also could quite say of myself, unhappily, that ‘there is hardly a single action that is not stained by pride, self-love, and human respect.’ But I hope, both for you and myself, that not one of these is the sole or chief motive of what we do. But how difficult it is to do things purely for God! How perfect should we soon be if this were the case! Glad, indeed, should I be if I were certain that I did every day one single action solely for God.

“You say that you have not a shadow of devotion. I answer in the words of Thomas à Kempis: ‘Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion’ (Bk. I., xxi. 1), and, ‘That we have not divine comforts, or more seldom experience them, is our own fault, because we do not seek compunction of heart, nor cast off altogether vain and outward satisfactions.’ This last you do not do when you amuse yourself with useless reading before going to bed, doing your own will, satisfying your whim, instead of doing God’s will. ‘Why wilt thou put off thy purpose from day to day? Arise, and begin this very instant, and say, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend my life. When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time of merit. Thou must pass through fire and water before thou come to refreshment. Except thou do violence to thyself, thou wilt not overcome vice’ (Bk. I., xxii. 5).”

“*March 23, 1891.*”

“I will offer Holy Mass for your intention to-morrow, and I trust that God will bring great good out of all this trial. What I should advise you is to meditate much this Holy Week on the truth that your *own* sins caused the sufferings and death of our dear Lord. This is difficult to realise, but when once it is realised, it is a great power to make us love Him with a true love.”

“*June 17.*”

“We must not be disturbed or astonished that a habit of long standing is not overcome all at once. It would be extraordinary if it were—almost miraculous. Therefore, fight on about getting up punctually. *Nearly* all depends on that. If that bad habit of sloth be overcome the rest will follow.

“Besides the penance I gave you before, I now add this, that you cannot avoid:—

“I make the intention now of remembering you very specially in every Mass and in all my petitions every day. I now intend to include you:—

“ BUT

I intend now formally to *exclude* you from my Mass and from all my petitions, that day and every day on which you have not got up directly it is time. This will have effect for the day you lie in bed one minute past the time you ought to rise, if it be wilful.”

“ July 1st.

“ You *must* conquer yourself, however great the difficulty, and the first thing about which the victory must be gained is in the dreadful habit of laziness in the morning, because that affects the actions of the whole day, and it is our *ordinary* actions that are to make us holy. So fight on. It is sad to have lost the grace of five Communions. As a penance make fifty fervent spiritual communions.

“ Courage! Thank God for all sufferings of mind and offer them in reparation. If you feel pain at want of sympathy, and at meeting coldness instead, what must our Lord feel from your coldness and tepidity after so much love?

“ However many times we slip back, so many must we resolutely begin again with renewed fervour in God’s service. If we go on three feet every day, even though we slip back two and a half, we arrive at last.”

To a convert he writes in the September of the same year:—

“ The Holy Ghost says, ‘ Strive for justice for your soul, and even unto death fight for justice, and *God* will overthrow thy enemies for thee’—Eccles. iv. 33.

“ You have to *fight* and fight even unto death, yea, strive as in an agony; and then not you, but God will overthrow your enemies. ‘ It is God that worketh in you to *will* and to accomplish’—Phil. ii.

“ Study well the second chapter of the Book of Ecclesiasticus. It is a truly magnificent chapter and most practical in every word.

“ I will give you some most useful rules written by Cardinal Newman to a convert lady:—

- “ 1. Not to ask for reasons why.
- “ 2. Not to say ‘ I told you so.’
- “ 3. Not to desire to hear news.

"4. To be willing to be ignorant of many branches of knowledge. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach him out of Thy law.'

"5. Not to be eager for the explanation of Scripture difficulties, or difficulties and mysteries of Faith.

"6. In a conflict of opinions and judgments, instinctively to feel that you are less likely to be right than others. How much more if the 'other' is the Church of God!

"Pray for me. Let us make the compact together that all our petitions for ourselves shall include the other."

The "compact" here spoken of was one that Father Wilberforce made with many of his spiritual children and his more intimate friends. In a letter to his sister he tells her that his meaning in making this agreement is, "that whatever in prayer I ask for myself, I intend also to ask for them, and whatever they ask for themselves, they also ask for me and for those in compact with me. I also intend to include, by the word *compact*, in every Mass, those who have made it with me. Thus, without the distraction of thinking of them, I can pray constantly and especially for others."

Just before the Christmas of 1891 Father Bertrand had a fall in the priory garden at Haverstock Hill; his head was badly cut, and he was a good deal shaken. He was obliged to keep quiet for a week or two, and it was during this time that the doctor who attended him discovered the symptoms of diabetes, the disease from which he was to suffer so much, and against which he fought so bravely to the end. His thirst, even at this early date, had become so intense that he could not suffer himself to pass by a vessel of water when going to say Mass, and the doctor's verdict did not come as news to him, though to his friends it was a shock.

Early in 1892 he wrote to his sister, and after speaking of some Ushaw students who had lately died from a strange epidemic of rheumatism which flew suddenly to the heart and caused almost immediate death, he says:—

"It was very trying to the bishop and the authorities. But after all, what can a man do better in this world than get *well* out of it? I have known so many who have lived too long, that I cannot mourn those who go by the death that college boys die. To die at Ushaw I look on as a mark of predestination. '*Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur.*'"

"How strange to think you have spent eighteen years as a nun; they are gone like a dream. I used to think of our dearest father as quite an old man, and lo! I, in a very short

time, if I live, shall be as old. Ten short years more! I always expect to live about that time—though how uncertain it is! But I expect to reach sixty-two, or sixty-four; very unlikely more. Diabetes will have done its work by that time, easily.

“There is nothing to trust to but the Precious Blood, and I hope through that to attain to Life Eternal. How little we can comprehend that mystery! The majority of those we loved have gone, so we must get ready. A few more Masses, meditations, sermons, etc.—the number fixed, and lessening every day, and then the summons to go: ‘The Master is come and calleth for thee.’”

*To a Religious, on conversation with God.*

“I hope this year will be one of special blessing for you, and that you will be generous and faithful to our dearest Lord in it, as He certainly will be to you.

“I would advise you earnestly to read, re-read, and study two little treatises which, though small, are worth their weight in gold a thousand times over; one the treatise on *Conformity with the Will of God*, by St Alphonus; the other, *How to converse familiarly with God*, by Père Boutauld, S.J.

“What you need, it seems to me, is to change the conversation you so constantly hold with yourself about all manner of things, and especially about other people, into conversation with God; if you like, on the same topics, or about anything else. This one change would change you most truly and efficaciously, and make you holy and happy.

“Let your constant aspiration be, ‘Here I am, O Lord; do with me what Thou wilt; only give me Thy holy love.’

“Acts of love and constant offerings of ourselves and all we have into His hands are the one great means of cleansing the soul from the guilt of all past sins, whatever they may be. So trust in God, and be resigned to Him whatever happens, and all will be well.”

In a letter to A. B. he explains the difference between confession and direction:—

“TAUNTON, July 26, 1892.

“Father W—— is now the priest in ——, and I hope you will get on well with him. He is very kind, and quite as

able to help your soul as I could be, and quite as willing also. It is a great thing not to be too much dependent on one priest, so as to stay away from Holy Communion when you cannot get to that one. It is very right to ask advice of one who knows you, and not to change, but as to regular monthly or weekly confession it is important to think only of the Sacrament and to receive it from any priest that happens to be at hand, just as you receive Holy Communion from any priest who says Mass. Our Lord is always the same, and it is He who absolves, whoever gives us absolution. Advice is different. That is not a sacrament, and it is quite natural to seek it from one rather than another, either because one knows us better, or for some other reason.

“Pray for me and I will for you, and do so especially as the Feast of St Dominic draws near. Wishing you every blessing.”

In the midst of the letters of direction it is amusing to come upon the following note to a fellow-priest:—

“BAYSWATER, *August 26, 1892.*

“MY DEAR ———,

“I was owl enough to leave in your room a shaving-brush which, though of no very great intrinsic value, facilitates the delightful operation of shaving. Could you, in the charity of your heart, forward the same by Her Majesty’s post to me at the Catholic Church, Lancaster?

“I finish the retreat to the holy nuns here to-day, and go north to-morrow, and then on to Ireland to give the retreat in the seminary at Thurles.

“This is a fine convent, quite new, and fitted throughout with the electric light.

“I hope you have not found your Dante any the worse for its excursion. It was most kind of you to trust me with it. I treated it more carefully, you see, than my shaving-brush. It is a delightful edition, and I am most grateful.

“If you now can restore my lamented shaving-brush to the embrace of its mourning parent, every hair of my beard will declare you a benefactor. I hope that good lady to whom I gave Holy Communion sometimes, has not got hold of it—she needs it!

“I remain, yours very sincerely in Christ,

“F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

*To a Religious.*

“TAUNTON, July 31, 1892.

“What I should recommend is that you leave yourself more alone. It is not good for bodily health to be always brooding over symptoms, however real. The best way is to go on day by day, eating, sleeping, taking exercise, working, and leaving our health alone. The same for the soul. Go quietly on. Do not analyse your symptoms. Corrupt nature, as you say, is a bad tree, and can only bring forth bad fruits. It does so in you, and it does so in me. Grace is a good tree, and brings forth good fruit in us both, makes us pray, stop in our convents, obey, etc.

“Your conclusion, nature is a bad tree, therefore there is no use praying, is unsound. It ought to be, nature is very corrupt and weak, therefore my only salvation is in praying.

“Ask yourself, ‘What do I practically want? Is it to feel no struggle, no difficulty, to have no faults, no humiliating weaknesses and imperfections, but to feel myself very good and humble, and perfect?’ If so, that will never, and can never be till after death. So there is no use wanting it.

“To go on fighting is perfection, and the only perfection you, or I, or anyone else will ever get to.

“You complain you dislike going to Communion. What matter, as *long as you go*?

“The principle is, not to do as we like, or to like what we do, but to do whether we like it or not what we have reason to know GOD wants us to do.

“Have you reason to know God wants you to go to Holy Communion?

“‘Yes, Father.’ Then do it, whether you like it or dislike it.

“Till we take this principle, no peace can come. Leave your symptoms alone, and quietly do God’s will when you see it.”

*To the Same.*

“ST DOMINIC’S,

“NEWCASTLE, March 22, 1893.

“It is good not to speak when there are interior storms . . . grace keeps you from that. The next step is to fight against them more bravely within. Yes, I should think the sin less, if you gave way even interiorly, but managed to restrain the tongue. It is a first step, but let the next follow. It would be the best simply to act to please God, but you should not at the same time pride yourself on despising

the favour, goodwill, and affection of others. That would come from pride—a bad root that does not bear good fruit.

“No doubt there are many venial sins that your purpose of amendment has been very weak indeed about, but if there were *one* venial sin which you repented of and determined against, that would suffice for validity; or if there were any sin of the past either. That is one reason why it is so much more prudent always to accuse yourself of some clear past matter.

“‘All or nothing’ is true, 1st of mortal sin; 2nd, of one venial sin, if that were the only sin repented of, but not true in the sense that if you turned away from one venial and not the others, that the confession would be invalid.

“Certainly our Lord wills you to give yourself entirely to Him. Can you hesitate?

“The only way for the *Spiritual Combat* is to take it chapter by chapter and practise it when next temptation comes. Pray about it much.

“Try and pray for others and think of them more, and have less self-inspection.”

The following extracts are from some letters addressed to a lady whom Father Wilberforce received into the Church about this time:—

“July 1, 1893.

“Would you like to be received before I go, or to wait till my return? If you feel convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church, and can make an act of faith to God that the Catholic Church is His one church and has authority from Him, I do not see any use in putting it off. But I do not want to hurry you.

“If you would like to be received before I go, you had better begin to prepare for confession. It is well to go twice, once to begin your confession, and then to finish it just before your conditional baptism. The first time you may be confused, the second you may be calmer and more composed. Do not be nervous about confession. Remember that you kneel at the feet of our Lord and speak to Him, and try to forget His minister, a poor sinful man, who goes every week to confession himself, but who has power from our Lord, as minister of the Sacrament, to forgive your sins in the name and by the authority of Christ our Saviour.”

“July 8.

“Certainly you can be received at once. You will not find confession so very difficult; a sincere and truthful spirit,

sorrow for sin, and desire of pardon are all that are necessary. I will help you, so do not be nervous, but calm and quiet.

"What a wonderful grace our Lord has given you, calling you again, when you had turned from His sweet loving voice before.

"The painful, though well-meant words of others are trials, but can do you no harm. So say with St Paul: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'"

"July 12, 1893.

"I congratulate you most heartily on the happiness of making your first Holy Communion, and I trust it will begin a series of fervent Communions, that will end in gaining you perfect love of God in this life, and everlasting union of love with Him in Heaven. Go on quietly reading books of instruction, so as to get into the Catholic spirit. You should also take some spiritual reading for twenty minutes or half an hour in the day. A chapter of the New Testament, particularly of the Holy Gospels, some of the *Following of Christ*. Rodriguez, the book I spoke of yesterday, you will find most practical, as it tells how to do our ordinary duties and everyday actions for the glory of God, and in the way to please Him. Our holiness consists in doing our ordinary daily duties and actions to please God, *not* in doing extraordinary things.

"One great thing is to speak to God by aspirations, saying to Him, 'I do this to do Thy will. Here I am, O Lord; do with me whatever Thou wilt, only give me Thy holy love.'"

"July 31.

"I am glad you like Rodriguez; it is a really solid practical book, and one to read often, and to lay to heart. It is not sentimental, but practical: 'plain Tommy,' as I call it often. Bread and not cake, and I am so glad you appreciate bread and don't always want cake.

"Don't be distressed about wandering thoughts. They afflict us all; even St Teresa complained of them. The main thing is to *begin* well in the presence of God, and to call back the mind when you are conscious of distractions."

### *To a Religious.*

"CONVENT,  
"HARROW ON THE HILL, August 8, '93.

"Your letter pleased me much as it shows that you have a real determination to kill the lion, and I know that you will

certainly have the honey of divine consolation if you do. I know Pinamonti's book—it is good, terse, and to the point.

“Pride is your great enemy as you see yourself—well, to know the enemy is a great point gained. Now you must turn the batteries of prayer, Holy Communion, etc., etc., against it, and not be content to rest until it is completely rooted out, and Agag is cut to pieces before the Lord. You can't do it earlier now, but it is quite late enough; do not for God's sake imperil your eternal salvation by delay.

“*Peccantem me quotidie et non me penitentem, timor mortis conturbat me, quia in inferno nulla est redemptio.*”

“What will pride profit you in hell?”

“Your meditation on the Spirit of Christ is most important, a voice from God to you. Do not turn a deaf ear to that voice. Meditate on Sophonias iii. 1, 2: ‘Woe unto the *provoking* and *redeemed* city, the dove.’ You are redeemed, and by resistance to grace, by pride and other sins, constantly provoking God to hide His face from you. Then God enumerates four sins of omission:—

“1. She hath not hearkened to the voice.

“2. She hath not received discipline.

“3. She hath not trusted in the Lord.

“4. She hath not drawn near to God.

“It is rude to turn away and refuse to listen to the voice of God, speaking to you so clearly in so many different ways.

“It is dangerous not to receive discipline, and submit to our Lord's declared will.

“It is bad to say, it is too difficult, I can't; instead of trusting entirely in the Lord.

“It is unfaithful and unloving not to draw nigh to God, by humble mental prayer, sincere conversation with Him. You will certainly have much to fight against, but only pray and abandon yourself to our Lord, and you will certainly conquer.

“Your way is clear and simple, walk along it. You are in no perplexity of mind to know ‘what ought I to do,’ but the will to do it is the essential matter. Prayer only can gain you strength for your will, and remember the voice of our Lord to you, ‘you could if you would,’ do not be like Jerusalem that ‘hearkened not to the voice.’ You are better off than many in having a thoroughly well-organised convent to live in, a most charitable, humble, and zealous superior, a wise director, and a holy and enlightened confessor.

“*Prosperere procede et regna.*”

*To the Same.*

“DOMINICAN PRIORY, HAVERSTOCK HILL,  
“LONDON, N.W., *Sep.* 22, 1893.

“My advice to you is to follow the motto of St Francis of Sales, ‘ask for nothing and refuse nothing.’ I advise you to leave it entirely at our Lord’s disposal whether you have your purgatory in this world or in the next, as it is better in His sight, for His glory and for your salvation. In this there can be no danger, it is the humbler course, and the one I strongly recommend you. In the meantime, follow the good inspiration of your retreat by taking all the unpleasant things that happen every day as your purgatory.

“Instead, therefore, of asking for your purgatory here, say to our Lord, ‘Dear Master, I dare not, being so weak and sinful, presume to ask for my purgatory, but I offer myself to Thee. Do with me what Thou wilt, give me grace to bear all things that come, patiently, nay joyfully, as my purgatory.’

“As to Holy Communion. It is not easy to point out the exact fruit of each Communion. Try and make them well and they are sure to increase grace though you cannot point out how. Grace is invisible. Could you point out the exact good your dinner yesterday did to your body? Yet if you stopped eating you would find it was doing you good.

“One fruit for your Holy Communion is that you are still in Religion asking to pray for your purgatory here, instead of an apostate delighting and glorying in sin.

“The way to make meditation and Holy Communion fruitful, is to have one thing you mean to do that day, and to pray for grace to do it.

“If any relation wants to make you a present, ask for Father Kenelm Vaughan’s *Scripture Text-Book*. Truly admirable.”

Towards the end of the year 1893, Mother Francis Raphael Drane, Prioress-Provincial of the Stone congregation, was taken ill with what proved in a short time to be gangrene in the right foot. The disease developed rapidly at first, and she received the Last Sacraments at the beginning of December. Mother Francis Raphael had a very special regard for Father Bertrand and held him in great esteem as a spiritual director. Now, as her sufferings increased and the end seemed to be drawing near, she begged that he might be sent for. It was only a flying visit, but his words strengthened and encouraged her in her sufferings, and in the early part of the following year he returned to Stone and

spent some weeks there. Mother Provincial died on the 30th of April 1894, and Father Wilberforce preached her funeral sermon, as he had done that of her predecessor.

The two letters which follow were written to one of the community soon after his first visit.

"ST DOMINIC'S, LONDON,  
"Dec. 5, 1893.

"I know you are now under the Cross, with all your religious sisters; and that you have personally a deep wound of sorrow in your heart, on account of the beloved and venerable mother, about to go to her reward.

"She has been a real mother to you, and especially a mother to your soul, and it must be a bitter and intense grief to part with her. God, in fact, asks of you now to make lovingly the sacrifice of His most precious earthly gift to you. The one comfort is that the trial, great as it is, comes *direct* from His loving hands. But still it must give you very sharp agony, and it is a sorrow that will increase, because you will feel it more after she has gone.

"There is no one to fill her place; no one like her. She is a choice soul, highly endowed, that God does not often give. All the more reason for thankfulness that He has given her all these years. When she goes, HE remains. What a mercy, that we need never be separated from Him, unless we *will* to be.

"I shall pray for you, and of course I pray continually for her. I rejoice that I had the privilege of seeing her so lately.

"My brotherly sympathy to one and all."

"Dec. 7, 1893.

"Many thanks for your letter. It is a privilege to hear of God's dealings with His friends, especially when they are in proximate preparation to see His bright face, with a look of love, welcoming them.

"You have the opportunity of the most meritorious sacrifice of what you prize most in the world.

"'Humility, sweetness, and intense love of God;'—may those be our three pillows also, when we lie down to commend our souls to Him."

## CHAPTER VIII

1894—1896

IN the following extracts from letters to one of his penitents Father Wilberforce gives some advice on the subjects of fervour and perseverance:—

“I am so glad to hear you have been making an effort. You cannot expect to change all at once, but the effort is the most important matter. As the exterior is now better, you must work away in the interior. If pride rages interiorly the first victory is not to let it appear, and then to try to calm it more quickly within.”

“*March 28, 1894.*”

“All Easter graces! Your acts to God are good if ‘I wish to love Thee’ means, ‘I will to love Thee, and intend to take means so to do’: it is not good if it only means, ‘I should like to love Thee, if it gave me no trouble and implied no self-sacrifice.’

“You can say: ‘I love Thee but I do not love Thee as I ought; make me love Thee more and more.’”

“*April 18, 1894.*”

“No habit, no matter how many years it has been indulged in, is insurmountable. It can be overcome if you take the means, but not unless. It will not overcome itself.

“I do not see that ——’s deathbed can be called terrible.

“It would be terrible if she were without faith, hope, and charity, but with a high degree of these virtues that unite us to God, mere suffering is not so terrible. It is terrible to *witness* in those we love but not so to undergo. God knows how to lighten His burden and to sweeten His yoke. Looking on, we see the suffering but not the interior grace to lighten it.

"Never be faint hearted. However many times you fall into faults—and how often that will be—come back to God as a child when it has fallen; it cries to its mother that she may help it to rise. The mother stoops down and hastens to lift up her little one. God does in like manner.

"Courage, Courage, Courage!  
"Fight, Fight, Fight!

"To him that shall overcome I will give to sit down with Me on My throne.'

"Keep faithful to the rosary, and our Lady will help you to overcome yourself. Do not let the joyful season of Easter make you negligent, for our Lord is always the same, always merits all our love, and we were never so near death as now.

"Our Lord has promised very emphatically 'Whatsoever you ask the Father in *My Name*, that I will do' (St John xiv.). How are we to understand this *whatsoever*? Many things are asked by us and not obtained. It is clear that we must ask in the Name of Christ Jesus. Now anything that helps our souls to love Him, we can certainly ask for in His Name. Ask then, during this holy octave for fervour, but do not contradict your words by what you do.

"Motives of fervour :—

"1. Shortness of life. We live once only; a short life, quickly going, and on this life depends all for eternity. What a fool you will think yourself in fifty years' time! One degree of *eternal* everlasting glory is a great matter, a momentous affair.

"2. Happiness and joy depend on fervour. Fervour makes our life happy, rendering all things easy and pleasant.

"Mental prayer to the fervent is joy, to the tepid a bore and a burden. Rosary a delightful offering to our Lady to the fervent, dry and uninteresting to the tepid.

"Be 'in carefulness not slothful, in spirit fervent, serving the Lord.'"

*To a Convert.*

"Do not be afflicted when you do not feel 'comfort in prayer.' We pray, or ought to pray, not for comfort, but to please God, and when our prayers give us less pleasure, we are most sure that in saying them we are moved by God's grace.

"It is well during the day to say the rosary, and this is easy, as you can say it anywhere—in the garden, or your armchair—and a mystery at a time, if you like. I think it is a

help to kneel before a crucifix and say a short loving prayer a great many times. It is better often not to say it with the lips, but only the soul, because it is then easier to prevent its being mechanical. This is how our Lord prayed in the garden."

*To a Religious.*

"ST WILLIAM'S SCHOOL,  
"MARKET WEIGHTON, April 14, 1894.

"1. The way to fight against jealousy is to wish and pray that others may excel, and in the very point that you are jealous of. That dispels the clouds quickly.

"2. A habit of recollection would be to think *often* of God in a direct manner and *always* in an indirect way. By an indirect way I mean that we are thinking of God whenever we are thinking of what He wills us to be thinking at that time, for we are then serving Him with our minds. We must try to love Him with 'our whole minds.' No number of aspirations can be fixed, for they should go on increasing. 'The path of the just as a shining light goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day' (Prov. iv. 18). The sun rises and goes on till mid-day.

"3. How can I get on a higher level? By prayer and mortification.

"Aspire to the level God wills you to be on. Seek Him and not perfection. Of course you will always be full of faults, but try always to do His will, and delight in it and all will be well. Leave yourself alone and think of God. *Funes peccatorum circumplexi sunt me, et legem Tuam non sum oblitus.* The cords of sinners (or sins) have encompassed me, O Lord; yet Thy law I have not forgotten, and I will try to please Thee, and do Thy will (Ps. cxviii. 61-4). As to acts of conformity, I like this one: 'I thank Thee, my God, for doing Thy own will in Thy own way, because it is Thy will. Here I am, O Lord, do with me whatever Thou wilt, only give me Thy holy love.'

"Pray to our Lord to 'prostrate' you with St Paul and then to speak to you. *BONUM mihi quia humiliasti me.*

"God does not mean you to be a saint in the sense of an extraordinary example to others, but He means you and me and all of us to be *holy* by loving His will."

Father Wilberforce had been for some little time engaged on the translation of the *Retraite sur l'Amour de Dieu*, by Père Grou, S.J. The book was a great favourite with him,

particularly the little treatise of the second part, on "Abandonment to God." His translation was published by St Anselm's Society in May 1894—without his name, however. From a motive of modesty, he called himself on the title-page merely "A Dominican Father."

In a letter to his sister he mentions this book:—

"ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE,  
"UPHOLLAND, WIGAN, *May 14, 1894.*

"MY DEAREST SISTER,

"Yesterday surely was your birthday: the 13th May seems so connected with you, as the Queen of May in old, old days, that it must be. I will say Mass for you to-morrow as a birthday present, and in a day or two will send you my book that I heard to-day is out. We have called it *A little Book of the Love of God*, and I hope that it will do good, and that you will like it. It is very different from Monsignor Weld's book on the *Love of God*. Have you ever seen that? Did you see the report of my sermon for the funeral of dear Mother Provincial at Stone? She was a beautiful soul and is a real loss. I have sent to the *Month* her masterly essay, 'On the Imagination, its uses and abuses,' which is well worth reading. I wrote a little introduction, but the editor says as it is to come out under his name, he must write the introduction.

"After this retreat, which ends on Saturday, I am to give a short one at Kensington Square Convent, for First Communion, and then the mission at Wardour for a fortnight. It is to begin on the Sunday after Corpus Christi.

"This is a new college, opened about ten years ago by the late Bishop of Liverpool. It is only for church students, and is a fine massive building, but simple, rather stern in style."

"*May 18, Friday.*

"I said the Mass for you, my dear one, and I trust that God will fill your heart with all the gifts and fruits of His Holy Spirit."

To Miss Capes he writes:—

"ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE,  
"UPHOLLAND, *Whit Monday.*

"Excuse me for having neglected to answer your letter before. I got it before I left Stone.

"I thought of you, for I knew how deeply you would feel

the loss of our dear and reverend Mother [Francis Raphael Drane], for she has, I know, been a true mother to you.

"We must thank God for having bestowed her upon us, and for having allowed us to know and love her." . . .

After some references to the projected *Memoir* of Mother Francis Raphael, he continues :—

"Besides this, we intend to publish a most charming manuscript of hers, called *Expansions of Scripture Texts*. I am to edit this, and the work is simply delightful. The only regret is that she did not go on and give us many more, but what there is we must be thankful for and prize.

"It is seldom that so many-sided a person appears, and we cannot expect to have her place filled up.

"The post just going.

"Ever in our Lord, etc."

To a Religious he makes some remarks on vocal and mental prayer :—

"WARDOUR CASTLE,

"June 13, 1894.

"Of course acts must be 'thought,' otherwise the soul could not make them at all. What I meant was that if you make, say fifty acts of love, if you say the words with your lips and tongue, it is more likely to become mechanical than if you make them with the mind only. Thoughts directed to God are words. What is the Eternal Word? Not a sound, but the Eternal Mind of the Father.

"The reason why you must not say Office with the eyes only is that 'Recitation' is ordered—that is, vocal, as well as mental prayer. Again, of course if you were to content yourself with mental acts of love and not show love by external acts and by keeping the Commandments, it would be inconsistent.

"The fortnight's mission here has now ended, and I return home to-day. Next Sunday week I am to begin a mission in Bognor for which I ask your prayers."

In the August of this year Father Wilberforce paid another visit to Neuenahr, this time, however, merely with the object of keeping down the disease which he well knew could never be cured. He owed many of these visits to the kindness and generosity of some of his friends, whom he used to say he could only repay by his prayers.

On the eve of his departure he wrote to a Dominican Religious :—

"ST DOMINIC'S,  
"LONDON, August 6, 1894.

"I am glad you have the Psalter safely.<sup>1</sup> I registered it. It is a relief to me that you have it again, for one day I could not find it, and I felt miserable. To have to write and say, 'I do not know where it is' would have been too dreadful!

"To-night I go to Germany.

"I preached yesterday on our Holy Father, thinking much of dear M. F. R., and quoting her. I took 'St Dominic's gift of holy joy,' and my text you would like, I am sure—St John iii. 29:—

"The *friend* of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, *rejoiceth with joy*, because of the *Bridegroom's voice*.'

"Our Lord is, of course, the Bridegroom; the Church, or the soul, the Bride. I showed how emphatically St Dominic was the 'Friend of the Bridegroom,' and quoted St Teresa's vision at Segovia, and our Lord saying, 'Rejoice with My Friend.' Then I showed why he rejoiced; the fountains of his joy.

"We must try to be Friends of the Bridegroom; and love Him, that we may see Him, as the apostles did to-day. 'They saw Jesus only.'

"While desolation lasts *patience* is the one thing. Give yourself to prayer, even if you can only kneel at the stone wall, waiting. He is behind, and can see through the wall, though you cannot. Kneel and say: 'I thank Thee, O Lord, for doing Thy own will in Thy own way, because it is Thy will.'

"What crucifies, sanctifies.

"In your retreat be very patient. Take half-hours of prayer if you are in darkness, and make dry acts of resignation and offering of self to Him. In His good time light will come. It is good for you, lest you should seek yourself in prayer. All rejoice when they see the Lord. Even Herod 'was very glad when he saw Jesus,' but badly, for self-love. Seek Him for Himself; that is, seek His will in His own way. He is *nearer* to you now than ever."

The prayer by Fénélon, which is given in the following letter, was one Father Wilberforce was very fond of. He had written it out in a small manuscript book that he carried about with him, and he often copied and recommended it to

<sup>1</sup> This was an English Psalter which had belonged to Mother Francis Raphael, and was full of her own notes. It had been lent to Father Bertrand with many injunctions to return it safely.

others. The letter is to a young lady who was going into a convent:—

“BAD NEUENHAR, *Aug.* 14.

“I hope you are keeping up your spirits, and not allowing yourself to be depressed, for after all you have only a short time to wait before going to ——. In the lives of the fathers of the desert we read that one waited at the door of the monastery a long time, many months, I am not sure it was not years, asking to be admitted. At last they allowed him to enter.

“So God is giving you a trial of patience also; but not a very long one. I will pray for you to our Lady to-morrow. The feast here is celebrated on the Sunday, but the Mass is said for the Assumption to-morrow. The people here are devout Catholics, and there are beautiful little chapels up and down, with images of our Lady, etc.—little roadside chapels.

“Say this prayer of Fénelon every day:—‘O my good God, I leave myself in Thy divine hands. Turn about this clay, turn it in this way or in that, according to Thy pleasure. Give it a form, then, if Thou pleasest, break it in pieces; it is Thine, it has nothing to say, it is enough that it answers all Thy purposes, and that nothing resists Thy good pleasure, for which it was created. Enjoin, demand, forbid. What wouldst Thou have me to do? What wouldst Thou have me forbear? Whether exalted or debased, in comfort, or in suffering, employed in Thy service or useless in everything, I will equally adore and praise Thee, sacrificing all self-will to Thee. I have nothing left, but with Thy Blessed Mother I desire to say from my heart—be it done unto me according to Thy will. Amen.’”

*To the Same on Temptations.*

“CANNINGTON,

“BRIDGEWATER, *Nov.* 21, 1894.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“When thoughts pass through the imagination, or dwell there for a considerable time, there is no sin, however bad the thought is, as long as the will does not consent.

“It is not well to examine this much, because that is the way to encourage scruples. It is enough if you ask yourself, ‘Am I certain I gave consent?’ and if you are not certain, then you may conclude that there was not full consent at least; even though there might have been some weakness and want of prompt control of the thoughts.

"You must remember also that you cannot help feeling a kind of attraction in the mind; that is the temptation, but if you would rather that the thought should depart, and not remain, there is no consent.

"The whole matter is to consider the *will*, not the feelings.

"The difficulty of convent life, to which you are looking forward, is not in fasting, etc., but in giving up self-will and self-love, and seeking God only.

"Give my blessing to your sister, who is, I hope, well and happy.

"I shall be here till Saturday; then,

"'The Keep,' Dartmouth.

"God bless you."

To another correspondent he writes on the same subject:—

"Do not be surprised or troubled that evil thoughts come into the imagination. You cannot help that sometimes, and the enemy suggests them. If there is no consent there is no sin, for sin cannot be, as it is often wrongly called, 'a misfortune'—that is, a thing that happens to us against our own will and desire. St Catherine's temptations will always help you when you feel that you did not consent, and wished the thought away.

"As for our Lord not being able to love you, that is, if you will allow me to say so, nonsense. It is only a subtle form of depression and discouragement, and *not from God.*"

To a lady who felt some anxiety on the subject of her confessions he writes:—

"Dec. 10.

"Whose confessions have not been imperfect? I am sure that I have never in my life made one that was not in every respect most imperfect. But we imperfect beings are sure to do everything in an imperfect way.

"The dark cloud that comes over your mind is a suffering, but it must not prevent you from praying to God. Your religious duties at that time are far more pleasing to God than when they give you much pleasure.

"The great thing is to try and look at God and not at ourselves. If we look at ourselves we shall be disgusted. If we look at God, we shall be filled with hope, love, and joy.

"I wish you and your family every grace and blessing."

Again and again Father Wilberforce insists on the

necessity of disregarding "feelings" in the spiritual life. In a letter to one of his convert penitents he writes:—

"January 9, 1895.

"Your news about the Church fills me with gratitude to God for His goodness, in doing good to souls in spite of all my defects and shortcomings. Nothing is so joyful as to feel that a soul has been helped by anything I have been able to do.

"You say that you 'seem to get cold and disheartened at so little.' Ups and downs in the spiritual life are sure to be felt, and come from various causes, and the chief lesson is to plod on courageously, whatever one feels and whatever happens.

"Remember that the feelings are not to be considered in the spiritual life. God does not look to the feelings but to the will. This is of great importance, for the feelings reside in the sensitive part of the soul, which is the lowest part, and the feelings are influenced by health, weather, circumstances, etc. We must not mind them; if we do, we shall pray when we are inclined, and not when we feel no pleasure from our intercourse with God."

*To a Religious.*

"ST DOMINIC'S,  
"LONDON, Jan. 10, 1895.

"I have been for some ten days in the infirmary with an attack of rheumatism in the head and neck, and to-day said Mass for the first time this year. But as I got your letter this morning, and the sun was shining, I went after Vespers to — House, as I thought it might do good.

"I am sure you are right about your resolution. The one for you, and the one that will give you real peace, and advance your soul to God, is that most essential one, of looking to God and not self.

"About self-examination just the same is true. Look at God in it, and not so much at self. St Gregory says that when we look at God we are sure to see the things that lie between us and Him. Go on looking at Him, even if you have committed faults, even if deliberate ones against charity, and of selfishness. Don't contemplate these things in yourself, but see them as things standing between you and God, and therefore to be knocked down by earnest acts of loving contrition, and of contrite love.

"I am so glad that the struggle with self on New Year's day ended in a victory over self—over Apollyon. At such times fly into the Arms of God. 'God is our Refuge and our Strength, and a very present help in our troubles'—Ps. xlv.

"You are quite right only to look at the troubles of to-day and to ignore others. The grace to bear future ones has not come yet, and will not come before the time. You can see, in a vague way, the trials, but you cannot see the grace God will send with them.

"Write whenever I can be of any use."

*To a Novice.*

"EDGE HILL,  
"LIVERPOOL, Feb. 18, 1895.

"You must put yourself completely into our Lord's hands, to do with you what He wills, and in order to do so, put yourself entirely into the hands of your superior. You must make an act of faith that she has the spirit of the Order, and that our Lord wills that you should learn that spirit from her.

"I am so glad that you already experience peace in the Religious Life, and if you strive to be a humble, obedient Religious, loving and seeking God only, you will have more and more peace and happiness, till at last it will become perfect and eternal.

"Do not let the thought that God does not call you to so holy a state trouble you in the least. He does call you, not because you are worthy, but because He is good."

*To the Same.*

"ST ANNE'S,  
"EDGE HILL, Feb. 25, 1895.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Despise the phantoms against faith, and go on manfully with the Shield of Faith (Eph. vi.). Make many humble Acts of Faith.

"Be simple and humble with your mistress.

"Detachment is a thing that must come gradually, and cannot be got in a moment. To be detached means to love God only, in all things, for His own sake. This is *Perfection*. You are not perfect. If you get to it at death, it will be a grand thing. You must aim at it.

"The whole Religious Life is meant to detach our love from other things, and to make us love God only.

“Go on praying for the mission. We have the Forty Hours from Tuesday till Thursday.

“Give your mistress my kindest regards, and tell her to get the novices to pray for souls during Lent.

“Love the Sacred Heart, and you will always have peace, which surpasses all understanding.

“Wishing you true love of God for His own sake.

“I remain in J.M.D.,

“F. B. WILBERFORCE.”

The same day he writes to another Religious:—

“ST ANNE'S PRIORY,  
“EDGE HILL, *Feb.* 25, 1895.

“MY DEAR SISTER,

“Thank you much for your kind letter. Poor —— has saddened my heart indeed.

“Either he is insincere, and then it is a case of the most detestable hypocrisy and cant, worthy of Pecksniff, or he is now sincere, and then it is the most amazing and inexplicable diabolical delusion I have ever encountered. It shows what we may come to if we follow our own feelings as a guide, and imagine them to be God's voice.

“I quite feel what you say about, ‘Will you also go away?’

“Your Slough of Despair is a temptation. You must go quietly on in blind faith, and trying your best to cultivate loving hope in God.

“Fervour you have; tepid you are not; you have none of the signs. You have not the *feeling* of fervour. Don't mind the fact of not realising anything. Go on from day to day, and say every day that prayer Mother Margaret was so fond of: ‘I come to Thee, O my Centre and Sweetness,’ etc. You know it, I suppose.<sup>1</sup>

“It all arises in great measure from bodily weakness and nervous exhaustion. It is more physical than spiritual.

“The nightmare thought, the suggestion of the flesh and the devil, must be met by a humble act of faith. It is a trial and cross. ‘Yes, Lord, I believe; I will serve Thee now, and leave all to Thee.’

“It would be a delusion of Satan to stay away from our Lord on account of such a thought.

“For Lent, put more love and intention into all you do.

<sup>1</sup> The prayer alluded to is taken from *The Spiritual Conflict and Conquest*, page 347, edition of 1874.

We serve the good, loving, tender Lord, who cannot misunderstand anything, and who knows all. So do not fear. It is never an impossibility to make a dry act of love in the will.

“God bless you.”

The following letter, as well as several others to the same correspondent, has its own heading, affixed by the person to whom it was addressed. In some cases the question to which Father Wilberforce replies has been sent in full:—

To \* “*one living in retirement, suffering from ill-health and despondency.*”

“CONVENT, STONE,  
“March 15, 1895.

“DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST,

“Our loving Father, who has allowed your health to be affected, does not look on you as responsible for the black feelings of despair that trouble you. God, who loves you so much that He would die for you alone, if it were necessary, looks at what you *do*, not at what you *feel*.

“You have left the world and are living in a religious house in order to keep good. That shows your will to be good. You want to do God’s holy will. Still you *feel* dark, and black, and miserable. That is a suffering and a great penance, but in your state of health God does not look on it as a sin. Why not? Because you cannot help it. It is your *misfortune* and not your *fault*. Sin is not and never can be a *misfortune*. It is a misery, but must be *wilful*.

“Now as to your questions. You ask, ‘Will God hear me, though I can pray but very little?’ Certainly He will, without any doubt. Pray quietly and calmly without effort as much as your strength allows you, and God will certainly hear you and pardon you through the Precious Blood of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Say sometimes, ‘Lord be merciful to me a sinner.’

“You ask secondly, ‘If I die soon what short devotions will best enable me to die a good death?’ The devotion to the Precious Blood that our loving Redeemer shed for you. Say, ‘O Eternal Father, I offer up to Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and my Redeemer, for my sins and the whole world.’ (There is an indulgence for this.) Turn to our loving Mother Mary, the refuge of sinners, and say, ‘Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, a sinner, to

thy Son Jesus.' Never think of hell. It is not for you. God will give you heaven for ever.

"God bless you."

*To a Religious.*

"MARIA HILF,  
"BAD NEUENAHN, June 29, 1895.

"Many thanks for your interesting letter that I was delighted to receive, in my exile from home.

"We had a most devout and edifying procession on Corpus Christi, all round the little town; all houses shut, and all the people following, singing, and praying. Four chapels of repose, and I carried our Lord from the last to the Church.

"Never be afraid of interior peace as long as it is humble, and as long as you realise that it is not from self, but because the light of His face is shining upon you. God loves Peace: 'My Peace I give unto you.' 'Fear not; Peace be unto you;' 'It is I, be not afraid.' 'Let not your heart be troubled,' etc., etc., etc. How many thousand times have you said, 'Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy Peace.' So do not be afraid, because He gives it to you.

"Though you have not asked me, I should advise you strongly to ask leave of your confessor to go to Holy Communion six times in the week. Go often: as often as you can, because,

- "1. Jesus Christ desires it;
- "2. The Church invites you;
- "3. The saints counsel it;
- "4. Our needs demand it;

and lastly,

- "5. Your director allows it.

"Soon the night cometh, when no man can work.'

"I am to preach at West Grinstead on July 16, on our Lady of Consolation.

"Ever, in the loving heart of Jesus,

"F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

*To the Same. Advice for following a preached retreat.*

"THE PRIORY,  
"LONDON, July 23, 1895.

"I do not know the Father who is to give your retreat, but I shall pray that his labours may have every blessing on them.

“ My advice would be to go quietly and hopefully—I mean trustfully, into the retreat, and listen to what the Father says, and if a point strikes you, I would advise you to pray about it afterwards, without much thought or mental strain.

“ I certainly consider it not only unnecessary, but hurtful and imprudent, to try *to go into* every subject the preacher touches on. You could not do it, and to try would only weary the mind, and do you harm.

“ Nor is an hour’s reading necessary, unless the rule binds you to it, and then you might ask leave to shorten it, if your mind feels tired.

“ No doubt the word of God, spoken, is often a grace, and brings light, but there may be *one* word for you, or perhaps one each day. When that strikes you and is in harmony with your mind, pray about it quietly.

“ Prize very much the calm of mind and soul that our Lord has given you, and do not follow out any line of thought, however good in itself, that you feel might disturb this calm. I understand what you mean quite clearly, and I am sure you ought to avoid anything that would tend to entangle you or to disturb you.

“ This calm and freedom of soul is a distinct and valuable grace from God, and you ought to prize it, to be most thankful for it, to cherish it, and to avoid anything that would endanger it. I am most thankful that you are, by His grace, getting more ‘established on God.’ Why should it be presumptuous? Why should not the soul improve, after years of struggle and prayer?—of course, with God’s grace. *‘Regi sæculorum immortalis et invisibilis soli Deo honor et gloria in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.’*<sup>1</sup> It is quite right to dread and avoid anything that may upset that, or even run a risk of interfering with it, and the retreat ought to increase and deepen it instead of destroying it.

“ I should advise very little detailed examination of conscience. Pass over a great deal. Ask yourself about resignation and generosity with God.

“ Do not allow anything that is said to make you think yourself lukewarm in the bad sense. We all of us are tepid in comparison to the burning love we ought to have, but in the theological sense, *you are not tepid*, and do not make any meditation on that.

“ As to Holy Communion, follow the direction I gave you before. We none of us deserve any communions, but our Lord does deserve to be received, and we should go as often

<sup>1</sup> “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—I Tim. i. 17.

as we can, because our Lord desires it, the Church exhorts us to it, the saints advise it, and our own needs require it. How little fit am I, alas! to say Mass every day, or ever!

“Keep yourself very quiet during the retreat, not overtaxing nerves and brain, nor loading the mind with many thoughts, but gently let a few sink down into your soul, and pray about them.

“The object of the retreat for you is not to be converted from sin to God, but to bring your will into closer union with God’s will. Do not then meditate on disturbing subjects; they will do you harm rather than good, and resist troubling thoughts, as coming from the devils, the rulers of the world of this darkness.

“God loves you, and wants you to love him more. And how do we love Him? By loving His will and abandoning ourselves, and all we have, and all we love, to Him, calmly and quietly, and then He will work, and will give you more love.

“I wonder how you will all like Father —; it will be a change, and I daresay will give new lights. I should like the list of his meditations and conferences.

“God bless you and all.”

To another penitent he writes on the necessity of self-denial:—

“Oct. 14, 1895.

“I know well by experience, how difficult it is to fight against habits of self-indulgence, but I know also that there is nothing to do but to fight on in a dogged and persevering way.

“No amount of talking about it or writing about it will advance matters one bit unless the will is resolved to conquer.

“So I told you, and tell you again, that you do not need direction in these matters. A direction post is only necessary when the way is doubtful, but here the way is quite clear and straightforward; the only thing is to go along it, but that no one can do for you.

“If you want encouragement, I will give you that from my heart, and bid you trust in God as if that were the only thing to do, and fight as if all depended on you alone.

“God has His merciful hand without doubt over you, but He requires correspondence. Remember the Gospel of last Sunday. ‘Dicite *invitatis*.’ Say to them that were *invited*. He *invites* but does not *force* us. Be regular with spiritual reading; it is most necessary. You must be resolved to get

up the moment you are called—a simple matter you ought to have learnt long ago.

“Remember that mental prayer will renew the fervour of a soul, however low it may have got. St Teresa says this.”

“*Dec. 3.*”

“What I told you before is the truth; you must deny yourself.

“Do what we will;

“Go where we will;

“Read whatever we will;

all will be useless till we make up our minds to deny ourselves.

“That is the root of all your disorder, and no direction can do any good till you make up your mind to deny yourself. Till then the sentence holds good: ‘You cannot be My Disciple.’”

The first letter of 1896 is addressed to a novice:—

“ST DOMINIC’S PRIORY, N.W.,

“*Jan. 4, 1896.*”

“I wish you every grace for the New Year.

“Why be discouraged because you see your faults more? It is a blessing to do so, and teaches us humility. You must expect to see yourself worse and worse as you advance. How could there be any progress in self-contempt if we saw ourselves getting better and better? We should then only love and esteem ourselves more and more. Learn then not to look at self but at God, and all will be well. We must try to grow worse in our own sight, as we do when grace enlightens us, and then we shall grow better in God’s sight.

“Your sister called at ——. The nuns and especially the superior liked her very much and hoped she would come, but she was not attracted. You must not be cast down about her. God will provide, and it would have been wrong to stay at home to comfort her, when God called you elsewhere.

“All will be well with us when we begin to rejoice in being allowed to suffer for Christ.”

*To B. H., on the death of her father.*

“HAVERSTOCK HILL,  
“Jan. 25, 1896.

“MY DEAR CHILD,

“I got both your letters together last night, on my return from Bruges, in Belgium, where I have been giving a retreat to the English residing in the town.

“So God has called your dear, good old father to Himself. A most happy thing for him, though a sad loss of course to you. Your true and solid consolation is that your dear father led a holy Christian life, and did his best to serve and love God.

“It was very nice that his last words were ‘thank God,’ and thanking Him, not for some personal thing for himself, but for a matter that promotes the honour and glory of God.

“I most earnestly join in your prayer; may my end be like his, and to bring this about, we must take care to make our lives as much like his as we can.

“You may be sure I shall pray for him, and offer the Holy Mass for him, dear old man.

“What are you going to do, my dear B——? Are you going to live on in the old house? You will feel of course very desolate for a long time, for looking after your dear father has been the great object and interest of your life, and you must feel the gap terribly.

“I will pray for you and I hope you will for me, and may God Himself console you and comfort you, and reward you for all you have done for your dear old father.

“God bless you.”

To a person who objected to go to Mass in a certain church lest she should there meet someone whom she disliked Father Wilberforce wrote some energetic words of warning:—

“GREENWICH, Feb. 27, 1896.

“I wonder much that you should not see the deceit of the devil in what you say. In his craft the wicked one suggests to you to commit a real mortal sin, to crucify our Lord, and to offend God, in order not to have the little contest with self in seeing someone else in church.

“Overcome the devil. Forget anyone else is there but our Lord and you, and overcome yourself. It is a most manifest snare of the devil.

“Watch and pray, for your enemy the devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

“Stand against the deceits of the most wicked one.

“When before the judgment seat, will our Lord say that it was a good reason for disobedience, because you did not like seeing someone else in church?

“Pray; Pray; Pray.

“Pray with humility, confidence, and perseverance. Ask for light to see and grace to do God’s holy will, and all will be well.

“Read St Matt. xxv., and every day read some holy book.

“God bless you.”

In Lent he writes to another :—

“During this holy time you must let the thought of our Lord’s exceeding love move you to a fervent return of love.

“Stand before your Crucifix and say :—

“‘This is what He did for me.

“‘What have I done for Him?

“‘What am I now going to do?’

“The fear of wilful venial sin does not diminish but augments from day to day if you meditate on His sufferings, the love with which He suffered, and what a deliberate venial sin made Him suffer.

“When I am at —, I will do what I can for you. But if a doctor has told a man over and over again not to drink if he wants health, and the man persists, what can the poor doctor do? You know what to do better than I can tell you : do it.

“Be very earnest in praying to our Lord on the Cross during these days for the spirit of compunction, and for grace to deny yourself, for in that all consists.

“Ask the same for me, for though I speak of it and know how important these things are, I do not practise them.”

“April 15.

“You will never find that Peace which our risen Lord wishes us all, except in trying to do His will in little things, rather than your own.

“Never fancy He has abandoned you. He never will unless you abandon Him.” . . .

Later in the year he writes to the same :—

“A book has just come out, written by Mother Francis Raphael Drane, though only published now, called, *The Spirit of the Order of St Dominic*. I recommend to your

notice the chapter on 'Early Rising,' and page 199 in particular—and how Sister Mary Casavanti heard the devil saying: 'Yes, we will stay here together.'

The next letter is addressed to a young nephew:—

"ST PATRICK'S,  
"LEEDS, *Easter Monday*, 1896.

"I wish you, and through you, your father and mother, all Easter graces and joy, and after many happy and holy Easters, the true Easter joy in the glory of the Resurrection in Heaven.

"I have in my letter-case a piece of paper that reproaches me every time I see it, written with W——'s own hand: 'As many photographs as possible (rather a large order!), and be sure that they are nice.' How am I to ensure that? I think them rather nasty. But where are they, nice or nasty, you will say? They are at the Priory, N.W., dear boy, and I cannot send them till I get back there.

"My work here ends on Low Sunday, and on the Sunday after that I am to begin a mission at a place called Holmeon-Spalding Moor, near York.

"Just before coming here I was giving a week's renewal of the mission I gave last November at Hawick, in Scotland. The priest there has a very amusing Irish terrier, who is a great companion to him. His name is Denis, called after Father Denis, of the Birmingham Oratory, who is a friend of the owner of the dog. Denis dislikes cats in a perfectly orthodox dog manner, and guards the garden against the invasion of any Scotch Presbyterian cat. If Father Lyle opens the window of the sitting-room and says, 'Presbyterian Tom; tell it to go away,' Denis, however sound asleep by the fire, rushes out barking. If you say, 'Denis, sing,' he will sit up and beg, and putting his nose straight up in the air, will howl in the most absurd and lugubrious way, wagging his tail all the time. He walks on his hind legs all across the room for a tit-bit—not for *Tit-bits*, but for bread, or a bone. He often makes Father Lyle go out a healthy walk when he would not otherwise.

"Hawick is not far from where Sir Walter Scott lived, and we went over to see the ruins of Melrose Abbey, which are very beautiful.

"I hope you are all very well.

"From your loving uncle,

"BERTRAND."

A lady, having written to Father Wilberforce on the subject of her difficulties respecting some matters of faith, he writes in reply :—

“ST DOMINIC’S PRIORY,  
“LONDON, *May 26, 1896.*”

“I feel very much ashamed of myself for leaving your letter unnoticed for so long a time. This is apt to happen if I do not reply at once, so pardon me.

“If I can be of any help to you, I shall be very glad indeed.

“You give three reasons, as far as I can understand, for difficulties against the revealed truth of God :—

“1st. That ‘you put yourself into other people’s place.’ I cannot see how this affects faith. Faith is a gift of God ; if you have the light and others have not, this does not make what God reveals untrue, any more than when you put yourself into the position of a blind person, it does not make what you see with your eyes, but he does not, untrue.

“2nd. ‘It is impossible to use intellectual blinkers.’ Certainly, why should you? None are required, because things of faith and things of science are on different levels. They cannot contradict each other.

“3rd. ‘You must use your reason that God gave you.’ Of course you must: reason on all natural things; submit your reason to supernatural things that are above reason. The Holy Trinity is, for instance, *above*, but not *against* reason. We must believe, though we cannot understand.

“You ask, ‘Why live again?’ The answer is plain and simple; for the same reason we live now, because it is God’s will, and to do God’s will because it is His will.

“Life is not worth living, unless you live for God, that I quite admit, but when you live for God to please Him, to praise Him, to glorify Him, to do His will, then life is most clearly, certainly, and abundantly worth living. In other words, if self is the end and object of life, it is utterly worthless; if God who made us is the object and end of life, then it is most unspeakably valuable.

“To say that God is the end of life is not begging the question. No other end of life can be named, and ‘The fool that *says* (not *thinks*) there is no God,’ can tell us of no other end. You ask, ‘What is the good of it all?’ The good is to do the will of God who made us; ‘who spoke and we were made.’ The way to retain and nourish faith is to practise your religion fervently. To pray earnestly and constantly for grace to do God’s will, to pray and beg

humbly, with confidence and perseverance, for faith, hope, charity, and contrition. To go every week to confession and Holy Communion. To read spiritual reading, and to mortify curiosity enough to avoid infidel, blasphemous, and immoral books, and blasphemous ones are the most immoral of all.

"No life on this earth is 'ideal' in the sense of being perfect, without human imperfection mixed up with it. The truly 'ideal' life is only when we see God face to face. So conventual life, though high and holy, is never quite without human imperfection.

"I see nothing whatever hopeless in your case. Mental prayer and spiritual reading, with humility and mortification, will set it all right in a very little time. I wish you from my heart all the graces and fruits of the Holy Ghost, and I promise you my prayers, and ask for yours."

*To the Same.*

"ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY,  
"LONDON, July 13, 1896.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Your letter touched me deeply, because it shows how good God is to allow any words of mine to help you. If He, who alone does all that is good, uses my words to help a soul, I feel more joy than anything else can give.

"If I had felt 'pitiful contempt' for you, because you were tempted, or had sinned, what a beast of a pharisee I should have been; how odious I should have been to God, and how despicable in the eyes of man.

"God has given me the grace to be a Religious, and I thank Him for it; but that does not take away temptation, nor make me unable to sin, and as I have more spiritual advantages than you, the truth is that my sins are far worse in His sight than yours. If you had my graces and I only yours, you would have been far better than I now am (which would be easy indeed), and I, incomparably worse than you now are: easy also.

YOU HAVE FAITH, you only need to *use* it. Remember that for faith, *humble submission* of mind to God is necessary, but it is not necessary to be able to imagine and realise what faith teaches, still less to understand and see no difficulties. A thousand difficulties do not make one doubt. Difficulties are in the mind and intellect, doubt in the will. It is the will that God looks at.

"As to being your director, I am willing to help you as far as I can, on these two conditions:—

"1st. That you make a quarter of an hour of mental prayer every morning; and ten minutes or a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading every day. Read Gospels, *Following of Christ*, and Rodriguez, *Christian Perfection*.

2nd. That you try to obey, and are open and sincere with me. You need not write long letters or talk of yourself too much, but tell me what you think I ought to know, good or bad, shortly and plainly, *especially if it humbles you*.

"Go to confession once a week if you can. Go to Holy Communion when you can. If you cannot more than once a month, go regularly once a month. When you cannot go to Holy Communion make a fervent spiritual one. PRAY OFTEN during the day, especially in time of temptation, by short fervent ejaculations. Do not mind what you feel. God looks to the will and desire. When you hear things said against the Faith, pray, and make acts of faith in your soul.

"You must not read any wicked blasphemous books, because to do so is an insult to God. If you read and enjoyed books against the character of my sister or mother, it would be an insult to me. I cannot be your director in any way if you delight in reading things against God, my Father, my Saviour, my Love, my only Good.

"God bless you."

The next letter contains some remarks on reading, which, it has been suggested, require a little explanation. In many of his letters Father Bertrand seems to speak depreciatingly of "light literature," whilst on the other hand, he himself undoubtedly appreciated and would thoroughly enjoy a really good healthy work of fiction. We have seen what he thought of some of Mrs Oliphant's writings; Pickwick, Mrs Gamp, Mrs Proudie, Tom Tulliver, and others of their kind were well-known and often-quoted friends of Father Wilberforce; with Shakespeare he was perfectly at home, and would often use his words in illustration of even purely sacred subjects. Books of adventure, too, always possessed great attraction for him, and one of his brethren relates that going one day into Father Bertrand's room, he saw on the table Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. He asked if it was worth reading. "Have you never read it?" asked Father Bertrand. "Never." "Then take it to your room, and don't go out till you have read it all through!"

But we ourselves venture to think that in the letter given below the writer explains himself. "Idle" reading he certainly did strongly condemn, and under this head he placed the ordinary run of magazine stories and modern novels. But, as he here explains, what he chiefly meant by "idle" or "vain" was that—whether talking, reading, or any other occupation—which "could not be offered to God." In the domain of reading he would compare fiction to jam, which for health can only be taken in moderate quantities, and by some persons not at all, and whenever he either advised or deprecated light reading, it was always with reference to the characters and circumstances of those to whom he spoke. With Religious he was naturally stricter than with others, but even to them, in cases of sickness or mental stress of any kind, he would sometimes recommend a certain amount of this sort of reading, as a wholesome relaxation;—the test always being: "Can you kneel down and say, 'My God, I do this for Thee'?"

Nevertheless it is true that towards the close of his life Father Wilberforce himself ceased to take much interest in any but spiritual subjects of reading and study. God was calling him to a higher level, and he no longer cared for things of earth.

The letter in question is dated,

"MILL HILL, N.W.,  
"August 21, 1896.

"I am so thankful that you have had a really helpful retreat, assisted, as is evident, by most gracious lights and helps from our Lord Himself, without whom we can do nothing. So often a quiet retreat with Him is by far the most useful to the soul.

"It is very satisfactory to hear that you were able to be alone with God, without that uneasy tendency to self-inspection, for it is no doubt a grace from our Lord.

"As your present work with others calls upon you to read some light and amusing things to them, you can and ought to do it for God, but I would certainly advise you not to do it for your own pleasure. It will be a pleasing sacrifice to our Lord, and one I would advise. Saints' lives will give enough change from books which are more directly spiritual, or solid books which are read as subjects for study.

"No doubt these vain and idle stories in magazines do dissipate the mind and fill the imagination with images that we have to expel before we can pray and return to God. No doubt, in the next world we shall regret giving time to these

things—to vanities; and it would be difficult to imagine St Catherine, or St Teresa caring to read them!

“It is a good thing to make one distinct sacrifice to our Lord at each meal. This can be done without any very formal rule. I can suggest no rule for you there, except the Apostolic one:

“‘Whether you eat, or whether you drink, do all to the glory of God.’

“Speaking again of ‘light literature,’ our Constitutions notice the reading of *vana* as a fault. I suppose one should interpret *vana* as we do ‘idle’ words. *Idle* would mean those that do no good. *Vain* reading, therefore, would be that which is merely for gratification of self, and not for God.

“I will indeed pray for you, and do you for me, that I who so often tell others what they ought to do, may begin to serve God from love and in earnest.”

## CHAPTER IX

1896—1897

IN the autumn of 1896 Father Wilberforce's strength was again at a very low ebb. Throughout the year his work had been increasing, and now he needed complete rest of mind and body. He suffered much from depression, and was unwilling to look forward or to make plans of future work, saying that he felt as if our Lord might call him away at any moment.

It was at this time that he wrote a beautiful meditation on "Preparation for Death," which was afterwards found among his manuscripts, and which has been placed at the end of this volume as a fitting memorial of one whose life, it may be truly said, was a long-continued preparation for death.

In consequence of his state of health his superiors decided to remove him from London, and he was assigned to Hawkesyard in the November of this year. Here, in the intervals between his missions, he could have the quiet and rest which were impossible in London, where penitents flocked to his confessional directly it became known that he was at the Priory.

In November he made his retreat at Hawkesyard. It seems to have been rather a notable one, and turned almost entirely on death and abandonment to God. We give an extract from some notes made during the ten days; they strike the keynote of Father Wilberforce's whole spiritual life.

After expressing his gratitude to God for having allowed him to be sent to Hawkesyard, and thanking Him that it had been done without any action, or even word of desire on his own part, he says:—

"The very best preparation for death is a spirit, and often repeated acts, of absolute abandonment into the hands of God, abandoning all, without reserve, into His loving, guiding, and supporting hands.

“ This I desire to do, absolutely, entirely, irrevocably. I renounce every desire, not only contrary to Him, but that is not entirely His. I desire, O my God, that Thou shouldst begin everything. Work, place, prayer, reading—all things I desire to be always begun by God and suggested by Him ; and thus begun in Him, to be carried on in and for Him, and ended in Him.

“ Why should death have any terrors? Why should not the thought of it be most sweet to a soul living, in all things and always, abandoned to the will of God ?

“ Fight NOW : he that is a stout combatant during his life is most likely to be conqueror at the point of death, as having learnt how to fight.”

But death was not to come just yet. There were still souls to be saved and sanctified, and many sufferings and labours to be undergone, ere the moment of final purification could arrive and the voice of God’s messenger call him home.

No sooner, in fact, was his retreat concluded than he declared himself ready for fresh work, and started off for a mission in the Borough. Before leaving he wrote to a Religious :—

“ HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
“ November 21, 1896.

“ This is now my *Home* ; a very delightful one, with its quiet, and with the beauties of nature all around, and the world shut out. I have no wish ever to move, but to remain in prayer and reading ; but that God will not allow, and to-day I have to roll up my tent and go, first to St Dominic’s, London, for one week, and then for three to the Borough, Southwark, close to London Bridge. No place could be more unlike Hawkesyard. The Church is that of the Precious Blood, and, as you kneel in your quiet peaceful choir, ask our Lord, through His Precious Blood, to convert many.

“ It is grand to be allowed to go there and sprinkle His Precious Blood on the souls of those who would have been so good, if they had my graces ; and are many of them very good now.

“ Many thanks for your prayers during my retreat. They helped me. I had a delightful time, and made a general confession, such as I should wish to have made at the hour of death, so that if the Lord calls me by a midnight cry, I may be more ready.

“ Humility is the one subject to work at. It is evident.

God is the builder ; all we have to do is to dig the foundation : He is the husbandman ; we can only dig so that the root may go deep down. He pours in the golden wine, if we empty the vessel.

"I quite understand what you feel and mean. Rodriguez on Humility cannot be read too often. In some books there is fear of illusion, but not here. Humility will save us from the snares of the evil one.

"Do not be afraid of putting yourself thoroughly for humiliation into our loving Lord's hands—those holy, guiding, feeding hands, that made us and support us.

"*Abandon* yourself to Him utterly. How absolutely our Lady abandoned herself to Him on this day. Think of the '*Suscipe*' of St Ignatius in her mouth, and the prayer, 'I come to Thee, O my Centre,' etc.

"Wishing you every blessing."

His correspondent appears to have taken fright at some expressions in this letter, for a few days later he writes again to reassure her :—

"HAWKESYARD,  
"Nov. 26.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"No, make your mind easy: I have no special reason, either physical or otherwise now, to expect death soon or suddenly, except the fact of being now fifty-seven, and many younger men dying suddenly.

"The rest has done me good. As far as I know, heart and lungs are sound. Diabetes can be kept under by care, and is better.

"But there is no harm in trying to be ready. 'Be ye also ready, for you know not the day nor the hour.'

"My whole retreat centred in the one idea of abandonment to God, and taking all from Him, and leaving all to Him. It brings great peace. It includes thanking Him for ALL, especially things not pleasant to nature. This will help love.

"As to the 'Retreat,'<sup>1</sup> I should be glad to do it, only I fear my notes, etc., are not original enough. But I will think over the matter, and perhaps with your help it might be managed.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a "Retreat for Nuns," which Father Wilberforce's correspondent had often urged him to write, and which he in fact began later on. But want of leisure time, and failing health, prevented him from finishing it.

“If I live, it is probable I shall see you at Christmas time, for I have to help at —, and may call on my return home.”

He writes about the same time to an invalid lady who had recently been received into the Church, and was in a good deal of trouble:—

“I sympathise with you very much in your troubles and your sickness. *Certainly* you were right not to abstain. Do as the doctor advises. I am sorry you were snubbed by the nun. It was wrong of her. But thank God for it.

“Cheer up. Put yourself into God’s hands; His loving, guiding, supporting hands, that never fail. Your health has depressed you, but God loves you, and all is well.

“It is only and simply the devil who suggests that God has not been pleased with you since you left all to follow Him and to do His will. No words could tell how He loves and blesses you. ‘Hope thou (O my soul), in God, for I will yet praise Him, who is the Salvation of my countenance and my God’—Ps. xli.

“God bless you.”

From London he writes to another Religious:—

“It was exceedingly kind of you to suggest to N—— to send me the *Retreat of Père Piny*,<sup>1</sup> and I am very grateful both to you and to her. The *Retraite* is good—or rather I should say that the two meditations for each day, taken as spiritual reading during the exercises, are very good indeed.

“Thank God my letter was allowed to help you. The only way to happiness is to abandon oneself utterly to our Lord. To offer oneself to God is not to think oneself a saint, but to think oneself a saint because one had offered oneself to Him would be foolish and wrong.

“Whenever you feel a natural aversion to anyone, pray for that person. Thank God for the feeling, as giving you an opportunity of practising charity and humility. Blessed Sebastian Valfré felt a strong natural aversion to one of the Fathers for eight years, but he said he was sure no one could guess what Father it was. Think what that implies.

“Go on praying for me. Some day I hope to visit N—— again. You must grow like one of the cedars in your lovely grounds. ‘*Sicut cedrus Libani multiplicabitur.*’

<sup>1</sup> This was a new edition, then just published, of the *Retraite sur l’Abandon à la Volonté de Dieu*, by Père Alex. Piny, O.P.

To another, on the subject of religious obedience :—

“BOROUGH,  
“LONDON, S.E., Dec. 2.

“Be sure your superior knows better than you. You must try and realise the great principle that God acts through our superiors, and that we cannot know the will of God more certainly and more clearly than by our superiors. If you read the life of blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, you will see that very strongly brought out. ‘I can assure you,’ she wrote, ‘that my divine Saviour has constantly repeated to me that there is nothing so hurtful to Religious as the want of obedience, however slight, either to superiors or rules; and the least answer showing any mark of repugnance, is an insupportable defect in the eyes of God.’”

“STONE, Dec. 4, 1896.

“Your letter rejoiced me because it shows you have been striving to overcome yourself, and no doubt you will succeed if only you persevere in the three things St Paul prescribes :—

- “1. Pray without ceasing.
- “2. Always rejoice (in God’s will).
- “3. In all things give thanks.

“Of course you have more peace and joy from submission to God. How lovely are St Paul’s three names in this Sunday’s Epistle, for God, from Romans xv.

- “1. The God of Patience; *verse 5*.  
“(We can only be patient by leaning on Him.)

- “2. The God of Comfort; *ib.*
- “3. The God of Hope; *verse 13*.

“(Who fills us with joy and peace.)

“As to your question about Purgatory: We should not so much fear Purgatory because it will be so disagreeable and painful, as because it will keep us from God. So make one act of utter offering of yourself to God. ‘Here I am, do with me whatever Thou wilt, only give me Thy holy love.’

“After all, it is a good thing to suffer something for God. The angels cannot suffer with Him, they can only praise Him.

“So the more the enemy presses on—‘*Bella premunt hostilia*’—the more you must say without ceasing, ‘*Da robur fer auxilium.*’ Give strength, bring help. The Sirdar, Lord Kitchener, has had a grand reception in London, but what will you get in heaven, if you overcome? ‘Hold fast that which thou hast.’ . . . St Thomas would tell you that the

one thing necessary is the will of God, and that God can guide you through anyone He sends you. These little trials are meant by our Lord to detach your heart from all but Him, and to make you know yourself, thus teaching you humility. Pray for me."

In the January of 1897, Father Wilberforce writes to a lady on the subject of what he calls her 'astronomical difficulty':—

"THE CONVENT,  
"STONE, January 24, 1897.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Your astronomical difficulty has, I know, worried many people, but it is one purely of imagination. Our imaginations are so much affected by the idea of size, which, after all, is only a relative thing like colour, and therefore nothing before God.

"The earth, it is true, compared to the sun, and the sun compared to the solar system, and the solar system to the universe of God's creation, is nothing, and further, all creation is a grain of sand before God. All is but a 'drop from a bucket' before Him. The fact is that mere bulk is nothing in His sight. So that the fact of the earth being small no more affects the Incarnation than the fact of Bethlehem and Nazareth being tiny places, yet He chose them instead of Rome or Jerusalem.

"Then it is only conjecture that the other planets are inhabited by rational creatures. Those planets belonging to our system are the only ones we know anything about. Jupiter being red-hot cannot be yet inhabited by any beings in the least like us. Mars *may* be inhabited, though we should be remarkably uncomfortable there. Venus and Mercury we know less about. We have no *proof* that rational beings inhabit any of them. So it is all imagination, all what *may* be, and not what certainly is.

"But granted that they are inhabited by rational beings—how do we know God's dealings with them? 1. Are they fallen? Do they need redemption? Perhaps (it is all perhaps, because we don't *know* if they exist) they never fell, and therefore never needed redemption. Why should they have fallen from grace because we did? 2. Our revelation is entirely for our race, and if there are others, God might reveal Himself to them in a completely different manner.

"So the whole thing is imaginary. We are not meant to know anything about it, because it is not necessary for our salvation. You remember how the apostles asked our Lord

whether many would be saved, and how He answered. He said: 'Strive to enter in at the narrow gate,' as if He had said, 'Mind yourselves, and leave the rest to ME; I am good, wise, and powerful enough to govern the world and a million worlds without you.' He really told them to mind their own business, and leave all to Him. So would He say to us: 'Save your own soul, and leave the stars to ME, who made them.' 'To the King of ages, immortal, and invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen' (1 Tim. i. 17). It seems to me all these things are best answered by prostrate adoration, remembering that we are creatures (have you studied Father Faber's *Creator and Creature?*), and He the Creator (Romans xi. 33, 34, 35, 36).

"The large package arrived, and we unpacked it in recreation time. The picture, a beautiful one, was unbroken, and duly admired, and the Rosary was there also. Why six decades instead of five, ten, or fifteen? I do not know. We can only indulge those of five, ten, or fifteen mysteries. Many grateful thanks for your kindness in sending it and all the other things.

"God has opened you a door for acts of charity to the poor woman in prison. You must ask St Catharine of Siena to go with you. She was devoted to prisoners as you know. See that the poor thing is instructed, and put before her the motives for contrition.

"Hope is not a cardinal virtue, but much more, one of the three theological virtues: that is one of the virtues that joins the soul to God. It is a supernatural virtue and as necessary as Faith. Hope is the certain expectation that God in His mercy, through the merits of Christ, will give us life everlasting. It is our own nothingness that makes us put *all* our hope in God only, so that the fact of having done nothing for God need not tempt anyone to despair, because God is the God of the present; He looks to what you are now. If you thought yourself good, and that you deserved heaven, because of your good life, that would be the perilous thing. So make as many acts of Hope as of Faith.

"I know well the difficulty of the French habit of stewing down quotations instead of giving the exact words. The only way is to have a concordance, and look out the text.

"If you can sleep you may lie on a board, but you must put a blanket over it. If it keeps you awake all night and makes you unfit for your duties during the day, then Discretion will tell you to give it up.

"Certainly practise mortification—there are hundreds of small opportunities every day that require no leave, and can

be done purely for the love of God. Remember that in an act of external mortification it is not the mere exterior act but the love with which it is done that God looks at. Discretion is the queen of virtues and must rule, because exterior penance is a means to an end, and not the end itself.

“St Catharine and Mother Francis Raphael agree. Study the nothingness of self, self-knowledge, but do not depress the soul by too much thinking about what we have done wrong, and how little we have done for God. Self-knowledge—yes; but not to be occupied with self, but with God.”

*To the Same, on joining in Protestant Worship.*

“HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
“RUGELEY, Feb. 10, 1897.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“As to Protestant worship—the law of the Church is clear and positive, that no Catholic is allowed to join in heretical or schismatical worship of any kind, public or private. They may join with us, but we can never join with them, for there is only one Religion. One Faith, one Lord, one Baptism; one *Body*, and one Spirit. Our forefathers would often have saved life and property by joining in heretical worship, but could not do so. So in all the cases you put, the answer is the same: an unqualified and absolute refusal for sermons, prayers, etc. During family prayers stay in your own room and pray for their conversion. The case would be the same even if the worship were merely schismatical. For instance, no one doubts the validity of Greek Orders, and therefore their Mass is a real sacrifice, and our Lord really there, but it would be a mortal sin to join, because they are not in the Body of the Church. The only time in which we could avail ourselves of the services of a real though schismatical priest, would be at the hour of death, because the Church gives all validly ordained priests the power to absolve in the hour of death.

“I am sorry to hear of your heart attack, whether ‘*vraie ou fausse engine*.’ Take care of yourself and don’t do anything that the doctor forbids.

“You say ‘I am not so very sure that an absolutely evil spirit exists?’ What do you mean exactly by this? You know that to say the devil does not exist, would be against the Faith. The Bible teaches clearly, and the Church, that there is an evil spirit. He was created good, but fell from pride. Remember 1 Peter v. 8. You must expect tempta-

tions against Faith; the devil is sure to suggest them, and your own pride also, but have immediate recourse to God. ‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower of defence, the just man shall run to it, and shall be exalted above his enemies.’

“It is never too late in this world to turn to God, and to work for Him and His service. Faith and Hope are two distinct virtues, but Hope implies Faith. You cannot hope in God unless you believe in Him. Faith and Hope will disappear in heaven and only love remain.

“Thank God you had the common-sense to reject all the tommyrot of theosophy. ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’ Those who have Christ want no Blavatsky.”

*To a Religious.*

“HAWKESYARD,  
“Feb. 11, 1897.

“I am glad you have heard from N——. She is a good soul, and shows many signs of predestination.

“Pray for the two missions: Newcastle, four weeks; Huddersfield or 'Oodersfield, for two weeks, ending on Easter Sunday.

“I do not know X——’s age. It is an awful question to put to a lady. Only Li-Hung-Chang can do it with any grace. He did it in London, on being introduced to some grand lady, and she answered, but he replied: ‘I am afraid you are telling a lie!’ which was very likely true, but it is hardly the custom to say so in England, you know! It might be, but it isn’t. If you want a lady to lie, ask her her age!

“I hope your invalids are better. We have been very well here up to now, but to-day Father F—— has retired—I hope to bed [with influenza].

“I do not wonder you found Ruysbrœck *rather* beyond your comprehension. It would be utterly beyond mine: rather like Browning’s poetry. Words, words, words, and sometimes a suspicion of meaning! I like ‘plain Tommy,’ I confess. If a man has a thought, he should express it clearly or not at all; enigmas are tiresome.

“Rodriguez, *Following of Christ, Spiritual combat* I can understand, and I am apt to find books that I *do* understand more profitable than those I don’t. I have tried St John of the Cross; most practical, I daresay, to those who understand him, which I honestly confess I do not. I never know exactly what he is driving at, or to whom he is talking; whether to an ordinary Tommy like me, who simply say my

prayers, and try not to get cross, or to one in an extraordinary state.

"Blosius I understand.

"I am quite sure I shall never be in any but the common Tommy degrees [of prayer], and I want plain bread and butter, and water, or, at least, milk and water; and I suppose it is as much a matter to thank God for, as it is that I am not a bishop, or you a provincial, because we should both make bad ones. We ought not merely to be *content* not to be in office, but *glad*; and as it would be at least a venial sin to wish to have the gift of supernatural contemplation,<sup>1</sup> I suppose we ought to thank God we have it not. Of course it is an excellent thing *in itself*, but not good for Tommy.

"We should work away at humility and resignation; that is spirituality that is easily understood and quite safe; and in prayer: 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.'

"About things in the sight of God:—

"He values not the material thing, but the love and humility with which it is done. A little thing done with much love is better than a big one with less. A big one with more love is, of course, the best of all. But Tommy can only do small ones. A servant carries a coal-scuttle: it would be more useful sometimes if she could carry a ton, but she can't. Still, she shows as much fidelity and love of duty by carrying the small amount.

"Put that into verse: not Browning's!

"Yours ever in J.M.D.,

"F. B. W., O.P."

"Plain Tommy" was a very favourite expression of Father Bertrand's, and the word, as he used it, stood for a good deal. He would say that preachers should give their congregations "plain Tommy," and not preach above their heads. Once, when speaking of a young preacher who showed great nervousness in delivering his sermons, and some anxiety as to how they would be received, Father Wilberforce remarked, "As for me, I have rubbed my cheeks with brass, and don't care in the least what people think."

He certainly never shrank from plain speaking when he thought it would do any good, or in order to uphold the truth, and some characteristic stories have been told of his encounters in this line. Once, when visiting an ancient

<sup>1</sup> For a later opinion of Father Wilberforce on this matter, see below, in a letter dated December 1900. Also in his preface to *A Book of Spiritual Instruction*, pp. xv-xvii.

church in the south of England, he was accosted by a strange gentleman who asked him if he were the vicar of the parish.

"No," he replied, "by the mercy of God, I have the great honour of being a Catholic priest."

"Ah," said the other, "I suppose you mean *Roman Catholic*."

"There is not the least necessity for using the word, since there are no Catholics who are *not Roman*."

"Humph," answered the gentleman, who turned out to be a curate belonging to the neighbourhood, "that is a matter of opinion, I suppose."

"On the contrary," said Father Bertrand, "it is a matter of divine revelation;" upon which the stranger withdrew.

On one of his many railway journeys a Wesleyan minister got into talk with him on religion. Father Bertrand thought that, for once, he would carry the war into the enemy's country, and began: "My great objection to you people is, that you are so very unscriptural!" This was in all probability the identical charge that the minister had intended to bring against the Catholic priest, and he seemed rather nonplussed. "Can you give me any instance of what you mean?" he asked, after a pause. "Certainly I can," replied Father Wilberforce. "Our Lord said, 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven.' Now you know quite well that you would be heartily glad if some very old and authentic manuscript were to be discovered which said that what our Lord really taught His apostles was, 'Do not for a moment imagine that you can forgive sins, for no man can do that.'"

The Wesleyan was silent for a moment, then he replied, "Well, sir, it would certainly be more *convenient*." "Precisely," remarked Father Bertrand; "we prefer to go by what our Lord said—you do not. That is why I say that you are unscriptural. Again, St James told us to anoint sick people with oil. We obey the holy apostle; you do not." The Wesleyan ended by acknowledging that he would like to know more about Catholic teaching. As he was leaving the train, Father Bertrand exhorted him never, in his preaching, to speak against the Catholic Church, "for if you do, you will be most horribly sorry for it the moment after your death!"

Mr Wilfrid Wilberforce, to whom we owe the foregoing anecdotes, also tells the story of his going with Father Bertrand to visit an old church—once Catholic, now very Low Church. "It was in Easter week," he says, "and the

ritualistic vicar of a neighbouring parish had caused a good deal of excitement by having the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday. An old verger was pointing out various objects of interest. 'Did you have the veneration of the Cross here on Good Friday?' asked Father Bertrand in his most guileless tone.

"No sir!" said the verger warmly, 'we don't go in for the Cross here!'

"Really," said Father Bertrand, 'although our Lord died on it. But at All Saints' they had it, didn't they?' 'Yes, sir.' 'But how is that? It's the same Church, is it not?'

"Yes, sir.' 'Why do they have it there and not here?' 'I don't know, sir,' answered the verger rather crossly. He felt he was getting the worst of it.

"Ah, well," said my brother, as we left the building, 'very likely the next vicar will be a ritualist, and then you *will* have the veneration of the Cross here too.'

"He used to say, 'I do not care about visiting Protestant churches; the Real Absence is so painfully obvious.'"

An instance of Father Wilberforce's zeal in his missionary work occurred during a large mission which he took part in during the course of 1896. He heard that there was a doctor in the neighbourhood who, though a Catholic, neglected his religion, and would probably not attend the mission.

Father Bertrand expressed his intention of calling on him, and was not deterred by hearing that his reception would be the reverse of cordial. Finding the doctor out, he left his card, saying he would call again. This time he was more fortunate, and was admitted. The gentleman was evidently in no humour to welcome his visitor. He came into the room with his hat on, and without even offering him a seat, asked coldly what his business might be. Father Wilberforce, in his politest tones, explained that he was very ill, and would be glad if the doctor would give him an opinion as to the wisdom of his undertaking a mission. "Pray be seated, sir!" exclaimed the doctor politely. "That you may be able to judge," continued Father Bertrand, "I will tell you exactly what my work will be." Then he detailed all the sermons and services of the mission, taking care to mention the time of each, including the hours at which confessions would be heard.

Father Bertrand would relate the scene with great amusement, dwelling especially upon the complete and instantaneous change which took place in the doctor's manner, as soon as he found that the priest came, not as a rebuker, but as a patient. "I was determined," he said,

“that at least he should know the times of the services.” To anyone who knew him, and understood how absolutely unlike him it was to consult a doctor before grappling with his work, the incident was particularly amusing.

*To a Religious.*

“HAWKESYARD,  
“Feb. 19, 1897.

“I was glad to get your letter, and to know that you will pray for the mission in Newcastle. To-morrow morning I am to start from here at 7.30, and from Rugeley at 8.16, and I hope to arrive in Newcastle at 3.30.

“Here I have been sitting on the shore, mending my nets, and now our Lord has said: ‘Launch out into the deep.’ So you must pray that He will give us a very large, if not a miraculous draught of fishes, of different kinds and sizes.

“This morning — sent me your letter. Allow me to remark that you have underlined thirteen times, not one of which was at all necessary. I mention it, because it is a habit, like saying, ‘as it were,’ to be got out of.

“Also, as I am in a critical mood; ‘very disappointed’ in your note to me, is incorrect. ‘Very much disappointed’ is all right, but ‘very’ should not go with a participle. It is a common mistake. You can say, ‘I am very angry,’ but not, ‘I am very angered,’ which should be, ‘I am very much angered.’ Not ‘I am very pleased,’ but, ‘I am very much pleased.’

“We must both improve this Lent in Humility, and in seeing what unsatisfactory beasts we are.

“I sent the two delightful papers of Mother Francis Raphael to the Abbess of the Poor Clares at Baddesley, telling her to send them to you. They are capital: so true, and so full of excellent common-sense. What a first-class retreat she would have given!”

To another, writing on humility, he says:—

“What a capital opportunity our Lord gave you of bearing a humiliation patiently and sweetly in union with His Passion! You have often told Him that you desire this: ‘Thou hast suffered for me, I will suffer for Thee; help me by Thy Grace!’ So thank Him for it, offer it up to Him, and do not complain.

“Learn to mortify the tongue, and not to say anything about others, superiors especially, except to praise them for their good points. You can mention their defects to our Lord and pray for them.

“You cannot have humility without bearing humiliations, as you know, and so our Lord allows some to come to you. What will it matter when you have been in Heaven a hundred years?

“An ‘upset’ needs two or more persons. Be determined not to be upset about anything whatever, and to do this, lean on our Lord. Nothing can then upset you.”

*To a Religious.*

“Why should you fear Death? Why should you not desire it above all things, though in Conformity to God’s will? ‘I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.’ Death to a Religious is the golden gate of Life Everlasting: an exchange from poverty to riches: from faith to sight: from war to peace: from anxiety to everlasting joy: from darkness to the sight of God, face to face. Why then should you fear? When God has called you to the Church and to Religion, do you imagine He will change and become unfaithful and desert you in the end? Read verses 8-10 of the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus.

“Even if we have to remain in Purgatory for a long time, as I shall have to do, is it not better to die? For then, however great the pain, we shall be certain of Heaven, and incapable of impatience, and in complete and perfect conformity.”

One of Father Wilberforce’s correspondents having sent him a copy of a certain prayer, “said to have been found in the Holy Sepulchre,” which was at this time being circulated by some persons of more piety than wisdom, he writes in reply:—

“WOODCHESTER PARK, *May 6.*

“The prayer you sent is rank superstition. I have seen it before. I do not see any harm in the prayer itself, but the note on it is pure superstition, without authority, and, as you say, ‘a charm.’ The one sentence: ‘It is as true as if the holy Evangelist had written it,’ is enough to stamp it as absolute and rotten superstition.

“Leo XIII. would, I am sure, condemn it.

“On what authority are these promises, exalting it above

the Our Father, or the Blessed Sacrament, made? Who put it in the grave? Had it lain there 803 years unseen?

"Instead of showing want of Catholic feeling, the fact of your soul revolting against it shows you had common-sense and proper Catholic feeling. Burn any you see.

"The words of 1 Timothy i. 4 apply to this prayer.

"How kind of you to promise to remember me on the 12th! It is an immense number of years ago—about thirty-two or thirty-three—since simple Profession. And I—what I am! '*Peccantem me quotidie*,' etc.

"I am glad you like the *Road to Calvary*.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the translation is 'very free' in some places: in fact, quite changed. And where they had 'boiled down' a text, I put the original. It costs 1s. 6d., I am sorry to say. Many more would have been sold, or at least more quickly, if they had sold it for 1s. But the profit then would have been small, and publishers somehow approve of profit.

"What a most awful catastrophe in Paris! I hear that six Dominican Fathers were among the victims.

"How wonderful is the Discourse in Ecclesiasticus, beginning with chapter xiv., verse 22, and ending xviii. 14. Read it: a sermon of the Holy Ghost, little read."

*To a Religious he explains the true idea of Perfection.*

"CONVENT, EAST FINCHLEY,  
"May 29, 1896.

"Your letter I have received, and when I return home on Tuesday, I will attend to the business at once.

"Your retreat, I hope, will come off, as a little quiet time with God will do you good just now. However, He will arrange for the best.

"Our Lord has been giving you light; thank Him for it and use it. His lights are often painful at first, but full of sweetness and love, and bring afterwards peace of soul.

"I quite understand what you mean, but I should express it a little differently. It is not that you have had too high an ideal of perfection—that is impossible; but that you have placed perfection rather wrongly. Perfection does not mean making ourselves and our companions *AI*, and having no blots and imperfections. That ideal is false, and a *mirage*.

"But perfection is loving more purely and entirely God's will, and seeking it in His way, and because it is His will.

<sup>1</sup> A small book for making the Stations of the Cross; from the French; lately edited by Father Wilberforce.

Therefore, if His will is that we and others should have many defects and shortcomings, we must delight in that.

"When I said that Pride might be at the root of a desire of perfection I meant that pride and self-love delights in self being perfect, and having no fault, no flaw. Pride is vexed and worried at imperfections. Humility seeks God, that is, God's will, and if God's will is to leave us 1000 imperfections, we, if humble and seeking God only, should rejoice in these imperfections.

"'Now I know all this,' I say:—

"1st. The blessed light that makes you see it comes from going oftener to the Light of the World in Holy Communion.

"2nd. As you now see it, and are humbler than before, you ought to go oftener to Holy Communion, that you may draw profit from the grace our Lord has given you.

"3rd. Go every day you can in June: every day if you can. Our Lord will rejoice that you should do so. Why stay away from His gracious and loving Heart?

"I had not heard of Sister L——'s happy birth to eternal life. *Deo gratias*. All she suffered she looks on now as nothing.—2 Cor. iv. 17.

"May God bless you."

*To the Same after a Retreat.*

"HAWKESYARD,  
"Trinity Sunday, 1897.

"To-day I made special memories of you, and heard two Masses for you.

"I wish you strength from the Eternal Father, wisdom from the only Begotten Son, love from the Co-Equal Spirit, and may God continue in you His good work, and bestow on you that gift we cannot merit, but on which all depends, Final Perseverance.

"What a blessing that that is not and cannot be in our hands, for how likely should we be to fail, but we can trust His love, and are in His merciful hands; 'Destruction is your own; your help is only from ME.'

"It was a beautiful time to be in retreat, and I think you have every reason to be thankful to God.

"1. Nothing could be better for a retreat and its work than to have a 'quiet, helpful time.' The more quiet, externally and internally, the better, especially within. The Holy Ghost loves to work in calm—*non in turbine Deus*.

"The reason that the meditations on the Great Truths fill you with calm contrition and thankfulness—that is, with love

—is because you are now learning to look more at them from God's standpoint. Before, you looked at them from self, and as they regarded self, and then they are extremely troubling. They are always overwhelming, but unless we look at them from God's point of view, they are absolutely crushing. GOD is the one explanation. Mysteries are nothing else than the infinitude of God encountering our finite minds. 'Mystery,' Cardinal Newman says, 'is the external manifestation of His infinitude.'

"Do you know well his sermons on 'The Mysteries of Nature and Grace'; 'The Divine Condescension'; 'The Infinitude of the Divine Attributes'? If not, *study* them. They are, in my opinion, some of the very finest things ever written. In a mere literary point of view, I think nothing in the whole range of literature finer.

"2. It is a great blessing to have a light from God to show you your defects more clearly. It is a grace. Our Lord said to St Gertrude, or some saint, 'There are many virgins in hell, but not one humble soul.' Ask Him to humble us both in the way He sees to be best.

"3. Hate and detest every fault because it displeases God, and is contrary to His infinite goodness, and that will blot it out, for what is that but perfect contrition, which we should pray for and practise constantly.

"What you say about spiritual ambition is a light from God: do not want to be AI, but to do God's will. People often mistake aiming at perfection, that is, at desiring and doing God's will in His way, because it is His will, for aiming at being AI, which is utterly different.

"The blessing of our not being superiors is that we can leave others alone, except in praying for them and being edified by them.

"The regret you mention is merely in the imagination. Despise it as a mere groundless phantom. The devil, envious of the light from God humbling you, tries to disturb your soul by this phantom (under the appearance, notice, of an angel of light), and so to prevent our Lord's work. Spit in the face of the crafty old enemy.

"'Our imperfections,' says St Francis of Sales, 'must accompany us to the grave. We cannot walk without touching the earth. We ought not to lie there in the mud: but we must not think of flying: we are as yet unfledged. We die little by little: we must therefore make our imperfections die with us. Dear imperfections! They make us recognise our misery, exercise us in humility, in contempt of ourselves, in patience and diligence, and in spite of them God

looks at that preparation of our heart, which is perfect.'—  
(*Practical Piety*, chap. xx.)

“God bless you.”

*Rules for Mortification.*

“POOR CLARE CONVENT,  
“BADDESLEY CLINTON, *June 30, 1897.*

“MY DEAR ———,  
“*Pax Christi.*

“I did not answer your letter at once, for it was well to reflect a little, and then I had to go to Walsall, and then come here for the retreat, and the answer got delayed. Pardon me.

“In answer to your questions:—

“1. The penance you ask leave to do may be allowed with prudence. Do not do it when you feel ill: not fit.

“2. If getting up in the night prevents your going to sleep again, do not do it. Sleep is most important for you spiritually, as well as in other ways. Sleep is the brain tonic, and is most important.

“3. It will be better for you to take cooked fruit sometimes. Abstain from it on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. In Lent, all days except Sundays. Take a little uncooked on greater feast days. Sauces and condiments: yes.

“4. The small instrument you may use four days. *Certainly* you may report yourself as to failures in your good resolutions.

“Our Lord has certainly given you lights that He desires you to follow, especially in the way of humility and charity, which are two such solid virtues. In them there is no fear of any imprudence, and they make us, more than anything, Christlike.

“Cardinal Newman writes: ‘Self-denial is the test of earnestness and fervour. If you want to know whether your religion is a reality, a power in your soul governing you, and not merely a superficial feeling, here you have a test—in what does it make me deny myself? Self-denial is the measure of love.’

“And the word ‘daily’ in the sentence of our Lord (take up His Cross daily) shows it must be in little, ordinary things, for no one has the opportunity of great and heroic things *daily.*

“To take up the Cross of Christ is no ONE great action, done once for all. It consists in the continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us.

“I am here alone, the priest having gone, and I cannot tell you how much I enjoy the solitude. It is quite a country place, very quiet, with a devout church, and these dear holy nuns serving God so fervently, and giving me a retreat by example, while I give them one by word. I talk, and they do.

“I was very glad to see you again, and I hope it will not be long before I am at — again.

“God bless you. Pray that I may say the right thing to these holy servants of God.

“Ever in our Lord,

“B. W.”

“P.S.—Try above all to cultivate the presence of God. Remember how God said to Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old, and had therefore served God far longer than we have: ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before ME, and be perfect.’

“This is a simple easy rule, but contains all that can be said.

“‘I am the Almighty God’:—

“‘I am who am’—said afterwards to Moses at the burning bush; and our Lord afterwards, showing His divinity, said, ‘Before Abraham was made, I AM.’

“And how these words to the old prophet remind us also of the ‘two rocks of the foundation’ laid in the soul of St Catherine of Siena: ‘I am that which is; thou art that which is not.’

“How clearly it is the same infinite, mysterious, hidden, incomprehensible God, speaking to Abraham, to Moses, to the Jews, and to St Catherine of Siena, ‘The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.’

“‘Walk before ME’: that is, live in My presence, and then you will become perfect in My sight.

“So that the real way to be perfect is, in all things, to look to God, and not to ourselves. *Oculi mei semper ad Dominum.*

“St Peter, as long as he fixed his eyes on our Lord, walked on the waves. Directly he fixed them on himself and the waves, he sank.”

In July Father Wilberforce gave a retreat to the penitents of the Good Shepherd Convent at Ford, near Liverpool, whence he wrote:—

“The penitents end to-morrow, and on Friday I am to

give a conference to the holy sisters. It is a very fine institution, and must save a great number of souls. The consecrated penitents are so good, lead such mortified lives, and do untold good among the 'new children.' Their great enemy outside is drink."

Father Bertrand always expressed the greatest esteem for the Order of the Good Shepherd. He thoroughly understood their spirit and appreciated the immense work they have done and are doing for souls. In all their difficulties he stood their faithful friend, and the short account of their founder, the venerable John Eudes, which he wrote for the *Month*, and afterwards published in pamphlet form, did much to remove prejudices and make their work better known. He was a true father to the "children," as the inmates of the homes are called, and easily gained their confidence.

Two letters belonging to this year contain some beautiful thoughts on Christ as our Friend. Writing to a Religious on the subject of her retreat, he says:—

"You thanked me quite enough for the very small benefit. Now show your thanks by praying for the retreat to clergy, at St Bede's, Manchester, that is to begin on Monday next. Your prayers and mine have no power as our own, but great power as being the prayers of members of Christ. The Eternal Father hears the voice of His Son, because 'Christ and His members are one Christ.' This gives confidence.

"Your three resolutions are good, but the third wants altering. Reduce them to the practice of personal love to our Lord, for all the perfection and sanctity of a soul consists in the 'one thing necessary': loving our Lord Jesus Christ, our God, our Redeemer, our Sovereign Good.

"1. Serve the Lord with gladness, because He is our Friend. 'Charity,' says St Thomas, 'is a certain friendship between us and God.' This makes us glad; joy is an effect of love. We say the 99th Psalm every day: 'Serve the Lord with gladness: Come into His presence with exceeding joy.' We can always have that joy if we love His, our Friend's will. 'Know ye that the Lord, He is God,' etc. One mark of friendship is 'to study the will of Him we love.'

"2. Not to speak, either to myself (chiefly) or to others of the faults of so-and-so. For we do not talk hardly of those our Friend loves. We excuse them for His sake, because we love Him.

"3. Good. But better to try not to reflect on isolation.

Who can be isolated who has such a Friend? Do not reflect on want of confidence and esteem, etc.; do not give way to such feelings. *Be sure* that if you love God, the having this Superior and not another, must work together for your good. God will make it more profitable than if you had another.

"Ask God to give you unbounded confidence in HIM, acting through your Superior, and immense esteem of her for His sake, and for what He has given her. You are looking away from Him at her: you must look at Him through her, and see her *in Him*.

"Certainly accept the 'infirmities,' etc., but not with a hurt feeling, but as a matter of course and with indifference, looking at His Perfections. What can it matter, as long as He is perfect? 'Of course I am imperfect, O Lord, but Thou art not!' Look away from self to Him and you will be happy and holy."

To a lady whose life was rather a lonely one he writes, exhorting her to cultivate friendship with Christ:—

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Never be afraid to unite yourself with our Lord in spiritual Communion. He, in His Love, wishes it, and will bless you abundantly. Acts of faith, humility, sorrow, love, thanksgiving. Of course we are *quite* unworthy, but God wills it.

"As you are rather solitary and by yourself, what a consolation it is to reflect that our Lord takes a distinct personal interest in you, and that He wants you to become His real intimate friend. An *intimate* friendship is distinguished from that superficial intercourse with those around us, and which does not penetrate beneath the surface; the intimate friendship carries us straight to the heart of a friend. We share one another's principles: we have an instinctive knowledge of what an intimate friend feels, thinks, and suffers. There is a tie that does not exist with others, and the strength of that tie is in the strength of our mutual trust and sympathy.

"Now, it is an amazing fact, but true, that our Lord, the Infinite God, desires us to become His friends, His intimate friends, and this is why He isolates you, that you may be more able to attend to Him, and to become His friend.

"You are His. 'His own.' So love Him, and He will be your delight. God bless you."

Among Father Bertrand's papers there are some notes written by way of introduction or preparation for the retreat to the clergy of the Salford Diocese, which he gave this year. He seems to have felt a little anxious about it, and evidently devoted much prayer and consideration to the subject, for these notes were made early in the summer. He says:—

“The retreat is to begin on the evening of Saint Hyacinth's Feast, August 16th, so I put it now (June 13th, Trinity Sunday), under his holy and powerful patronage. Pray for me, great Saint, that I may have a pure intention in the work, that I may speak humbly, as to my superiors in God's sight, yet in His Name speaking His Truths for His Glory, with His Light, without fear of men, and without vain-glory. *Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum annuntiabit laudem Tuam!*”

“On Thursday, August 19, Saint Alphonsus is kept (in our rite). He, the great preacher to priests, will help me. In his instruction to those giving retreats to priests he warns them:—

“1st. To have a good intention; not wishing to be thought a man of talent, learning, eloquence, but only to do good to souls for God's Glory: and that good only which God desires.

“2nd. Not to strive after *new* and *lofty* thoughts, leaving the will dry and unmoved, but let all be directed to help those who hear to make a good resolution.

“3rd. In order to do this, frequently remind the priests of the Eternal Truths, *by the consideration of which, perseverance is obtained* (Ecclus. vii. 40). We Priests, as well as others, must die; we shall be judged, we must be for ever in Heaven or in Hell. ‘These are the Truths best calculated to change for the better the lives of all who meditate seriously upon them.’

“4th. To be as *practical* as possible. Speak of the method of making mental prayer, thanksgiving after Mass, the correction of sinners, etc. . . .

“5th. To treat the priests with respect. To show and feel veneration for them. Speak to them as to men of learning and sanctity. If you denounce sin, do it in general, protesting you do not speak as if to the guilty. Speak with *sweetness* and show *sympathy*.

“6th. The preacher, in the most awful subjects must always take heed not to suggest despair, but hope; hope through the merits of Jesus Christ and the prayers of Mary, Mother of God and Refuge of sinners, and to have recourse by prayer to these two anchors of hope.

"7th. Above all must the preacher expect the fruit of his labours from God, not from himself; he must beg the grace of God, and trust to that to give his words strength and converting power.

"Saint Bernard is kept on the Friday, and Saint Jane Frances de Chantal on the last day. May they obtain for me wisdom and the Spirit of Prayer."

*To a Religious.*

"CONVENT OF MERCY,  
"MIDHURST, *Sept. 24, 1897.*

"In saying the Rosary, put in a word about the mystery after the Holy Name in each Hail Mary, and it will help to fix your mind.

"Thank God for sending you notice of His will by the Archangel, Holy Obedience, and for the grace given you to 'arise quickly and fly to' R——, 'and abide there *till I tell thee.*'

"I will not give you up as long as I can be of any help. But 'our help is in the Name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.'

"As to work, desire to do God's will, and do well the least things for Him. God values not *what* we do, but how we do it. Look at God, and do not trouble yourself about how much or how little you are told to do. Do little things well and God is pleased.

"When you feel 'all is to end in nothing' it is the voice of the evil one. Fly to God. The least thing done for Him is of more value than the grandest thing done for any other motive. Pray earnestly to our Lady.

"It is quite certain that you must have more difficulty than one who has always been a Catholic; you must endure this, and try your best to turn it to good account."

This year Father Wilberforce paid his first visit to Cornwall, where he went to give a retreat to the Carmelites at Lanherne. Here he made acquaintance with Cowper's translation of some of Madame Guyon de la Motte's poetry, which pleased him greatly, and of which he here sends a specimen to one of his correspondents:—

"THE CONVENT,  
"LANHERNE, *Oct. 9, 1897.*

"This is a completely country place; six miles from station, St Columb's Road; the convent a curious old 14th-

century house ; the village, called St Mawgan, very pretty, in a vale about one and a half miles from the sea, the open Atlantic. This is my first experience of Cornwall, and I had no idea it was so pretty a country.

"The nuns say Matins, as we do in London, at 9 P.M., and get up at this time of the year at 6, that is, from Holy Cross till Easter: in summer, at 5; Compline at 8 P.M.; Vespers at 2. These hours are all laid down in their constitutions.

"How do you like this? :—

"To love God is to make a perfect surrender of self to Him' :—

"Peace hath unveiled her smiling face,  
And woos thy soul to her embrace ;  
Enjoyed with ease, if thou refrain  
From earthly love, else sought in vain ;  
She dwells with all who truth prefer,  
But seeks not them that seek not her.

"Yield to the Lord, with simple heart,  
All that thou hast, and all thou art ;  
Renounce all strength but strength divine,  
And peace shall be forever thine.  
Behold the path that I have trod,  
My path till I go home to GOD."

(*Saturday Night.*)

"You will, I am sure, pray for me to-morrow, the Feast of St Lewis Bertrand. I shall have to say the Mass of the Maternity of our dear Lady, but that will please the saint, and he will not pray for me less."

*Direction on Prayer, etc.*

HAWKESYARD,  
November 1, 1897.

"MY DEAR ——,

"May we, one day, be in the '*turba magna quam dinumerare nemo poterat ante Thronum.*' That is the only thing worth desiring.

"Last Saturday evening I returned home, having left here on August 16, for a series of retreats and sermons, including Manchester, Hawick, Aberdeen, Glenlivet, Gलगain, Waterloo, Midhurst, St Dominic's, London; Lanherne, Limehouse, Woodford, Southampton.

"Now, after having preached so much to others, I am to make my own retreat, to begin next Wednesday, for which I ask prayers.

"Thanks, many and hearty, for the notes of Canon Aker's retreat. They are very nice.

"1. As to prayer: certainly go on freely and with confidence with the prayer of Acts and Petitions. As long as you can make them, why stop them in order to think and reflect?—which we should only do that we may be able to make these Acts.

"'For you, Religious,' says St Alphonsus, 'all your mental prayer should consist of *acts* and *petitions*.'

"You do meditate: (1) during your spiritual reading; (2) often during the day, when you think of spiritual things; (3) also, though shortly, when you think of the text you have selected.

"For example, you choose the text: 'Jesus, having loved His own,' etc. After preparatory prayer, you *remember* this text; this is the work of the memory. Then you meditate: (a) Who were 'His own'? The apostles, and all who believe in Him and love Him. I myself then.

"(b) But I cannot be His own, and my own, at the same time; therefore I must be His without reserve, and in His way, because it is His way. This is the work of the understanding.

"Then, affections and acts: Adoration; Contrition, for being your own by self-love and looking at self, instead of His own by Divine Love and looking at Him; Thanksgiving, for the grace of being 'His own,' thinking what that means. LOVE: as many as possible, 100 at least. Petitions, for true love of our Lord for His own sake: loving Him, *not* for your sake, but for His; for pardon, perseverance, etc.

"Here, far from neglecting meditation from sloth or presumption, you have made it.

"2. It is a grace, and a very valuable one, not to be able to pray freely till you have repented of faults of pride, uncharitableness or criticism. You remember the man who could not see the Blessed Sacrament at the Elevation, and Thomas à Kempis found he was uncharitable, put him right, and then he could see It.

"When you feel so, make acts of contrition, and pray that you may 'esteem others better than yourself' (Philip. ii.). In fact, what better Mental Prayer than the one petition: 'Oh Lord, grant me grace to esteem all others, especially Sister Mary Disagreeable, better than myself!'—and this repeated, in the self-same words, if not for three hours, like the Master, at least for half an hour. Why fear, if you pray exactly as He did? Is not He our Model?

"3. I can quite understand not wishing to let extra

penances be known by others, especially by those who lack some of the Fruit of Trustworthiness.

“Value more than all self-inflicted penances those which come from health, and the things commanded by the doctor. These come from God, straight, and rather humble than puff us up. The penances God gives are so much better, and when accepted, are quite as *voluntary* as those we invent. The latter we can stop directly self-love has had enough, the others we can't. *Thank* God for every suffering from health, as a real boon, better than gold, silver, or precious stones.

“Say, ‘I thank Thee, O God,’ etc., because it is Thy will—not because it will *do me good* (though it will). What deordination could be greater than to love God for our own sake! Yet how easy. Self is so easily the centre. If we love, that is, delight in, God's will in things we don't like, then we love God for *His own* sake. We must want to progress and be more perfect for His sake, if He desires, to please Him, not to be *AI*.

“4. As to abandonment to Him about the use of reason, make it once for all, but don't dwell on it. If He wants you to live with disordered brain, why not, as well as with disordered liver? What matter? The Image of God is in the soul. If that is in grace, why care if He desires the brain of ‘His own’ to be disordered?

“I feel no difficulty myself in this. I do pray that if I should go mad, it may be evident to all that I am, so that no scandal may be given. I do not think that I should much mind, if it were God's will; Burgess Hill is a very pleasant place! But do not allow your imagination to dwell on it. Say, once for all, ‘*whatever* is Thy will I thank Thee for.’

“After all, if He did will me to go mad, He, if I love Him, is bound by His gracious promise to make it ‘work together unto good.’ Again, if I went really mad I could not sin, and sin is the only unmixed evil.

“When you say ‘it is humiliating,’ no doubt it is, just as death is still more humiliating, but you must excuse me if I think that the humiliation to self is what is feared, not the humiliation to God's Image. That is in the soul, and cannot be touched. It is only the brain, used by the soul, that is deranged.

“There is a curious idea about derangement of brain, as if there were some disgrace attached to it; but why is it more disgraceful to have brain deranged than lungs?

“The only thing we cannot be resigned to is sin, and everlasting damnation, which is its consequence. That cannot be God's will.

“No: I fear I do not long for heaven in any true sense. I am quite willing to work as long as God wills, but when He wills, I hope I shall not be unwilling to stop. He may cry ‘Halt!’ at any time.

“This is what surprises me about N——’s wanting to get well so strongly. Perhaps she feels it to be God’s will that she should get well. But without a miracle she must die. She ought to receive the Last Sacraments, resign her office, and spend the time in loving preparation to meet our Lord.

“Speaking again of insanity, people say, ‘how dreadful not to be able to merit!’ But we can merit beforehand by accepting it for God, and if it is not God’s will we should merit, we should love God more than merit. As if He did not know what is best!”

*To a Lady, on Spiritual Communion and Mass.*

“HAWKESYARD,  
“Nov. 18, 1897.

“That you have been ill again distresses me, but does not surprise me. England is so damp at this time.

“Though the Tirol is an unknown land and far off, it is so dry that it favours the lungs, and the lovely sunshine (like the face of God) comforts and heals them.

“But I can well understand your feeling of dread of an unknown land, and the relief ‘home’ is.

“What has happened shows you clearly how careful you must be to keep quiet, with no over-exertion, and *calm in mind*. To rest on God, and to be thoroughly resigned, so as to see His hand in *everything*, is the only way to be calm, but that is an infallible way.

“You can take the deprivation of Mass and Holy Communion as a penance sent you by God for all lukewarmness, if this does not discourage you at all—not, if it does. Thank God for being so kind as to give you a penance; offer it up to Him lovingly, and tell Him you are content, even if it were His will you should never go again. Sacraments are divinely excellent, but His will is infinitely better still.

“Make up by hearing Mass spiritually. Why cannot you lie quietly in bed, and unite yourself to the Holy Sacrifice, and say exactly the same prayers you would have said in the church? Distance is nothing to God. You will then have fourfold merit:—

- “1. For the desire to go to Mass;
- “2. For the mortification of not going;

"3. For the union with God's will; and

"4. For the prayers.

"Then make three times a day, morning, noon, and night, a fervent spiritual Communion. Three minutes will do it. Thus you will have Mass spiritually, Holy Communion spiritually, visit to Blessed Sacrament spiritually, every day.

"Illness, properly taken and managed, and WELCOMED WITH THANKSGIVING, need not keep you back, but advance you.

"Once for all, clearly understand that no rule of fasting or abstinence, even on Friday, Good Friday included, binds you in the least. It is your positive duty to God to obey the doctor, and eat on every day, and every part of every day, exactly what he thinks best for you.

"It is difficult to know what book would suit another. St Alphonsus is one of the best. There is also a Jesuit one, called *Avancini*, that I think is translated. Best of all is the New Testament.

"Pray do not scruple to write whenever it is a comfort. If I can help you at all, I could not be better employed. What could I do better than help a soul to God?"

*To a Religious.*

"HAWKESYARD,

"Nov. 23, 1897.

"In your letter you say:—

"I try to look up to Him, and hope for Him, but I am only sensible of His displeasure at my hypocrisy, and of His justice in casting me off.' You add: 'I do not know if this is a temptation or not. It seems too true to be one.'

"(a) Humility, which is Truth, ought to make you feel exactly as you describe. Therefore, if God has given you light to see SOME PART of the truth, thank Him for it heartily. What is the use of deceiving self by a mask, to be torn ruthlessly off at the judgment seat? Therefore, far from putting this into the background, acknowledge it to the full, and praise God's justice.

"(b) At the same time, this truth would turn into a temptation, if it made you distrust, and fail in confidence.

"You have nothing to trust in if this be true? Certainly not, of your own.

"You never imagined you had anything to trust in of your own.

"You have only the Precious Blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

“His justice, of course, would rightly cast you and me off, if it were not for His mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the first principle of Christianity. But,

“Bathed in His blood ;

“A member of His body ;

“Redeemed by His death ;

we shall not be cast off, but His mercy will accept us.

“‘The cloud of hopelessness,’ then, comes from contemplating, what is so true in itself, your own unworthiness, sinfulness, inability to do anything good, instead of looking constantly on the worthiness, holiness, and goodness of our Lord, whose member you are. All our evils come from not keeping our eyes on Him. *Oculi mei semper ad Dominum.*

“Rejoice if you see a little of your own misery and unworthiness and sinfulness. It is a grace. You do not see one-thousandth part of the truth.

“Courage ! God’s grace is working in you.”

*In acknowledgment of some books.*

“HAWKESYARD,

“Nov. 26, 1897.

“Many most hearty thanks for the copy of the new edition of the *Memoir*, which I prize much. Also for the little book for lay-sisters, which I have not yet read. Still more, for the dear little book, worth ten times its weight in gold, of St Catherine of Siena.<sup>1</sup> I have read every word this morning, and hope to read it many times, and to practise it in some measure, according to the crassness of my nature. At least, to try. But how much easier to read and approve than to do !

“*The Lay-Sister* ought to be useful. It is not broken up enough into paragraphs. Who corrected the proofs ? Do you see, ‘They *hare* very simple,’ on page 4 ? I shall read it.

“Yes : Ecclcus. iii. 4 is delightful. So we must love God and pray that our sins may be forgiven. ‘The prayer of days’ means daily prayer—prayer continued day after day.

“How nice Ecclcus. xxvi. 4 is. ‘If his heart is good.’ Happiness is from within.

“Blosius says that when we offer up to God our works, prayers, sufferings, etc., with those of our Blessed Lord, it is as if we add a drop of water to a goblet of wine. The drop is absorbed : so, our littleness and imperfections, in the

<sup>1</sup> *On Consummate Perfection*, by St Catherine of Siena. Published by Catholic Truth Society at id.

fullness of Christ's merits. 'Christ and His members are one Christ,' St Augustine constantly repeats.

"You have put, I see, a very kind inscription to me in the first book. I trust I may have been an instrument of good in those years! May we both see the face of God for ever, and drink of the torrent of His delight.

"Yours ever in Corde SS.,

"F. B. W."

*To a Lady.*

"HAWKESYARD,  
"Nov. 30, '97.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"When you speak in your letter of the sense of failure, you must be on your guard against pride.

"There is no failure really except the failure of ceasing to try to do God's will. As long as that is the desire of the soul, all failures are of no consequence, and very likely an advantage. All is advantageous that helps to humble the soul.

"Now I think you should try as much as possible to despise the devil and his temptations and take a delight in doing the very opposite. He is very proud ('as proud as Lucifer' is a proverb), and has a particular distaste for humility, so to despise him is often a good way. The mind should be as much taken off these thoughts as is possible.

"The bell is just going to ring for the office of the dead, so I must close."

*To his Sister.*

"ST THOMAS' PRIORY, HAWKESYARD,  
"RUGELEY, STAFFS, Nov. 25, 1897.

"MY DEAREST SISTER,

"All hail, as you come out of your solitude with your strength renewed like the eagle. I shall be curious to hear how you like a Redemptorist retreat.

"My retreat was quiet and happy. I like a solitary one. I used the Bible, *Following of Christ*, and Rodriguez almost entirely. I had a retreat book but used it little, it was too long. I prefer a text to meditate on or pray about.

"I came out with the truth impressed on me that God is very good and I very bad, that I must work away to try to learn humility; and that it is a horrid thing not only to have very slight love of God but to love Him for my sake instead

of for His own sake. So that I must try for those two things. Humility ought to be very easy, there is so much cause for it, but owing to human corruption it is difficult. To love God for His own sake ought to be easy also, as He is so good. To love His will because it is His will is the best way I presume.

“What you wrote of X—— is most interesting, and I trust she will visit you again. What her rector told her was strictly true, and the best thing he could tell her.

“Canon Bagshawe’s books, *The Church* and *The Threshold of the Catholic Church*, are very good and would do her good.

“*Mary in the Gospels*, by Dr Northcote, would be a very good book about our dear Lady. Also what Card. Newman says in his devotions about the Immaculate Conception, and his wonderfully beautiful sermons about her, the two last in the volume of *Sermons to Mixed Congregations*.

Her question about the Infallible Guide and the Bible shows confusion of mind. It is like asking to know what would you do if you found white was black, if light were darkness, or  $2 + 2 = 9$ .

“We only know the Bible to be the word of God because the Infallible Guide says so.

“I was much struck the other day by St Paul’s words in the fifth chap. of the Ephesians, ‘Giving thanks *always for all things*, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.’ They are useful to meditate on, and show us how constant and universal our spirit of thanksgiving ought to be.

“With my warmest love and every fraternal message to M. Abbess and all the community.

“Your devoted Brother,

“BERTRAND.”

*To a Religious.*

“Dec. 31, 1897.

“The day that obedience tells you to look after the children will be as much spent for and with our Lord, if you try to keep united with Him through your duties, as the more quiet ones. Very likely more grace will attend that day and more union of will with Him.

“Why not meditate—1. On the graces God has given during the past year. 2. Your shabby correspondence. 3. The faults of the past year with contrition and amendment.

4. The faithfulness our Lord wants you to show for the coming year.

“To be accused unjustly gives you a capital opportunity to be united to our Lord in His Passion. If you were so weak as to break your resolution and to defend yourself, humble yourself at His feet. If you have not the merit of not speaking, you will have that of humiliation.

“Not to get up when called might surely be a slight sin of disobedience, but I would put it to the chicks rather as an act of self-denial to offer to our Lord to please Him. This teaches them to serve Him from love rather than from fear.

## CHAPTER X

1898

THE first letter of 1898 is one of encouragement and exhortation to persevere in the spiritual warfare:—

“HAWKESYARD,  
“January 4, 1898.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“Time certainly does not hang fire, and never returns. ‘Behold, I come quickly.’

“From my heart I wish you every best grace and gift for this New Year.

“It is quite true that the last twelve months have been a time of light and grace for you, and you have much to thank God for. Much more than if they had been months of great sensible fervour and consolation. For the interior light to know yourself and God better is a far more useful and precious grace, and not open to delusion.

“‘These are counsellors that feelingly persuade me what I am.’

“Keep on the same track and do not weary, and God will lead you on to better things, and to solid peace.

“I remember telling you years ago that, if God were to lead you on by His kindly light, you would see many sins and imperfections that you could not see then. This is so true.

“The weariness of spiritual things is a trial, and shows you have been working. Scorn the temptation to relax.

“I know of no ‘royal road’ to greater interior recollection and converse with God; there is none: it must be done gradually, by turning from other things, and conversing with Him.

“I do not think the treatise you quote meant that leave should be got for small daily mortifications. These can be done as they occur. Do not bind yourself *never* to do this or that: ‘never’ to take salt or sugar, etc., but often abstain, and offer it to our Lord.

“Do not have too much cold : be cautious about that in this damp climate.

“As to the little extras allowed you : it is important for you, both for your soul and body, and for others, not to get run down. I should say take these things when you really have reason to think they will do you good. If you run down, it will affect your nervous system, depress you, render you unfit for your duties to others. Be prudent, then, and if you are better, keep so. God bless you. Pray for me, and I for you.”

Father Wilberforce spent the greater part of the month of January at St Dominic's, Stone, resting there in preparation for the work of Lent. A little note to one whom he had helped in many difficulties is dated :—

“STONE,  
“Jan. 31, 1898.

“Thank you much for your kind letter, which is a consolation and a joy, as it always is if I have any reason to hope our Lord has helped any soul through me. That is the one true joy of this world.

“I have always felt how dreadful it would be, and insulting to our Lord, to allow the supernatural relations with a soul to degenerate into mere human friendship, and I am thankful you can testify to Him that it has not been so. . . .

“God bless you, and pray for me.”

The following letter, written from Hawkesyard, whither he had returned for a few days, was accompanied by some translation from St Thomas on the Incarnation, in reply to a question as to how far Christ could suffer in His soul :—

“Feb. 9.

“Behold what I have done for you, roughly ; given you some food for thought and meditation out of St Thomas. The better we know our Lord and Saviour and only Hope, the better we shall love Him. Certainly to know Him, is to love Him. Tell me if you like this. It is very literal ; condensed from three articles of the holy Doctor.

“Since I was at Stone I have been keeping much more strictly to the diet, and Father Prior has made me take meat at breakfast—a most un-Dominican proceeding!—but I am bound to say I am a good deal better. Father Provincial told me the other day that he considered it would be wise for me to go after Easter to Neuenahr, which will doubtless do me much good.”

The first engagement for this Lent was a large mission at Burnley, which involved hard work. Some anxiety had been felt by Father Bertrand's friends as to whether he would be able to do it, and before starting he felt rather doubtful himself. But on this, as on so many similar occasions, it was curious to see how, the nervous depression and repugnance once overcome, he threw himself into the work and was really the better for it. This was partly, no doubt, supernatural—the delight of gaining souls for God triumphing over the weakness of nature; but it was also in part physical. The disease from which he suffered had a very depressing effect on his whole nervous system, and exterior occupation was for him almost a necessity. He knew this and often expressed a dread of having 'to *rust* rather than to *wear* out.'"

During the Burnley mission he writes to his sister:—

"Feb. 24, 1898.

"Enclosed is a picture that has been sent me, of the 'Bull,' East Farleigh, which I remember well. Do you? I remember the Fair outside, and the joy of buying gingerbread at it, after church. '*In diebus illis!*' Fifty years ago!

"It would be a mistake to hurry N——; but take any opportunity you can get to enlighten her about the Unity of the Church, the Holy See, etc.

"The fear of scandalising others will of course tempt her to avoid Catholics. I should point out to her that as the thing she does is good, she need not fear, and must leave people to say what they like. It is the same feeling that led Nicodemus to come to our Lord at night, 'for fear of the Jews.'

"Exhort her to go on praying for light to see God's will, and for grace to do it when she does see it. Prayer is *the* way, but prayer with the desire to do God's will. I will send you a book to lend her that may do good.

"This mission is to end on the third Sunday of Lent, March 13. On the fourth, to Passion Sunday, I am to give one at Atherstone; then a short retreat at Slough, and then a fortnight at Devonport.

"On March 14, I shall enter on my sixtieth year: a solemn fact, especially as I have a mortal disease. . . .

"We are all in the hands of God, and He will do what He pleases with us, and what matters anything, if we die in His Grace? Do not be anxious about me. I daresay I may live a few years more. But you must be prepared for the

shock, if I do not; and if I get a sudden chill and die, I would say to you, my dearest, in Cardinal Newman's words:—

“Weep not for me when I am gone,  
Nor spend thy faithful breath  
In grieving o'er the spot or hour  
Of all-enshrouding death.

“Nor waste in idle praise, thy love  
On deeds of head or hand,  
Which live within the hidden book,  
Or else are writ in sand.

“But let it be the best of prayers,  
That I may find the grace  
To reach the holy house of toll,  
The frontier penance-place.”<sup>1</sup>

“Do you know the rest? Take care of yourself and pray for the poor sinners we preach to.”

Two days later he writes to another:—

“Feb. 26.

“Knowing your kind anxiety for my health, I think you will like to hear that, far from being dead, or worse in health, I feel very much better.

“The fact is that the canon here and the housekeeper understand all about my complaint, for Father Lawrence Johnson (an old Ushaw companion of mine) was curate here, and had it for some years, going to the unseen state about two years ago; so the experience of his case makes them treat me well.

“I confess honestly that I feel much better for it in every way, and it enables me to keep strictly away from forbidden things. Abstinence from bread and all similar things must take the place of abstinence from meat; and as it is God's will that I should have the favour of diabetes, it is, I hope, His will that I should eat meat. I am a glutton. Pray for me that I may make it up in other ways, which I do not do, I fear.

“Very fine church and schools here; many people. Pray that many may be truly and permanently converted to God.

“How do you like the Acts in mental prayer measured by a watch? Does it distract or help you? Of course no such things are to be adopted in a wooden way: if you feel drawn to one kind of act for three, or thirteen, or twenty minutes, it is all right. But I, poor, idle, distracted soul, find I can

<sup>1</sup> “The Golden Prison”; *Verses on Various Occasions*.—Ed., 1880.

keep more to the point and more diligent by using this method."

This method of making the different acts in mental prayer for so many minutes, measured by the hand of a watch, had been adopted by Father Wilberforce about this time, as a means of concentrating the attention and thus avoiding "dreaminess." He frequently recommended it to those under his direction, and in another letter he explains how it should be practised:—

"I have found that a good way of preventing mental prayer from becoming a dream is to take a watch in your hand and then for half-a-minute think of the text you have chosen as the subject of your prayer. For another half-minute make Acts of Adoration. Then for one minute each, Acts of Contrition, Thanksgiving, Love, and Supplication.

"The advantage of this way is that knowing I have only a certain time to make each kind of act, I have to exert myself to do it, and it prevents dreaming.

"EXAMPLE.—You take the verse from St John xiii.: 'Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father,' etc. The words, 'Jesus knowing that His hour had come,' may, out of many, suggest thoughts of death.

"*Half-minute*.—Soon the hour will come when I shall have to pass out of this world to the Father. How soon? I know not. How, O Lord, didst Thou meet the hour? In complete submission and obedience to the will of Thy Father.

"*Half-minute*.—ADORE the Father with our Lord, offering His disposition.

"*One minute*.—ACTS OF CONTRITION, for anything wrong that would disturb you at that hour.

"*One minute*.—ACTS OF THANKSGIVING, for the example given you by our Lord at that supreme hour.

"*One minute*.—ACTS OF LOVE. Thou wert ready to die for me, make me ready to die for Thee.

"*One minute*.—ACTS OF PETITION OR SUPPLICATION, for pardon, perfect contrition and love, and for a happy death.

"Five minutes fled.

"Then you can go on in the same way to the words, 'Having loved His own.' Delightful thought! His own! I am Thy own, Thy very own, O Lord. How?

"Repeat the same acts for another five minutes, and then go on to the next phrase. In this way the half-hour

is soon gone. You can go straight through a chapter, dwelling on what strikes the mind, and making these acts, but if drawn to remain longer on one kind of act, then rest there. Sometimes I take two minutes for each act. The great object is to keep the attention fixed."

From Burnley Father Wilberforce went to Newton Abbot, whence he writes :—

"Not only have I not received Extreme Unction yet, but I feel ten per cent. stronger than I did before the Burnley mission. I am here to give my dear little nephew his First Communion on St Joseph's Day. On the next day I begin the little mission at Atherstone, followed by retreat at Slough—not the Slough of Despair, I hope.

"'Talking to God familiarly' pleases Him most, because He loves us and loves to hear us prattle, rather than reading stilted things to Him. A Father loves the talk of His children better than fine things dictated by a governess."

*To his Sister.*

"THE PRIORY,  
"ATHERSTONE, *March 22, '98.*

"MY DEAREST,

"I will try to indicate to you the line of answer to N——.

"1. Point out to her that on account of the principles of the Church of England all the bishops must teach heresy. For a High Church Bishop must authorise clergy to teach that our Lord is not present in the Eucharist; and a Low Church Bishop must authorise others to teach in his name that our Lord is present.

"2. Point out that they have no principle of unity. If the Holy Ghost taught through the Church of England it could not be as it is. But as long as each individual parson teaches his own opinion, there *cannot* be unity.

"The only principle of unity in doctrine is Divine Authority, and that is not even claimed.

"A man taking orders in the Church of England must himself choose the doctrine he will teach. He may teach High, Low, or Broad: he must choose by his own private liking and judgment; now heresy means 'choice'—the choice of our own judgment. The Church of England forces people to choose for themselves, that is, to be heretics.

“3. How can she test whether what we tell her is true about the unity in doctrine in the Catholic Church?

“(a) Has she ever seen contrary doctrines taught in Catholic books about things defined by the Church? Can she quote a book of any bishop or priest, for instance, which denies the Real Presence? If we were not united, how easy this would be.

“(b) Has she ever heard a priest, nun, or devout Catholic deny the Blessed Sacrament?

“(c) She might write twenty letters to various bishops asking what the Church teaches about any doctrine, *e.g.*, Baptism, Confession, Eucharist, etc., etc., and compare them. We know what would happen if she wrote to various Anglicans.

“4. Of course the objection about good and learned Anglicans is one sure to present itself to any humble mind. But

“(a) It would prevent anyone ever changing their religion. A Jew might say, ‘I know many good men better and more learned than I am; why do they not see the truth of Christianity?’ St Paul might have said this of Gamaliel, his master. What would an Anglican say to a Methodist in answer to the same argument?

“(b) N—— has not to answer to God for the Bishop of ——. But she has to answer to Him if she does not follow her own conscience and the light He gives *her*. The Bishop of —— may be better than she is. What of that? He may not have the same light from God. When our Lord says to her, ‘Why did you not follow the light I gave you?’ it will not do to say, ‘Because Dr —— did not see it.’

“(c) Against the Bishop of —— she has the whole body of Saints of the Church who did see it.

“5. Explain how utterly doubtful (at the lowest) the condemnation of the Pope must make their Orders, and therefore the Eucharist. Of course for us it is certain they have no Orders, but doubtful for them.

“The Pope and twelve hundred bishops all unite against the Protestant Orders; the Greek Church rejects them; even the Jansenists also; and of their own bishops and clergy a great body agree with the Pope.

“How doubtful at least they must be.

“Exhort her to pray on for light to *see* and grace to *do* God’s will. But when praying for light she must have the determination to follow it, or God may withdraw it.

“Pray for this work.

“I am much better and stronger.”

A letter on Progress in the Spiritual Life, is dated :—

“NEUENAHR, *May 22, 1898.*

“Your letter of April 25, nearly a month ago, has been neglected, for which pardon me.

“You very likely heard that on St Peter Martyr’s day, —’s wife had her first child, born dead. It was a keen and mysterious trial, but they were very much resigned, and it gave us all an excellent opportunity of adoring God’s loving will, and thanking Him for doing His own will in His own way.

“I am glad you are following the admonition given to St Antony. It is most necessary, and the only way. ‘What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter.’

“‘But,’ you add, ‘I cannot say that I feel as if I were making any real progress, or getting really any better.’

“What a good thing! What a delusion you would be under if you were to feel that you had made progress, and were getting really better. How much better not to feel it, for the feeling would surely be dangerous. When we get nearer to God, when the light of His face shines upon us, do we not see our shortcomings more, and our imperfections?

“Look forward, not backward: at God, not at your progress. Advance with courage to the many virtues you stand in need of, rather than stop to reckon the progress you have made. Leave this to God, who searches and knows the heart. Be content to seek Him and love His will, and do not waste time in wondering if you have made progress. Go on with patience and courage, though you see no progress. If it is good for you to see it, God will show it to you. ‘Consider,’ says St Teresa, ‘His Greatness, and we shall discover our baseness; contemplate His Purity, and we shall discover our filthiness; behold His Humility, and we shall discover how far we are from being humble.’

“Do not be too anxious about your class. Pray for them, and take what opportunity you have to do them good, and then leave them to God.

“The waters are doing me good, and I am very well. In June, I hope to begin retreats again, after the quiet here,

which is most delightful. The weather is now bright and sunny; the birds are singing away most charmingly.

"God bless you."

The following letter is addressed to a nephew on the occasion of his Confirmation.

"NEUENAHN,

"*Trinity Sunday, June 5.*

"MY MOST DEAR ———,

"Mother has told me how great a day this is for you, one of the most important of your whole life, because the Holy Ghost Himself, the Lord and Lifegiver, is to-day to come to you in the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation, to fill your soul with His Royal Presence, and to make you more than ever (what Baptism has already done) His living temple. 'Know you not that your members (the very members of your body) are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body.' These wonderful words, that I advise you to learn by heart and often to think about, you will find in St Paul's first Epistle, or Letter, to the Corinthians, chapter vi., verse 19.

"After the Holy Ghost has come to you in Confirmation, you will belong to Him still more than before. When St Paul says you are not your own, he means that you belong to God because He made you. If you made a boat, you would say: 'That is mine'; and if you were asked, 'How is it yours?' you would answer: 'Because I made it.'

"Also you belong to God, your loving Father, because He bought you, and bought you with a great price. Of course you know what that great price was—the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, and nothing certainly could be greater than that. So you belong to Him by the right of purchase.

"Then you also belong to Him by the right of possession, because He has made you His temple, and has lived in you, loving you, ever since your baptism, and now has come to consecrate your soul to Himself, and to strengthen your Faith, Hope, and Charity by His gifts and fruits.

"So you must try to be faithful to Him, dear boy, all your life, that you may belong to Him for ever, and never be separated from Him, for then He Himself will be your reward exceeding great.

"After your Confirmation you must try more and more

to do every action for God, to be very diligent in study time, to please Him ; very merry in play-time, to please Him ; and very earnest in your prayers, to please Him.

“ If you let the Holy Ghost work in your heart, He will bring forth in you all His fruits, that will make you perfect towards God, yourself and your neighbour.

“ Charity is the first, by which you love God for His own sake, and then follow the two lovely fruits of Joy and Peace. Their very names are delightful, and they are the two things that make life really happy and always bright. For Happiness is from within. They depend on Charity ; the more you love God, the greater peace and joy will be yours. They cannot be perfect in this world, therefore you need Patience. These four perfect you in relation to God.

“ Then the next five lovely fruits make you perfect in relation to others.

“ Benignity, or supernatural Kindness, makes you think well and kindly of all.

“ Goodness, supernatural Generosity, makes you do kind actions to all.

“ Long-suffering and Mildness enable you to bear with the troublesome ways, the defects, the sins of others, for as we are none of us perfect, we are a trial often to each other.

“ Then Fidelity, or supernatural Trustworthiness, is a magnificent and far-reaching fruit that perfects the character. It makes a man a ‘ faithful friend, the medicine of life and immortality,’ as the Holy Ghost says. It makes a man faithful in all he says and does ; perfectly truthful and straightforward, and always to be trusted, in small things and great.

“ Lastly, Modesty, Contineny, and Chastity make a man perfect in himself.

“ Modesty is that nice orderly conduct, when before others or by oneself, that comes from remembering that we are never alone, but always in God’s presence.

“ Contineny makes us moderate in all lawful pleasures, as eating and drinking, sleeping and playing, etc., and Chastity gathers up all the affections of the soul, and fixes them on God, making us avoid any kind of pleasure that we know would offend Him.

“ Pray for these twelve rich fruits for yourself, and for me, and for us all. I have prayed for you, of course, and shall continue doing so.

“ I am here drinking the salutary waters, and they have done me good, and I hope soon to return to England and to work for God and for souls.

“ You have heard about Mr Gladstone, no doubt, and his

recent death and public funeral. When you read his life you will see not only how greatly God had gifted him, but how earnestly he had used God's gifts. Though we cannot be like him in gifts, we can all imitate his earnestness in using what God has given us for His glory."

Father Wilberforce returned to England in June, and soon afterwards writes to a charitable lady who was attending the sick-bed of a poor child :—

"HAWKESYARD,  
"July 6, 1898.

"This morning I was wondering how you were getting on, and afterwards found your letter.

"How pleasing to God must be your devotion to the poor little sufferer, whose soul He has determined to save *through you*. Our Lord is taking her in the early days of her life, and has used you as the means by which He has given her the perfect dispositions of Faith, Hope, Resignation, and Charity. All good is from Him and for His glory ; yet how good of Him to make use of you. This must fill your soul with firm confidence in Him and His goodness.

"‘The Lord is my Shepherd,  
And I shall want for nothing.’

"You rather amuse me when you join together in one sentence, ‘utter inability to pray,’ and, ‘or to say anything but “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”’ What prayer could be better or more efficacious than that? It was the prayer that obtained for the poor publican forgiveness ; put him into a state of grace. What better prayer could be imagined?

"You add, ‘the desire of praying is so great.’ Now, our desires speak to God ; the desire must come from Him ; it is His own gift, and it speaks to His heart, and we may be certain that no good desire goes unrewarded. If no bad desire, fully deliberate, accepted and consented to, can help offending and wounding Him, how much more must every good desire, fully deliberate, accepted and consented to, speak to Him, please Him and fill him with joy. To desire God's will to be done in you, through you, and in His own way, is a most meritorious act of love, and must come from His grace. Give way to it, then, always calmly and quietly, and be not anxious.

"The little one going to God is indeed to be envied, and you are too, in so holy a work. ‘Behold, O my God, O my great Creator, a small lump of mire and earth mixed together

in the hands of Thy Eternal Providence. Do with me what best pleaseth Thee, in my life, in my death, and after my death; in time and in eternity.' See chapter xxxiii. of the *Spiritual Conflict*.

"Wishing you every grace, I remain, in the Sacred Heart,

"F. B. W."

In a letter to a Religious he speaks of the dispositions for frequent Communion :—

"GOOD SHEPHERD CONVENT, PENYLAN,  
"CARDIFF, *July 20, 1898.*

"Thank God, the waters and rest at Neuenahr did me great good, though I should have derived more benefit if the weather had been hotter and drier. Still, I am much improved.

"It seems to me that the light you have had to see yourself better comes from going oftener to Holy Communion: so go on receiving our Lord as often as you can.

"Our Lord has a right to look for true fidelity and watchfulness, humility and charity, if you went only once a week; but the way to gain these graces is to humble yourself, acknowledging your own nothingness and the truth of His word: 'Without ME you can do nothing.'

"If you became conscious of the faults you mention, and were determined to go on with them and not to fight against them, then I should agree that frequent Holy Communion ought to stop, but not if you mean to try and fight the enemy.

"We must labour after the charity that 'thinketh no evil,' but loves to believe good of others.

"I well know the kind of thing you mean, about the thoughts and words that seemed at the time prompted by love of rule and observance. No doubt in many of them there is a root of pride and self-love.

"It requires time and long combat to gain patience and indifference in small inconveniences and contradictions. But the endeavour is of great use. Let the difficulty and failures humble you, and then much is gained.

"No doubt deliberate inordinations do form a barrier to union with God, and we must sacrifice them to enjoy Him. So try and be more faithful every day, as life glides by, and the soul gets nearer the golden gate.

"You amuse me by your distinction between 'regular meditation' and meditation on certain texts of St John.

Why are the latter not regular? Why is poor St John to be 'irregular,' and Father someone 'regular'?"

*A Sermon on Jonas. To S. M. R.*

“CONVENT, ST MARYCHURCH,  
“ST IGNATIUS' DAY, July 31, 1898.

“I have to preach here on our Holy Father's Day, and begin the retreat at St Margaret's Convent, Edinboro', on Saturday evening. It is to finish on the Assumption.

“How lovely the story of Jonas the prophet and Ninive is! I never tire of it. It teaches so much of the nature of God. I mention it because I am going to read it in church this morning, suggested by the tears of our loving Lord over Jerusalem: to show He is the same God who spared Ninive —‘that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons that know not how to distinguish between their right hand and their left (children, I suppose), and many beasts.’

“How loving and compassionate! How can anyone be anything but full of joy in serving so gracious a Lord and Master. Jonas is a lesson: how foolish to turn from God and fly, instead of doing His will, in the way He wills. Jonas looked at self, and not at God. He was thinking of self, and fearing lest he might be looked on as a false prophet. What matter if he was, as long as God has His way and is glorified! He was angry with God for being so merciful, as men are often inclined to be.

“‘He was very angry.’

“Fancy a man being *angry* with God! How often people are, when they do not get their own way. When they want God to do their will, in their way, because it is their will; and He does His will in His own way, because it is His will.

“And Jonas was very impudent, and prayed impudently, as many do now, instead of humbly, knowing their own nothingness.

“‘I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this just what I said? . . . Therefore I fled . . . for I knew how it would be. I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful; slow to anger (long-suffering), and of great compassion, and easy (ready) to forgive evil.’

“It is well for Jonas and for us that our good God is gracious and courteous, though we are so ungracious and rude to Him and doubt His word so often; that He is merciful, though we are hard to others, but need mercy ourselves; slow

to anger, though we are so provoking ; of great compassion and kindness, or where should we be?—easy to forgive evil, so we must trust and love Him. The same God who wept over Lazarus and Jerusalem.

“Jonas was so cross, his pride being hurt, and his eyes fixed on himself, not on God, that he actually wished for his own death, through bad temper !

“How kind and mild is God’s answer ; not taking him at his word. ‘Dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry? Why are you cross with Me for being merciful and kind!’

“Pride and temper made Jonas wish the destruction of the city, to save himself a humiliation !

“Then he went off sulky, and sat down under the booth, *i.e.*, trellis work, in a temper.

“The kind, good God made a gourd, or ivy, or palm-crist come up to shade him. ‘The Lord is thy keeper ; the Lord is thy protection on thy right hand ; *the sun shall not burn thee by day*, nor the moon by night’ (Ps. cxx.).

“Jonas was glad—glad God was good to him, because he loved himself, though he wanted God to be severe to others. (Oh human nature !)

“Then God tried him : sent a worm, and the ivy or ‘gourd’ died. Jonas got hot and cross ; surly as a bear, and grumbled. Why? He had not his own way.

“And God said, ‘You are angry about the gourd, and shall not I spare Ninive?’ etc. All in Ninive were God’s own property ; even the poor patient cattle, with their big bovine eyes.

“O loving, merciful God ! how far better to be in His hands than in the hands of man—of Jonas.

“However much we have sinned then, we must turn to Him, look to Him, love Him, and He will have mercy and spare.

“‘From blindness of heart  
“Deliver us, O God.’

“We see the kind of God with whom we have to deal. How can we help loving Him and His Sacred Heart?”

To Miss Buchanan, who had been helping him in some literary work, he writes :—

“ST MARGARET’S CONVENT,  
“EDINBURGH, August 8, 1898.

“It is indeed kind of you to have got me some of the little books, and I shall be most grateful to have some here, for they are so useful to give away.

“What I asked you to give for distribution were:—

- “1. *An easy method of Mental prayer.*
- “2. The leaflets on mental prayer.
- “3. *Maxims of St Alphonsus Liguori.*

“They are all id. each, and published by the Catholic Truth Society.

“The other book is one I translated from the French of Father Grou, called *A Little Book of the Love of God.*

“I mentioned it to you as a book that would be useful to you as a spiritual reading book, but I did not mean to ask for copies of that. . . . I am very glad that you had a happy day at —. The conversion of David and St Peter are both most lovely subjects of mental prayer, full of love of God. Hell is a truth very necessary to be remembered, to make us hate sin; but we should try to hate sin not only because hell would be unpleasant to us, but more because it is separation from God. ‘Let me never be separated from Thee.’ It seems a curious order to have hell before death.<sup>1</sup>

“It is very interesting to hear of N——’s family having known the dear, loving, holy, wise St Alphonsus. What an honour and joy to have ordained him!

“What you say about want of knowledge of God is quite true. All shallowness in the spiritual life comes from that. The more we know God, the more we shall love Him and turn from ourselves; we can only love what we know, and the knowledge of God is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

“Pray never think that I could look on your kindness as being rude. Being a Religious, I have no money.

“I will tell you what I want now. Any facts or writings, passages, etc., that show Savonarola’s love for our dear Lady or for the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. There is a lovely old life of him in Italian by a contemporary, B . . . . macchi. I do not remember the name, but it begins with B, and I think, ends with ‘macchi.’<sup>2</sup>

“Thank God you understand better what mental prayer is. It is a blessing. ‘Taste and see how *sweet* the Lord is.’

“Read Faber’s *Creator and Creature.*”

<sup>1</sup> In the prayer, *Anima Christi.*

<sup>2</sup> Burlamacchi.

*To his Sister.*

"ST MARGARET'S CONVENT,  
"EDINBURGH, August 9, 1898.

"MY DEAREST SISTER,

"To-day, having a free Mass, I offered the Holy Sacrifice for you and the community . . . that you might all 'labour to please Him' (2 Cor. v. 9).

"This is a large convent, standing in extensive grounds, with a remarkably fine stone church with Norman arches and vaulted stone roof.

"Edinburgh is a wonderfully beautiful city: quite the finest in the United Kingdom, and the castle, Arthur's Seat, etc., reminds one so of dear old Sir Walter Scott, and he, in turn, of our dearest Father.

"The nuns here, Ursulines of the Incarnation, take the greatest care of me and my diet: and I eat meat constantly and no bread, though St Dominic and St Vincent Ferrer say, lots of bread and no meat!

"I heard the other day from Father Cuthbert Wolseley, at Grenada, B.W.I. He seems very happy in his work, and is very well in health. He was to have returned, but the General told him that, though he might return, if he wanted to carry out his (the General's) wishes, he would remain. So he decided so to do, and likes Grenada. He has hard work. About 10,000 Catholics spread over twenty miles. He says:—

"The Presbytery is two miles up the mountains, and I go down to Grenville Church three times a week to say Mass; the other days I say Mass in my oratory, and allow the people to come. Most of them live nearer here, so here I have larger congregations. On Sundays I say seven o'clock Mass here, and have a sung Mass at ten at Grenville, when I preach, give Catechism, and baptise, and arrive here about 2 P.M. for dinner, going down again at 7 for service.

"I often get 200 communicants who have walked ten miles down from the mountains. They bring a little to eat after Mass, return home, and actually come down again for the evening. I am immensely edified by the devout and earnest Catholics I find here. As there are 10,000, I cannot do justice to the people. I am out nearly every day for sick calls, and obliged to keep two good horses, as the average work is from twelve to fifteen miles per day.

"The ground is sanctified by St Lewis Bertrand, and I

am at present the only Dominican in this, the very land where he worked.'<sup>1</sup>

"I hope you will pray for dear Father Cuthbert, who is a good, generous soul, and his 10,000 people. A large number to have on one's hands alone.

"I suppose you heard that three Dominican Fathers of the Lyons Province were drowned in the ill-fated steamer *Bourgogne*, lost in collision. They were hearing confessions and giving absolution as the ship went down. *Requiescat in pace.*

"To-day, if I can find time, I am going to call on the Poor Clares at their new convent here, an offshoot from Baddesley Clinton. It is at Liberton, which was in former times Leper town, I am told, now a suburb of Edinburgh."

From Edinburgh he also writes to another Religious, giving some advice for her retreat:—

"August 13, 1898.

"Do not make too long a list of things for confession, as that distracts you so much from acts of contrition and purpose of amendment. A few things that are—(1) wilful; (2) repented of for supernatural reasons; (3) that you absolutely determine not to do again, are so much more practical than three hundred and fifty things, many involuntary, many only feelings, and many that you do not repent of, and mean to do again.

"I never heard of Julienne Morel and never knew she was created, much less that she had written a book.

"For myself I should vastly prefer the New Testament and Psalms; but if her retreat does you more good, by all means use it. But take one or two thoughts. One word of our Lord or His evangelists, or David, go so much deeper than long French reflections.

"The soul is roused by looking at God, not at self. 'My eyes are always on the Lord; He will pluck my feet out of the snare' (Ps. xxiv. 15).

"You have said that hundreds of times in choir: begin this retreat to *do* it, and He will pluck your soul out of the snare. The books I should recommend for the retreat are

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written the Island of Grenada has been placed in the hands of the English province of the Dominican Order, and several Fathers are stationed there, doing good work among the people, but greatly hampered by want of funds. There is scarcely a white man besides themselves on the island.

the Bible, especially New Testament and Psalms, and Ecclesiasticus, *The Following of Christ*, *The Spiritual Combat*, which I strongly advise you to read slowly *through* from first word to last during the retreat.

"Is not that enough for eight days? You can have a life of a saint, for light reading, if you like.

"Weigh well and often the precept of the love of God:—

"1. With all the mind—thinking power;

"2. With all the heart—loving power;

"3. With all the soul—the spirit itself;

"4. With all the strength—action.

"Let the one constant petition in mental prayer be that you may begin to love God *for His own sake*.

"We are so apt to love Him for our sake: 'O my God, I love Thee for my own sake, that I may be happy.'

"To love God for His sake is a supernatural and divine gift: ask and you shall receive. But you must be ready to pay the cost.

"'Here I am' (Genesis xxii. 1). What a grand chapter that is to meditate on."

To the same, a little later, he says:—

"Contrition is a supernatural gift. So ask for it continually in mental prayer, but take care not to make efforts after sensible sorrow, for it is unnecessary, and efforts after it will only derange head and liver, and end in discouragement.

"To repent out of love means to hate a thing because it displeases God. This you do.

"The best way to know that we love God for His own sake, is to do, in order to please Him, unpleasant things, *e.g.*, the retreat, when you feel ill and disinclined: and to thank Him when things go against your will, *e.g.*, when you have a pain, etc.

"To love God means to prefer His will to ours. It is not a feeling but a preference of the will. You stop in the convent and teach in the school, to do God's will: that is love.

"A hard heart means, not absence of feeling, but an obstinate will, intending to disobey and oppose God.

"Make yourself full of joy by thinking much of our Lord and His love and goodness and mercy, and not full of sadness by looking at yourself. Forget yourself during the retreat, and look at Him, and your heart will rejoice."

*To the Same.*

"1. Remember how contrition absolves, or rather obtains absolution, and make many acts of contrition, asking our Lord to give you as intense a hatred of the least venial sin as you now have of the worst mortal.

"We gain this by looking at sin from God's point of view, as an evil to Him, not so much to us.

"2. Your resolution is very good. Work at it and try to unwrap.

"It will be done by seeing God in others, looking at Him.

"No doubt the difficulty of 'making up' is pride: the love of self rather than God. Looking at self instead of God, which makes you prefer self to God.

"'To look back is dreadful.' Then cease to look back, look forward to God. Fix your eyes on Him *Oculi mei* 'SEMPER *ad Dominum*.'

"It is most kind of you to offer Holy Communion for me. God reward you. I do and will pray for you.

"I will offer your resolutions in the sacred chalice tomorrow. . . . Hope is the bright road to God. Fix all your hope on Him. On dark days 'make not haste in time of clouds' (Eccles. ii. 2).

"On dark days *wait* for the clouds to go by.

"All the saints were not sweet, gentle, and amiable *by nature*; some were, but others were not. St Francis de Sales, who by nature was very passionate; St Lewis Bertrand, who by nature was gloomy, dark, hard; St Jerome, who by nature was very fiery and sarcastic, etc., etc., became so by conquering themselves.

"Fight, and our Lord will be pleased and reward you in copious measure.

"God bless you. Do not be cast down when you fail. Pray for me that I may do some of the things I talk about."

*To M. B., on the Foreknowledge of God.*

"THE CONVENT,  
"STONE, August 20, 1898.

"Many grateful thanks for all the trouble you have taken to make so many and such beautiful extracts. They are just what I wanted: may God reward you.

"I have not Dr Luotto, though we have it at Hawkesyard. If you like to translate for me a few things about our Lady,

and something of devotion to the Holy See (not much), it may be useful.

"Next Sunday I am to begin a retreat at 23 Kensington Square, so if you like to pay me a visit there, you can do so.

"Your difficulty is one of imagination; we cannot imagine God. Meditate on the words of Isaias lv., 8 and 9.

"You see the whole puzzle comes from not remembering how different God is from us. He *is*, we are not. There is no past or future to, or in, Him. All is present. What you *will* do this day week, though future to you, is present to Him. He gives you free will. He knows what you choose or (what to you is future) what you will choose, but He does not force you to choose it. If you look at it as knowledge, and not as foreknowledge, the difficulty will vanish.

God knows how I shall use my freedom to-morrow, but that does not prevent me from having and using freedom.

"Is this plain? If not, tell me, for these puzzles destroy the peace of the mind in prayer.

"Many grateful thanks for the little books, which have been most useful and are not yet exhausted.

"I remain, very sincerely in Christ.

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

*To a Convert Lady, on Trust in God.*

"KENSINGTON SQUARE, W.,

"Sep. 3, 1898.

"MY DEAR ———,

"Thank you much for your kindness in sending me the *Lamp*, to enlighten my darkness, for actually I had never heard of ——— or the mission before, and it interested me much. I have never been in that part of Yorkshire. I have never seen Whitby, though the late priest, Canon Randerson, was an old friend.

"I have just lately returned from Edinburgh, where I was giving a retreat to the Community of St Margaret's Convent. It is a very fine place, on a hill.

"Your feeling that you cannot ask our dear loving Father, God, who numbers even the hairs of our heads, and without whom not even a sparrow falls to the ground, to take care of you in even the least things, I cannot enter into at all. Nor can I understand why you are to trust His loving care less, because, as a Catholic, you belong more closely to Him than ever. I should have thought the exact opposite would have been the case. God does not take care of us because we are

worthy, but because He is so infinitely good. And as to little things—everything is in itself little to Him. So trust Him always, and in everything, little and great, spiritual and temporal, for this world and for eternity. ‘Lay open thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be directed’ (Prov. xvi. 3). Read and meditate on Psalm xc.: ‘He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.’ And verse 14: ‘*Because* he hoped in ME, I will deliver him: I will protect him *because* he hath known My Name.’

“We must not tempt God by imprudence, putting ourselves into danger without reason, but at the same time we must trust in Him, and delight to live under the shadow of His wings.

“Certainly, I will say Mass to-morrow for your intention. I will pray for —. It adds much to the trial that he is not in the Body of the Church, though I trust he may be united to the Church in spirit and soul.

“You are right indeed—the Church of England is in a terrible plight—divided against itself, with no principle of unity, authority, or truth.”

*To the Same.*

“ST SCHOLASTICA’S PRIORY,  
“ATHERSTONE, *Sept.* 14, 1898.

“May your dear brother’s soul rest in peace. Certainly I will offer Holy Mass for him to-morrow morning, that Eternal Rest may be given to him through the Precious Blood that was shed for him, and that the perpetual Light of the Face of God may shine upon him. May the Lord make him joyful for ever in gladness with His countenance (Psalm xx.). As God gave him the trial of bad sight here, may He show him the beauty of His face for ever.

“Certainly it is a great blessing that he died believing in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, as far as he knew, and I trust that God in His goodness has now brought him to those truths he was ignorant about in this world.

“You can safely leave him in the hands of Him that made him, and redeemed him, and loved him far more than even you could love him (St John xi. 25).

“Certainly you must try to give up all your life for our Lord, and to love Him, and Him alone, and for His own sake, with all your mind, heart, soul and strength. Love His will, for if we love His will, we love *Him*.

“But His promises do not depend, thank God, on our worthiness, but on His greatness, goodness, power, mercy, love, which are all *infinite*.

“We are not worthy of His Promises, it is true, but we pray continually that we may *be made* worthy of them.

“‘Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may *be made* worthy of the Promises of Christ.’

“Look at Psalm xc.

“God, the great Jehovah, there says: ‘*Because he hoped in Me I will deliver him,*’ not *because he is worthy*.

“‘He shall cry to ME (in prayer):

“‘I will hear him:

“‘I will be with him in trouble:

“‘I will deliver him:

“‘I will glorify him:

“‘I will fill him with length of days:

“‘I will show him My Salvation.’

“Do not distrust Him. Do not hurt His feelings by doubting His Word, His Promise.

“Now for the three subjects:—

“1. *Our War in Egypt.*

“It does not seem very heroic to mow 10,000 men down with machines, while remaining safe.

“But the war is just and right, I think. For the Mahdi was the aggressor against Egypt, and was very cruel, and a tyrant and a false prophet; and our aim is to govern that part of the world well, and with justice. So I think we may well rejoice.

“As to politics, I am much of your opinion that there is not much difference between Conservative and Liberal, but, between them both, England is the best governed country in the world.

“2. *Mixed Marriages.*

“In themselves they are wrong, and condemned. But often, in practice, if the proper conditions are observed, and if the Catholic party is really well-instructed, strong in faith, and firm in loyalty to our Lord, good, rather than evil, comes out of it.

“If the Catholic mother is weak-kneed and careless, horrible evils and loss of souls result.

“For myself, I could not imagine having that love and oneness of soul wanted for a true marriage, if I differed from a person radically, on all the greatest and most important subjects.

“If I were a layman, I would far rather remain single than marry a non-Catholic.

“I think it worse for a man to give his children a non-Catholic mother, than *vice versa*.”

“3. *Scandal*.

“Your horror rather amused me. I thought something awful was coming!

“After all, madness is not a moral fault.

“Many people ramble, without being a scandal.

“Not to answer a question breaks no commandment.

“To be dragged by the arm is unpleasant, but not a sin.

“To have things of no consequence pointed out is not uncommon in this world.

“As to flowers,<sup>1</sup> if it would please your relations, I should certainly advise you to send them. God bless you and keep you.”

*To a Religious.*

“ST CUTHBERT’S COLLEGE,

“USHAW, *September 28, 1898.*

“You must remember that venial sin is committed when the mind sees a thing is wrong, against God, and yet does it to please self. There is no necessity to remember the number of venial sins, only to repent and labour against them.

“In each confession have *one thing* of which you can say, ‘By the help of God I will at least not do *that* again.’ Do not be content to say I will be better.

“When you get a snub, thank God for it and think no more of it.

“Be sorry and ask our Lord to pardon you for your unwillingness to suffer for Him, for it is a priceless gift of His goodness.”

“*Fight the good fight.*” *To Rev. —.*

“ST PETER’S,

“CARDIFF, *November 1, 1898.*

“Your letter touched me very much, and you may be sure that any help I, though so unable of myself, can give you, shall be yours with all my heart.

“God, in His mysterious dealings with our souls, seems to will that we should help each other.

<sup>1</sup> For a funeral.

“The first thing necessary for you in the battle, is simple and perfect trust in God, who is ever with you. It is His will we should fight, and so St Paul says, Hebrews xii. 1 : ‘Let us *run* to the fight *proposed to us*,’ by God, that is, He proposes the fight and offers the crown.

“He bids us look at ‘the great cloud of witnesses over our head’—a thought well suited to this feast. The Saints in their myriads of millions of every tribe and nation and people saved, are witnesses to us that God will help those who fight bravely, and will bring them to victory.

“So St Paul tells us, ‘laying aside every weight,’ that is every disorderly affection that weighs us down, ‘and sin that surrounds us’—every occasion of sin, St Thomas says ; ‘let us *run*,’ with courage and alacrity, ‘to the fight proposed to us’ by God.

“In the next verse St Paul shows you how to guard against the very danger you mention, that is, ‘giving in by weariness.’ ‘So,’ he says, verse 3, ‘that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds.’ That expresses exactly your fear, and shows you how to meet it. By ‘Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.’ So your defence is to look constantly at Him, and not at yourself and your dangers, and He will be your strength and victory.

“‘The Name of the Lord is a strong tower of defence, the just man shall run to it, and shall be exalted above His enemies.’

“So, take heart, and do not lose courage, and victory will be yours. Meditation on each sentence of Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3, etc., will help and encourage you.

“Thoughts and involuntary emotions ought to be ‘a prayer bell’ to us, and how many earnest prayers they will make us say, that otherwise we should not have said.

“Then temptation humbles the soul, that is, teaches us the truth about our own weakness and nothingness, and God’s Power.

“One good thing to help against thoughts and images is to have the mind thoroughly occupied with other thoughts. This is one good effect of constant study of Holy Scripture, that it suggests other thoughts.

“I do not know whether you have been introduced to St Thomas’s Commentaries on the Epistles of St Paul? If not, let me exhort you to get them and to read them carefully, for the Epistles are perfectly different after the Angelic Doctor has cast upon them the light of his illuminated mind. He is so short and pithy, so clear and suggestive, that he is easy to read. And he explains every word of all the Epistles.

You can get his commentaries for a few shillings from Burns. There are two editions; one published at Turin, in two vols., at about 6s. The objection to it is that the references give only the chapter, and not the verse, though this makes you hunt through the chapter, which makes you more acquainted with Holy Writ.

“For prayer, for preaching, and for meditation, nothing is so good as becoming familiar, word by word, with the Bible. Nothing can take its place. What is wanted, is not so much a learned knowledge as a devout knowledge of God’s holy word, the good of the soul and the weapon of our defence.

“St Thomas has also a commentary on St Matthew and St John. I do not mean the *Catena Aurea*, but a Commentary; this also you can get from Burns.

“Let us pray for each other, that our charity may more and more abound.

“Do not be *nervous* about imaginations, for nervousness makes quite innocent things suggestive.

“Ever my dear —,

“Yours affectionately in J.M.D.,

“BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

In reply to an invitation from the Superior at Stone, he writes:—

“ST PETER’S,  
“CARDIFF, Nov. 6, 1898.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“You will be glad to hear that I have got through the work without difficulty, and feel far stronger and more vigorous than a week ago. I have acted as St Paul describes in to-day’s Epistle, eating meat, and making a god of, etc.! I hope my end will not be destruction, by the Mercy of our Lord.

“I do not want to become an invalid before my time. Work is good for soul and body: far better than sitting thinking of symptoms.

“To-day a man of 107 came to confession.

“I feel great gratitude to M. P. for her kindness in desiring to benefit my health. My only feeling on the other side is that as I am so much away from home for work, I do not like to ask to go to Stone merely on my own account. But when God seems to arrange it for me, I am delighted. At Stone I could finish *Blosius*. Already I have some more done.”

The "Blosius" here referred to was the *Book of Spiritual Instruction*, the translation of which, begun many years ago, Father Bertrand was now working at regularly.

Towards the end of November the suggested visit to Stone took place, and was prolonged to the following February, as the parish priest was unexpectedly taken ill, and Father Wilberforce remained to supply for him. During this time he finished his translation of Blosius, and the book was published in the course of the year 1900.

The two following letters are addressed to X——, a lady who was on the point of being received into the Catholic Church:—

"HAWKESYARD PRIORY, *Nov.* 17, 1898.

"Most sincerely do I feel for you in your present suffering state. Yet how thankful you should be to our loving Lord and God for allowing you the inestimable privilege of suffering with Him and for Him. St John Chrysostom says that God does a soul a greater favour by giving it an occasion of suffering for Him, than by giving the power to raise the dead to life. Therefore thank God in your pain and grief, even if your heart be pierced quite through, and say to Him constantly: 'I thank Thee, O God, for doing Thy own will in Thy own way, because it is Thy will.' That is an act of true and perfect love, because to love God's will is to love God.

"Now, as to the practical advice to be given.

"Speaking in God's presence I have no hesitation in saying that the idea of putting off what you see is the will of God does not come from Him.

"It is very natural for your kind friend to wish you to do so. Her hope is that if she can persuade you to put it off, something may turn up to prevent the step altogether.

"But if you see God's will it ought to be done at once. What sign has He given you that He wills you to put it off? You have heard Him say 'Follow ME'; are you to say, 'Not just now, but after a time'? No. 'Rising up, he followed Him.' 'Let me *first* go and bury my father?' You know the answer. I am convinced that He now gives you the grace and asks the surrender *now*.

"1. You will entirely dissociate yourself from your work at —— by going to —— and being received.

"2. 'Go away for a little while' to —— is what I advise.

"3. You can write to your family and to the rector at

— and tell them you are going to be received. You are not called upon to ask their advice—you know they will say, ‘Stay in the Church of England,’ and you have not the slightest intention of following that advice, so why ask it?

“You have already consulted the rector, and he has told you to read the Bible and judge for yourself. You have followed his advice most obediently and the result is that you see that God wills you to join His One True Church. So you must say: ‘Here I am O Lord, do with me what Thou wilt, only show me Thy Holy Will.’

“Of course you deeply feel grieving your dear friends—so did Abraham deeply feel having to sacrifice ‘his only son Isaac whom he loved,’ but he only said, ‘Here I am,’ and obeyed.

“‘Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee.’

“So you must say with Abraham, ‘Here I am.’

“It is sure to be a time of trial and suffering until you have been received, so the sooner the better, then will follow peace, light, and joy. But it must be a step in the dark into light. ‘Fear not, it is I.’

“Praying the Holy Ghost to guide and strengthen you,

“I remain with all sympathy,

“Yrs very sincerely in Christ,

“F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

*To the Same.*

“THE CONVENT,  
“STONE, Dec. 5, 1898.

“You will have returned home by this time, and I sincerely hope that the quiet rest has done you good in body and mind.

“I most deeply feel for you in your present painful position, and sympathise with you in having to do what will pain those you love.

“But I do not see how matters will be mended by waiting and putting off your reception. How long is it considered right and wise to delay?

“You must try and put aside all the mere pain of doing what others will blame, and as far as possible consider what you would do if it pained no one. The only question is, what does God will?

“What would you wish to have done if you were to die?

“You see yourself in the case you put to me, as to the advice I should give a Catholic in danger of becoming a Protestant, that the first principles of the two cases are utterly different.

“You have followed the advice of your clergyman, you have read the Bible and prayed, and your conclusion is, that it is God’s will that you should join His One True Church. Having had that light, you should follow it, although it may pain others.

“Let me know what you decide to do. I shall go on praying for you, and if there is anything I can give you any information about, I shall indeed be happy to do so.”

The next letter is to \*, who had written to ask, “How to save one’s soul in the world?” Father Wilberforce replies:—

“STONE, *Dec. 9, 1898.*

“You ask what would be the best way to save one’s soul in the world? I answer, to choose a confessor to whom you can go every week, to believe what your confessor says to you, and to obey what he tells you. In that way *you* are sure to save your soul.

“As to the person of whom you write, he has not, and never had, any vocation to a Religious Order. What he has to do is to trust in God; pray; go to the Holy Sacraments; and above all, and in all, to obey his confessor.

“I will pray for you and wish you every blessing.”

To X—— he writes again on the danger of delay in following the light given by God:—

“THE CONVENT,  
“STONE, *Dec. 13, 1898.*

“You say in your letter of Dec. 9, ‘I must decide to wait.’ Now I cannot help feeling rather uneasy as to your decision, for I ask myself, ‘For what are you waiting?’ To know God’s will more clearly?

“You evidently do know it, for you say that if the step pained no one you would take it at once. If you would take it, you must have light enough to see that it is God’s will, and to delay then is dangerous.

“As to the poor in your village, you would not really disedify them. It is not as if you were to give up the service of God, or one thing you have taught them, but only that you see more truth than you did before.

“Everyone must use their own mind and judgment in finding the teacher, but when the teacher is found, then we lay aside our judgment and listen and believe. The Anglican Church does not teach or even pretend to teach by authority, but says, ‘Judge for yourself.’ The Catholic Church claims to teach in the Name, and by the authority of God. Your reason tells you that a church which allows every kind of contradiction cannot be the true church of the one God of truth. It is a lawful and legitimate exercise of reason and judgment to find out the Divine Teacher, but not to judge for oneself each doctrine of revelation.

“The people you admire in the Anglican Church did not see the truth of the Catholic Church. We are not called upon to make any judgment upon them, but to leave them to God, who is the only Judge.

“Of course, if the Catholic Church were really what Protestants imagine, it would be hateful.

“She is the church of Him who said: ‘If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’

“Which church, which religion, does the world hate? calumniate?

“Certainly not the Establishment.

“How long do you think of waiting? For what are you waiting?

“I shall go on praying for you, and I am sure God will give you grace and light.

“Wishing you the strength to do God’s will whenever you see it,

“I remain,

“With deep sympathy,

“Yours very sincerely in Christ,

“F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

To a lady who, at his recommendation, had been reading St Catherine of Siena’s little treatise on “Consummate Perfection,” Father Wilberforce writes:—

“St Catherine on ‘Consummate Perfection’ is very beautiful, and though so exalted, she puts the spiritual life in a very simple form. God, God’s will, absolute conformity to it.

“What you mention is clearly and decidedly the voice of the devil, trying to discourage you.

“God calls you to holiness, to be a saint, and will make you one in His own way, if you will only let Him. The process will be painful but the end magnificent.

“Let me hear before long how you get on, labouring after Consummate Perfection.”

*To the Same.*

“STONE, Dec. 17, 1898.

“Your letter still unanswered ; I am sorry.

“Far from being cold here, it is unnaturally warm for December, but I do not mind cold—I mean it does not make me ill—and I am lately very much better and stronger.

“I am so glad you appreciate Saint Catherine’s little book. After all, God is the only good, the only perfection, and God’s will is God, and therefore union with God’s will is union with God.

“St Catherine’s idea is both beautiful and practical, and God evidently meant the book for your soul. The practice of it will be in *everything*, external and internal, to say with heart and will, ‘I thank Thee, O God, for doing Thy will in Thy own way, because it is Thy will.’

“Perfect peace, perfect joy, can be found, in spite of all pain and suffering, by union with God’s will.

“Give the children my blessing, and tell them how pleased I am to hear they are trying to be good, and that they behave well in Church.”

## CHAPTER XI

1899

THE year 1899 opens with another letter to X— on the authority of the Catholic Church, and on devotion to our Lady:—

“STONE, *Jan. 5, 1899.*

“Your welcome letter reached me this morning, and I wish you every grace and blessing, temporal and spiritual, for this new year.

“You must not be surprised to find that there are some things in God’s revelation through the Church that you would not believe by your own judgment. Your own judgment in things of revealed truth has to be subjected and submitted to God.

“The whole question resolves itself into this: ‘How am I to know what things God has revealed?’ The Catholic answer is: ‘By the testimony and authority of the Catholic Church, which God has appointed to *teach* all nations.’ The only other answer is, however it may vary in words: ‘By my own judgment, as to what I think myself or like. What I think right and like, God has revealed; what I do not like, God has not revealed.’

“I do not mean that people would put it thus, but analysed it always comes to this and nothing more, and must come to it. So, if I should think a thing contrary to the spirit of God’s word, and the Church says it is not in opposition, but according to God’s word, on the Catholic principle I believe it on the authority of the Church, on the Protestant principle I reject it, and follow my own ideas.

“‘What I cannot really believe in with my whole soul cannot be truth to me even though others believe it.’

“The fact that others believe a thing does not make me believe it; so far it is true.

“But if I do believe a thing with my whole soul on the

authority of the Church, it is truth to me, though without the authority, I should not know it to be true.

“In natural things even, this is often the case. For instance, when we watch the sun set, astronomers tell us that the sun has set and gone several minutes before we see it set, but we go on seeing it by the refraction of the light.

“Certainly by our senses we should say that the sun has not yet set; but by authority I believe that it has already set.

“So you say: ‘By the force of my old ideas and what I have always been told, I find my judgment tells me not to honour the holy Mother of God, and not to ask her prayers, but God’s Church tells me that God is pleased with honour given to her, whom He Himself has so highly honoured, and that He wills me to ask her prayers, therefore I submit my judgment.’ That is the Catholic principle. The Protestant one is to say, ‘My opinion is best, and the Church is wrong.’

“As a matter of fact, that difficulty about our Lady is more in the imagination than anything else, and a clear knowledge of what the Church does teach would go far to remove it.

“Your way of coming to the truth of the Church is quite a reasonable one. You rightly say, ‘God, who is wise, could not have left us without a way to know what He has taught.’ The Catholic Church is the only church that even claims the authority to teach in His Name; therefore she is the true Church.

“Our Lord instituted a teaching church: the only teaching church is the Catholic Church, therefore she is the church established by Christ. This is absolutely true.

“The Anglican Protestant Church declares all churches, herself among them, to have erred in matters of faith, therefore she is not the Church of God. She does not even pretend to be.

“Go on praying for light, and for grace to follow the light. At this Feast of the Epiphany, or appearance of our Lord, this must be our prayer.

“Ask our Lady to turn to her Son as she did at Cana, and ask light for you, as she asked wine then for the feast.

“Did it ever strike you that in the Gospel the first and only miracle of our Lord’s hidden life, the sanctification of St John Baptist, was wrought through our Lady’s salutation, and the first of the public life at Cana by the direct intercession of our Lady (‘the woman—the second Eve’), though the time had not yet come? It is certainly remarkable.

“How do we know the Bible is the word of God? I know it only by the testimony and authority of the Catholic Church.

“If Protestants believe it, they must believe it for the same reason. But then, why reject the book of Ecclesiasticus, for instance, which the Church teaches to be the word of God?”

“What was said at the Protestant meeting was absolutely and entirely false.<sup>1</sup> No Catholic priest ever says that, as you justly remark, but, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.’

“Christ only is ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ Therefore (among other things), as He has honoured our Lady so immensely more than any other creature, we try to imitate Him by honouring Her, whom the King honours.

“Have you ever read Cardinal Newman’s *Sermons to Mixed Congregations*? The whole volume is wonderful, and the last two on our Lady would explain the Catholic teaching and idea to you very well.

“By-the-bye, if the Church founded by our Lord had ever had ‘accretions of error’ in matters of faith, then she must have taught what was false, and ‘the gates of hell have prevailed against her.’

“With most sincere regards and sympathy,

“I remain most sincerely yours in Christ,

“F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

To a friend who had been copying some of his translation of Blossius, he writes:—

“STONE,  
“Jan. 30, 1899.”

“Thank you very much for your kind work, which I am so glad to hear you have found useful and pleasant.

“It is an excellent treatise, about the best I know. Short, full, measured, dignified, solid, humbling, yet encouraging, loving, and sweet. I trust it may do much good to many souls. . . .

“I am glad you have found the sweetness of God’s will, or in other words, His love, down deep in your soul; that is, in the essence or inner sanctuary of your soul. Love it there,

<sup>1</sup> To the effect that Catholic priests teach that salvation is to be obtained through the Blessed Virgin Mary.

because it is God's will, and in the way He wills, and all will be well.

"What is the good of looking at, or seeking, or caring one jot for anything at all, except God's will—that is, God?"

*To a Religious who had been ill.*

"ST ANTHONY'S, FOREST GATE,  
"LONDON, *March 21, 1899.*

"Cheer up: do not be depressed. What you feel is only the natural reaction after illness, and the effect of physical weakness. The brain feels exhausted, and in this exile the soul works through the brain.

"Therefore take yourself *quietly* and do not be distressed that you feel tired and weary, and unable to spend a long time in mental exertion for God. Talk to our Lord quietly and tell Him what you feel, and how trying it is. I often feel perfectly indolent and inert spiritually after a mission, from reaction, but that passes.

"What our Lord wills is that you should bear the weariness in union with Him and make it your Lenten penance.

"This mission is a very good one. The holy Fathers are very good and fervent. The mission is not a hard one to give, because the people are more intelligent, and make their own confessions, and do not leave all to the priest.

"Chester is off, and instead, I am to help Father Connelly, at the Sacred Heart, Brighton; easy, quiet work. In Holy Week there, I shall have much time to pray, I expect, if I do not waste it.

"Miss N—— had no vocation I should think: she was like a round ball in a square hole, or a bull in a china shop. She seemed to me to have been 'sent' by someone else to you, not come of her own accord, which never answers.

"Thank you so much for your prayers, and for remembering the 14th of March, on which day I was initiated into the realms of 'bufferdom,' and became an old buffer. Sixty is a good age, and I shall soon have to be led out into a field, to be shot.

"I am very well: my cold almost gone. I grub like an alderman and sleep like a pig, so my body ought to be well, at least.

"The church here is a large one, and very fine; simple and plain Gothic, but very effective, and a capital working church."

On Good Friday he writes to another correspondent :—

“ WEST BRIGHTON.

“ To-day’s mystery shows us how impossible it must be for us to learn humility in any other way than by humiliations (1 Peter ii. 21).

“ So our kind Lord has provided you with one that costs you much. I feel for you, but it will add greatly to your everlasting crown. So thank Him ; and do not lose your peace. ‘ Have a care,’ says St Peter of Alcantara, ‘ never to allow your heart (that is, your soul) to become sad, troubled, or solicitous, whatever may happen, but let your whole endeavour be to get and preserve *peace* ; for our Lord says, ‘ Blessed are the Peacemakers.’ So *make* peace in your own soul.”

To another, a few days afterwards :—

“ I do not know that it is a bad sign not to find particular help from priests. I feel exactly the same, and so do all, I think, after a certain time. We know enough, and have only to go quietly on, putting it in practice as well as we can, leaving all more and more to our Lord. I have often found great help from His words in the Gospel. For instance, the other day’s Gospel : ‘ Peace be to you : it is I : fear not.’ How good to pray that at the end He may come and say that.

“ I would not advise you to disturb the peace of your soul by thinking how little you have done for God. Make any number of contrite acts, but do not reflect on the past. How much worse it would be if you said : ‘ How much I have done for God ! I am all right.’ The best way is not to trouble the soul about past things. Take it for granted it is nothing, and look at our Lord only—not at past or future, but at Him. Do not expect help from any but Him. I have done nothing, and never shall, but He has done great things, and will do still greater.”

Whilst giving a retreat to the students of St Joseph’s Missionary College, Mill Hill, he writes to his sister for the celebration of her half-jubilee in religion :—

“ ST JOSEPH’S FOREIGN MISSIONARY COLLEGE,  
“ MILL HILL,  
“ LONDON, N.W., *April* 17, 1899.

“ MY DEAREST SISTER,

“ May God give you every best light and grace on this happy day. Your card came this morning as a useful

reminder, but not a necessary one, as I had not forgotten and intended to write to-day, and also, as I intend now, to say holy Mass for you to-morrow. I shall offer the holy Sacrifice both as a thanksgiving for all the graces your loving Spouse, so faithful and true as well as generous, has bestowed on you in so many ways during the last twenty-five years; and also to petition for your faithful perseverance till the end. Also to ask pardon for all shortcomings and infidelities of which you are conscious and all that you do not see.

“What a happy thing it is to have persevered for the space of twenty-five years—it gives you the best possible hope that He who has given you grace to do so will perfect the work He has begun in you, so that you will be able to say when the end comes: ‘I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course (done my work); I have kept the faith’ (been faithful and loyal to my Spouse whom I love).

“You can now look back at the twenty-five years of your religious service day after day to God, with the feelings dear Card. Newman describes in his beautiful way. ‘Such is the sweetness and softness with which days long past fall upon the memory and strike us. The most ordinary years, when we seemed to be living for nothing, shine forth to us in their very regularity and orderly course. What was sameness, is now stability; what was dulness, is now a soothing calm; what seemed unprofitable, has now its treasure in itself.’

“It is a grand work for God and one He delights in, to go on from day to day and month to month and year to year cheerfully doing the same round of holy quiet duties, and as willing now to do them and to go on doing them, as on the first days of your course. The service is one of faith, and the results are not visible to the eye, and cannot be dwelt on with complacency as when a fine church has been built and a man is tempted to say, ‘I, Nabuchodonosor the king, have built this mighty city,’ but in a quiet service of God in Religion, the soul sees its shortcomings, but God sees the stable love of daily and hourly self-sacrifice. Cardinal Newman says:—

“Faith’s meanest deed more favour bears  
Where hearts and wills are weighed,  
Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,  
Which bloom their hour and fade.”<sup>1</sup>

So you must encourage yourself to-day to serve God steadily and perseveringly for all the years He has fixed, even if twenty-five more remain. Look only at Him and cling to Him, as the ivy does to the tree. If it finds no tree the ivy

<sup>1</sup> “Flowers without Fruit”; *Verses on Various Occasions*, 3rd ed.

trails along the ground, unable to rise; so does the soul lie prostrate till it finds God, and clings to Him as to its Beloved, and having found Him it ascends, rises up towards heaven, going on from grace to grace. *Ibunt de virtute in virtutem* (Ps. lxxxiii.).

"I shall also to-morrow hear Mass for you and say my rosary for you and other prayers.

"I wish, my dearest, that I could send you some nice book as a present; and you may be sure I would, but after all, the holy Mass, though only known by Faith, with nothing to strike the eye, is the best of all presents. For it can unite us to God, the Infinite Treasure, of whom Cowper so well says:—

"Give what Thou wilt, without Thee we are poor;  
And rich with Thee, take what Thou wilt away."

Our beloved ones, father, mother, and Agnes, surely do not rejoice with you less but rather more because they are in the world of reality and not of shadow, and, as we hope, and have reason to hope, are with God and see us in Him.

"A sea before  
The Throne is spread, its pure still glass  
Pictures all earth-scenes as they pass.  
They on its shore,  
Share in the bosom of their rest  
God's knowledge, and are blest.<sup>1</sup>

"J. H. N."

"And your religious sisters too, that have 'gone before us with the sign of Faith and sleep in the sleep of peace'; who we hope have been granted 'a place of refreshment, light, and peace,' will rejoice with you and pray for you.

"This is a very delightful place to me, and I am thankful to be allowed to come. It is so grand to think of these young men, generous enough to give up all, home and country, for Christ and to be preparing to go forth to do the work of evangelists in Borneo, Central Africa, India, or wherever else God's voice through obedience may send them. Our Lord must be so pleased with them and their fervent service."

*To a Friend, on affections of the brain.*

"ST WEREBURGH'S,  
CHESTER, Sept. 30, 1899.

"Thank you for telling me about dear N——. She is in God's hands. How many hundred times she has said '*Tuus*

<sup>1</sup> "A Voice from Afar," *Verses on Various Occasions*, 3rd ed.

*sum ego, salvum me fac,*' and we must leave Him to do it in His own way.

"I do not quite see that an affection of the brain is more humiliating than a disease of the lungs, heart, or foot. All are, as Shakespeare makes the duke say in *As You Like It*,

" 'Counsellors,  
That feelingly persuade us what we are ;' —

that is, Nothing.

" 'Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.'

"All forms of death are humiliating and teach us the truth, and the form God chooses is the best."

The same day he answers a penitent in delicate health, who had asked for directions on mortification :—

"You may give up wine unless ordered to take it for health ; and do it in reparation for sins of intemperance.

"Use the two cushions at night as signs of distrust in self, and trust in God : the two pillows you hope to die on. Do nothing to prevent sleep ; if you have been restless, take more sleep in the morning. 'He giveth His beloved sleep.' You need a good deal.

"You may abstain from pastry and sweet things. You can always make an offering to our Lord of a small thing at each meal.

"But remember it is not the external thing, but the love with which it is done that our Lord looks at.

"Pray for me. I salute you in the words of St Paul, 1 Thess. v. 23. Make many a mental prayer on 1 Thess. v. 16, 17, 18."

In the two following letters, Father Wilberforce answers some further difficulties of his correspondent, X—— :—

"ATHERSTONE, *Nov.* 2, 1899.

"You say : 'The separation that becoming a Catholic involves seems to me so dreadful and so unnecessary.' It is very natural for you to feel thus, and I sympathise with you from my heart. It *is* dreadful ; that is, the thought of separation from dear friends is enough to fill your heart with dread and to make you shrink from the sacrifice. To an affectionate nature and tender heart the wrench is dreadful.

“It is true, I know it well by experience, that nothing makes such ‘a great gulf’ between people as difference of religion, particularly if one belongs to God’s Holy Church. My cousins (who differ widely between themselves on almost every doctrine of Christianity) would have been like brothers to me, if I were not a Catholic. Now, we are utter strangers.

“Did not our Lord foretell this, and did He not mark it out as one of the minor signs of His Church? ‘*All men shall hate you for My Name’s sake.*’ All unite in this; however much they may differ in everything else, they unite in hating the one true Church.

“He came with ‘a sword of separation’ (St Luke xii. 51).

“To become a Catholic is a radical change of religion from private judgment to authority and the gulf is fixed.

“‘Why should Catholics be forbidden to worship with Anglicans?’

“You can join with them in daily prayers, provided that *you* say them. That is, they may join with you. But we are forbidden to join in spiritual things with them, because there is only one Church, and we must not act as if there were many, or even two approved by God. The individual Anglican may be good and holy, in God’s Grace, by inculpable ignorance, and in His favour, but not belonging to the ‘One Body’ (Eph. iv. 4). We must not act as if he was. This is hard to human nature in your position and at your age.

“You must not as a Catholic go to a Protestant Church because there is only one church, and we must not try to belong to two religions.

“After you are once in the Church, on the Rock, you will have no difficulty about this. It is a matter of feeling.

“I understand what the vicar felt when he said he was tired of these discussions. Who would not be? But what can be more *practical* than to find out, Am I in God’s One Church? Where is it?

“How could Mrs B—— think some may be called by God into the Catholic Church, if the Catholic Church is wrong, and the Anglican God’s Church? It would be impossible. God would not call people from truth to error. Both can’t be true for they are contradictory in principle. As to Mivart’s letter, I was as much surprised and pained at it as you could be. He had evidently lost his temper. It was very wrong to write such a letter, very disloyal to the Church and our Holy Father. His contention that Leo XIII. should have written on the Dreyfus case is absurd, as you see. But, after all, what does Mivart’s complaint come to in the end? That

changes would be well in the procedure of the Roman Congregations. It is not any matter of Faith or Morals. What he says of the Galileo case is utterly misleading. If that is a difficulty to you I will go into the matter, which has been answered a thousand times. Is it a difficulty to your mind?

"It is utterly false, as any Catholic will tell you, to say we are not better off as to unity. The unity in faith is complete and divine. Do not let any dread of not having a home alarm you. You will have it. But if you had none ever again, what of it? Rejoice and be exceeding glad. Meditate on the Promise of Christ: 'If *anyone* hath left father or mother for My sake,' etc."

"HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
"RUGELEY, Nov. 15, 1899.

"Next week I am to go to Clevedon; but I suppose the gulf made by religion would have prevented my having the pleasure of seeing you, even if you had been still there!

"I do not think you would find so complete a separation necessary, as you seem to anticipate. Anglicans quite understand that we do not join in spirituals with them, though they may with us.

"The Catholic Church is consistent and must make a difference with those outside the fold.

"Study Ephesians iv.

"Verse 4 speaks of One Body and One Spirit, just as there is only One Lord and One God.

"We need not and do not judge Anglicans. They may be in the 'soul of the Church' by union with our Lord, that He only can decide; but we can and do judge that they are not in the One Body, and therefore we ought not to join in spiritual matters with them, though they may if they like join with us.

"You say that the Anglican clergy do not forbid people joining with Catholics; I answer:—

"1. Some do. The very high Church forbid and often exact a vow from people not to join in any Catholic service, although they say it is the same Church!

"2. The others do not, and more consistently, because they go on the principle of private judgment, and let everyone do as they please.

"Even about this there is no unity, because there is no principle of unity.

"I think you should now look after yourself; and not be too much in the hands of your friends. It is very good to be

charitable and self-sacrificing, but you should consider your own soul first, and do all you can for them afterwards.

“You will never be at peace until you have made your submission to the Church, and feel yourself in the Fold, and on the Rock.

“On the principle of the three branches of the Church, all *principle* of unity is dissolved.

“Instead of being ‘careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, one *Body* and one *Spirit*,’ the possibility of one Body is completely gone.

“If there are now three churches so dissimilar as the Catholic, the Greek, and the Anglican, all three the one Body of Christ, then why should not twenty different churches, all with their own doctrine, be right. Such a thing as schism becomes impossible as long as Orders are valid.

“In that case the Donatists in the time of St Augustine would have been the true Catholic Church. They had separated from the Pope and the Church in Africa: kept the old churches, had real undoubted Orders, yet were a body schismatical because separated from the Head, the visible Head, and heretical because they differed in faith.

“They, against whom St Augustine wrote, as schismatics and heretics, were exactly in the position of Anglicans now, except that Rome acknowledged their Orders, and never re-ordained any Donatist priest who became a convert. They called themselves Catholics, wanted others to call them so, said they had not separated from Rome, but Rome from them, that they were the old Church of Africa, the African Catholic Church, but not the African Roman Catholic Church.

“Yet St Augustine told them as he would tell the Anglicans to-day, that they were out of the Church because separated from the one centre of unity, the Chair of St Peter.

“If now two archbishops, and twelve bishops of France separated from Rome and said, ‘We are the Catholic Church: the Pope has separated from us, not we from the Pope, the tree from the branch, not the branch from the tree’—would not this be absurd?

“You should not delay, but take the plunge; you are now like a boy standing shivering on the bank trying to make up his mind to plunge in!

“Wishing you every grace,

“I remain,

“Yours most sincerely in Christ,

“F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

*To a Religious.*

“HAWKESYARD, *Nov.* 18, 1899.

“As to 1 Cor. xv. 51 and 52.

“51. ‘We shall *all* indeed rise again:’ all bad as well as good. ‘But we shall not *all* be changed,’ that is, from corruption into glory, but only those who are saved. They will be changed by the gifts of glory in their bodies—agility, clarity, impassibility, immortality.

“52. ‘In a moment.’ It will take no time; ‘in the twinkling of an eye: at the last trumpet.’

“This trumpet is that voice of Christ, of which it is said: ‘At midnight there was a cry made,’ etc., and St John v. 28: ‘The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.’

“St Gregory says: ‘The trumpet means the presence of Christ manifested to the world, and called a trumpet because the manifestation will come to all, as the sound of a trumpet wakes all in a camp.’

“‘The dead will rise incorruptible;’ that is, with their whole bodies. If a man had lost a leg in South Africa, he will have two legs, even if damned. In the resurrection all defects will be remedied for all: *natural* defects.

“‘Incorruptible’ = immortal, which will be the case for all. But ‘all will not be changed’ into the state of glory, but only the righteous.

“‘*We*,’ says St Paul, we apostles shall be changed from death to eternal life. We apostles, and with us all who are saved. S. M. R., I hope, and even B. W., I hope.

“May we be changed from a state of misery in this vale of tears to a state of glory, in which we shall see God face to face.

“How delightful is the xlii. chapter of the third book of the *Following*. I like that verse: ‘When thou lookest to creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn.’ Therefore: *Oculi mei*, etc.

*To — on courage under temptation.*

“HAWKESYARD,  
“*November* 9, 1899.

“Certainly I will pray for you. And you must not be faint-hearted. Meditate on the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus; a grand instruction to us by the Holy Ghost as to

the spirit in which to take these trials from God, why they are allowed, and how to meet them.

“Do you not say in your soul every day at the beginning of Mass: ‘*Hope* thou in God, for I will yet praise Him: who is the salvation of my countenance and my God.’ And the 30th psalm, verse 25: ‘Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened: all ye that *hope* in the Lord.’ For how true it is that ‘Our Lord is our Refuge (to fly to) and our Strength (to fight with); our Helper (to stand by us in the combat and to fight against our enemies for us)’ (Ps. xlv.).

“Therefore do not be faint-hearted, but full of courage, hope, and joy.

“‘Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous;

“‘And be joyful, all ye that are right of heart’ (Ps. xxxi.).

“You are, thank God, ‘right of heart,’ because you hate these things, and every victory over temptation brings eternal triumph. We cannot be crowned unless we have fought: ‘To him that shall *overcome*, I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I have overcome, and have sat down with My Father on His throne.’

“How often we say, for a martyr, ‘*Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem.*’ You, then, are *beatus*, and ought not to be sad.

“Some trial and combat we must have. Our Lord has chosen this one for you. *Thank* Him. How many good aspirations, sighs, groans, you have sent up to Him on account of them that you would not without them.

“If you have not the Book of Psalms in English, I would strongly advise you to get it. Have it interleaved, so that you can put notes by the verses. If you get familiar with the Psalms in English, they will help you much in every way. I am saying, during my retreat, the Gradual Psalms in English every day, as one of the retreat exercises.

“*You* must no more be faint-hearted than the soldiers in S. Africa!”

### *To a Friend.*

“November 20, 1899.

“The war is most interesting, and must be more so to you. Of course it is as certain as any human event can be, that the Boers will be licked into a cocked hat directly the reinforcements come up. I pity the poor farmers very much, and their wives and families; but it can’t be helped. Their government was so foolish and impudent. . . . It is not unnatural for [your Irish friends] to feel angry with England;

though their own Irish soldiers are among the bravest and best.

“When Sir Redvers Buller goes up with 40,000 men through the Free State, he will walk straight into Pretoria, and the Boers must throw up the sponge. I wonder our men have not had more reverses at first. The victory cannot help being ours. We are fighting for English influence, instead of Dutch, in S. Africa, and for the future. No one can help the Boers, because no one can meet our fleet. France would if she could, but all her ports would be blockaded in twenty-four hours, and every transport carrying troops would be sunk. War is a terrible necessity.”

A letter to \* is headed :—

“For the case of a person who felt he had been a very great sinner, and was possibly ‘given over to a reprobate sense.’

“HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
“RUGELEY, December 20, 1899.

“Such a one should study much the lovely words of St Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost. ‘A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world *to save sinners*, of whom I am the chief. But for this cause have I obtained mercy: that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth *all patience*, for the instruction of them that shall believe in Him unto life everlasting’ (1 Tim. i. 15). It is much better to study this than discouraging things written by men.

“Of course it is possible for a man who loves mortal sin, and is determined to go on loving it and not to repent, to be delivered over to a reprobate sense. But this does not apply to anyone who prays and desires to be forgiven. If he prays God must be giving him grace, or he could not pray. If he desires to be pardoned God must be giving him grace, otherwise he would not desire to be pardoned.

“A man in a reprobate state desires only to sin, does not care and does not pray for pardon.

“Therefore this person should put such thought of reprobation out of his mind, and read things that will fill him with hope and confidence in God’s mercy. Let him go with all trust to the merciful Saviour, who came *to save sinners*. If he is a sinner and knows he is one, Christ came to save *him*. Let him put all fear away, and welcome his good, loving Saviour. He should pray, and then God will hear him

as He has so often promised. ‘He shall cry unto Me, and I will hear him : I am with him in trouble : I will deliver him, and I will glorify him’ (Psalm xc. 15).

“Let him put away all discouraging thoughts, for they come from the devil. Let him beg our Lady, the refuge of sinners, to help him.

“Wishing you every Christmas joy.”

## CHAPTER XII

1900

AT the beginning of 1900, Father Wilberforce writes to a Religious:—

“Unless you mean not to write again till next New Year 1901, you will certainly write again this century; for the 19th century goes on till January 1st, 1901. This is the last year of the 19th century; as you will see at once if you imagine someone owing you or the Convent £1900. You would not say: ‘Hold, enough!’ when he had dealt out £1899: you would say; ‘I want another, to make up the hundred, or the century of pounds.’

“But though still in the 19th century, I wish you all the graces of our Infant Lord for this new year. I hope the new century, when it begins, will find you very holy.

“Without any doubt, in my opinion, the new century, when it comes, will find the Transvaal and the Orange Free State with the English flag flying. The difficulties are great: all the more reason to make John Bull go on. The War Office has been careless, and not sent enough guns, and moreover, to our shame, guns inferior to those of the Boers; but in spite of all, English determination will conquer, and the war will do us good. It will open the eyes of the authorities; and it is now bringing out all the brave self-sacrifice and heroic determination that has made the Empire what it is. England will be all the stronger, and peace and security will reign in South Africa. Of that I feel no doubt. . . .

“I sang Mass for the Sisters of Mercy at Derby, to whom I had been giving the three days’ retreat that they always have at the end of the year. It was a grand thought of Leo XIII., to usher in the Holy Year by universal prayer in the first hour of it.

“I heard to-day from Miss N——. She says: ‘The

churches [in Rome] teach. There is so much to learn. *Now* I am beginning to grasp the vastness of St Peter's.' Pray for her: I am glad she sees that she has 'much to learn.'

"Go on fighting bravely against yourself, as the soldiers will against the Boers. Victory will be yours, because God is on your side."

*To another Religious.*

HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
"January 12, 1900.

"In answer to your question about Holy Communion I should say: Go to Holy Communion but stop being dissipated, and still more, criticising. If you repent and turn to our Lord with full determination, He is merciful and faithful to forgive. This year we ought all to cultivate as much devotion as possible to the Holy Name of our Lord.

"Why not make the Epiphany a kind of extra Rosary mystery, and say it with the ordinary vocal prayers? There is nothing to forbid saying one Pater and ten Aves with the beads, thinking about the Wise Men and the Holy Infant. Why try to fit obedience on to the Glorious Mysteries? It could come in well in the Joyful or Sorrowful: and then the Glorious as the reward of obedience. 'He became obedient unto death—therefore hath God exalted Him' (Phil. ii.). Though obedience to Church and authority is included in the third Glorious. I hope you are praying much for the war. It is, as far as we can see, certainly good for the cause of civilisation and religion that we and not the Boers should be paramount in South Africa. Yet the cost of lives on both sides will be terrible. And pray for the many souls hurried into eternity by bullets and shells. Many officers and about thirty-five thousand men on our side are Catholics.

"Thank you so much for prayers for my coming missions; at Liverpool, three weeks; Stourbridge, ten days; Longton, one week."

From Atherstone Father Wilberforce writes:—

"Feb. 11.

"O. K. has gone out as Volunteer for the Cape War. God bless him for his self-sacrifice and love of country. The war brings out so many heroic actions.

"We must take example for our spiritual warfare and be

determined to gain the **VC**. That is what the soldiers covet : Victoria Cross. But we are all trying to have **VC** also :

VITÆ CORONA.

“To him that shall overcome, I will give the Crown of Eternal Life ;’ so I hope you will be Sister Mary Reginald, **VC**.

In another letter from Atherstone, Father Wilberforce describes the grief felt by Father Cuthbert Wolseley, O.P., at the death of his nephew, who fell in the Boer War. He says :—

“The priests of the Island (Grenada) went to comfort him ; had high Mass of Requiem, and one hundred and fifty went to Holy Communion for the brave young man’s soul. Lord Wolseley wrote to his father and said he could hardly condole with him, for he envied such a death ; to die for his country. It is a grand thing : next to martyrdom. Father Cuthbert says his nephew was very pious, so no doubt he offered his life to God, and very likely went straight to Heaven. ‘Greater love than this no man hath, that a man give his life for his friends.’

“The war is a just, and even a holy one, for it will stop the horrible cruelty of the Boers to the natives. Even Mrs Boer would often beat poor natives to death with her own fair hand ! A gentleman who was here yesterday, and has lived long in the Transvaal, told us this and much more. The Zulus had prepared for war years ago, with the Boers, and would have wiped them completely out, only we prevented it ; and this war is the grateful return of the Boers. We can never allow them to be independent again. The war will bring out all the best qualities of John Bull. I should like to be there as chaplain, though an old buffer.”

*To a Religious.*

HAWKESYARD, February 13, 1900,  
“*In festo S. Cath. de’ Ricciis.*”

“Pax Christi



“J. M. D.

“You felt tempted to be *down*, that is, depressed or put out, not because your prayer was unanswered, that is *never* the case, but because your prayer was not answered in the very way you wanted, but in the way God saw best. That is to say you were, like Jonah, down (sulky) because God did

His will and not yours! So make an act of love of His will: that is 'aiming high,' for nothing is higher than His will. The 'aiming high,' will only be spiritual pride if the motive is wrong. If you aim high that you may be exalted and better than others it would be pride; if you aim high to please God it will be humble. Your description of 'aiming high' is good (it comes to this):—

"(a) To live in our Lord's Presence;

"(b) To love Him alone and with Personal love;

"(c) To care for souls in order to do His will.

"All three admirable to aim at: not a bit too high. What in fact can be higher than the First Commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole mind, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole strength.

"He certainly loves you as well as pities you, and pities you from love; no one does feel for you as He does.

"When you said: 'I wish I were dying,' N—— snubbed you. It might have been better if he had said: 'It depends on whether it is God's will,' for had it been God's will that you should die, even if you went into the depths (of purgatory) it would be better. 'In purgatory you would implore to come back to earth to do penance.' I doubt. I do not believe any soul already saved, certain of heaven, in a state in which no sin is possible, perfectly patient, would be so foolish as to ask to come back to earth to a state in which salvation is not certain, in which sin is very possible and often committed, and in which we are so often impatient and *down* if we do not get our own will. This folly is not possible. No one who tries to love God much will go into the depths, and if a soul is perfectly resigned and conformed to God's will it will not go at all to purgatory but straight to heaven."

*To an invalid Lady.*

"HAWKESYARD, Feb. 5, 1900.

"MY DEAR ——

"I am always delighted when I can be of any use or comfort in this work-a-day world. Thank God I am very well, and am preparing two books for the press. One, to be out for Lent, entitled *A Book of Spiritual Instruction*, is a translation I have made of a treatise of Abbot Blossius, of the 16th century. I hope you will like it. The second is a Commentary on the Ephesians, a book of spiritual reading.

"I have lately brought out in Catholic Truth Society the *Our Father and Hail Mary*, by Father Jerome Savonarola.

“When a nice morning comes, go to Holy Communion with an act of Contrition for faults, *without fear*: even if your confession was two or three weeks before. Remember, confession is *necessary* only when mortal sin has been committed. Though you have faults, how much better to go to our Lord than to stay away. We must not be stricter than the Church.

“Did your friend mean that the war could not be pleasing to God, or that to read about it could not? God does not condemn just wars, and I believe and hope this is a just one for us. The Boers intended to have a Republic in all S. Africa. I take the greatest interest in it, as every true, loyal Englishman must, and I am anxious, but quite confident, that before long we shall give the Boers a dreadful thrashing. Every Catholic should be on the English side, because the Boers are intense haters of the Church, fanatical haters of it, while the English always give perfect liberty.

“In the Jubilee year all indulgences are always suspended for the living, with a few exceptions. But all for the dead can be gained. I suppose the idea is that people should go to Rome for the indulgence.

“The Rubrics tell priests very distinctly to say certain parts of the holy Mass aloud, with a clear and intelligible voice. Unless a man has lost his voice, it is quite against the Rubrics to whisper those parts.

“I read all the war news I can get, every day.”

*To a Niece.*

“ST ANNE'S, EDGE HILL,  
“LIVERPOOL, *March 9, 1900.*

“MY DEAREST B——

“Your letter forwarded to me delighted me, and I congratulate you heartily on your success. I am quite sure I should be ignominiously plucked if I tried to pass. I think to get honours in the senior examination is very creditable and must have implied very diligent work.

“All Liverpool went mad on the day of the Relief of Ladysmith. Our bell here rang at intervals, and we had a solemn *Te Deum* chanted in the evening. A fabulous number of champagne bottles were opened in the town and I fear more than one got very drunk! I did not. I thought as I was giving the mission and was to be 60+1 next week (March 14th), that I had better not!

“This is a fine church, good schools, and 5000 people. . . .

“When I leave here I have to give ten days' mission at

Stourbridge, then a week at Longton, then a week at Nymphsfield, and a week at Clevedon. . . .

"Give my love all round.

"Ever your affectionate uncle,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

The following very characteristic little note occurs in Father Bertrand's *Ordo*, written during the Edge Hill Mission :—

"'Boys will be boys.' Let them; who wants to prevent them? But don't let them be girls, or animals—monkeys.

"'Youth is the season for enjoyment.' Yes: innocent. If you get one-and-sixpence from your parents and go and get toffee, and greengages, and plums, and beer—then, an hour after, what do you say of the *enjoyment*?

"'You can't put old heads on young shoulders.' Who wants to do so?"

*To a Religious.*

"STOURBRIDGE,  
"March 28, 1900.

"I am glad you have *Blosius*. The colour of the book is too light, but the teaching of the book is first-rate. Why should it puzzle you because God gives people outside the body of the Church the grace to be virtuous? If a person is baptised and has not wilfully denied the faith, or fought against God's light, he or she is in the soul of the Church and perhaps has never lost baptismal innocence.

"With much less external means of grace they are faithful to what they have, and love God's will and so are holy. 'The Spirit bloweth where He listeth,' and can make anyone He wills holy, in any way He wills. We are bound to seek grace by the Sacraments. He has not bound Himself to give no grace except by the Sacraments.

"No doubt some outside the body of the Church, yet in union with the soul of the Church, are far better, more humble, mortified, given to prayer, etc., than many in the body of the Church. They are in inculpable ignorance.

"If a soul is in inculpable ignorance and prays, what is to prevent holiness? Such a one can be a saint. Who they are God alone can judge.

"I am sure with all the means of grace I have, I am

very far short of many parsons, who without Orders or Sacraments are more faithful to God than I am with them. This is humiliating.

"The poor sister with the temper is meant to be a cross to make others holy. How could we learn humility, patience, and charity if everyone were sweet and gentle? Bear with her patiently, and so you will gain virtue and merit. You do not fast, so God gives you this sister's temper to bear instead. How many have to bear with tempers of husbands, wife, etc.? It is their cross."

To another correspondent Father Wilberforce, writing on the subject of Heavenly Rewards, says :—

"CATHOLIC CHURCH,  
"LYDIATE, *May 24.*

"With all due respect to the Carmelite nun you read of, she must have been a very ignorant person and ought to have known better. Her confessor ought to have told her that as God Himself 'was her reward exceeding great,' to say 'I do not want more reward' would be equivalent to saying, 'I do not want to know God better and to love Him more, for ever,' which she would not say I hope. Surely it is God's will, we should desire the reward which is Himself for ever. What are *selfish heavenly* joys? Heaven is God—to know Him and His Son Jesus Christ—to love Him. A degree of merit means to know Him more, to give Him more glory, and to love Him more for ever. There is not and cannot be anything selfish in the bad sense in heaven. Praise from God we ought to desire: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

"May I presume to correct a mistake? We ought never to say in English 'different *to* this or that but different *from*.' I cannot differ *to* you but I might differ *from* you. This by the way; it is a very common mistake. I am glad your mental prayer differs *from* what it was and is more real.

"Have you read Father Tyrrell on *External Religion*? that will help you, I think.

"Saints do not deaden their hearts, they often bleed with agony, but they overcome their feelings and do not allow themselves to be distracted from God.

"Our Lord is 'a jealous lover,' because He cannot allow anyone else to be loved *except for His sake*, because He is God. St. Thomas says that to love others means *to wish them well.*"

One of Father Wilberforce's correspondents had been reading Ruskin's works, and our two next letters contain some remarks on the subject.

"LYDIATE, May 31, 1900.

"As for Ruskin—I have not read *Ethics of the Dust*.

"The question you quote seems to me untrue. To say, 'Nothing pleases God, unless we should have done it if there were no God,' seems to me absurd. Why? Does he explain? If there were no God, why should not we do always just as we *like*?

"Is Ruskin against self-sacrifice? I am astonished to hear you say that. Surely he would admire a man who gave his life to save another: for example, a man who gave a life-belt to another in a shipwreck? Or the Sister of Charity who nursed a man in a fever and died of it. Would he wish all to think only of self? I cannot think this of him.

"This is a delightfully quiet place, and I should be very happy if I were to live here always. We can't help liking one place more than another, but that is no reason, Blossius would tell us, for going or not going there.

"The English flag is now flying in Pretoria, and the war practically over. *Deo Gratias*. If the Boers had fought to be allowed to have the advantage of English government, they would have shown their sense. . . .

"I also like giving presents, and in that, feel that I have a *vow* of poverty, which is a good thing.

*To the Same.*

"HAWKESYARD,

"June 5, 1900.

"I am reading *Ethics of the Dust*. There is a great deal that is beautiful and true in his philosophy; so much so that it makes one sad that he had not the full light of the faith which would have guided him so much.

"His proposition: 'Nothing is ever done so as to really please our great Father, unless we should also have done it, though we had no Father to please,' is, in my opinion, completely false. I cannot see any truth in it; and it arises, it seems to me, from a complete want of realisation of God.

"God is all good. 'One is good, God.' Without God there is no good. Without Him there is nothing. Therefore without Him there is no good to be aimed at or done.

"The illustration Ruskin brings of an earthly father is

quite true of him, quite false of God. A good earthly father would certainly say, 'If you had no earthly father you should not rob tills.' Certainly, because an earthly father is only a man, a partial created good. He is not Goodness Itself.

"He can't say, 'I am, who am.' If he did not exist, Goodness would be just the same, eternal, unchanging. But with God it is not so. There are great principles of good and true that are not only good and true because God commands them, but good in themselves; but what does that mean? It means that they are involved in the Essence of God, in the Being of God.

"For instance, to omit Mass on Sunday is wrong, not in itself but because God commands it. To lie is wrong in itself. That means that truth is God. It is not something independent of God, higher than He is, to which He must conform, but it is God Himself. Truth is God and God is Truth. If there were no God there would be no truth.

"So the human father should say: 'Son, steal not, even if you had no human father, because stealing, injustice, is not wrong because "I am," but wrong in itself, wrong for ever.' But God says, 'I am the Almighty God. I only am good. I am Goodness and Justice. Therefore steal not in order to conform to Me. My very being is justice. Without Me, there is no justice. Justice is right because I am God.'

"And about reward. Reward is God. To aim at reward distinct from God, mere self, is base, but 'I am thy reward exceeding great.' Also fear of punishment is base if merely slavish and servile, but not when the punishment is to lose God. Meditate on Ecclesiasticus xliii. 29-37.

"It is false to say, 'Without God you should aim at good,' because 'God is all,' and if He were not, there would be no good to aim at."

From East Bergholt he writes to one of the community at Stone about the retreat he was intending to write:—

"June 9, 1900.

"Thank you very much for your encouraging letter. Perhaps you are right. At all events what you say much encourages me to try.

"Your idea is the right one I am sure. A retreat for Religious should dwell on the one idea of union with God, showing what is meant by it, why and how we should aim at it, and how all in the Religious Life is intended to promote it,

and how the life of a Religious is unmeaning and foolish except as a means to attain to union with God and to become one spirit with Him. That indeed *is* worth living for.

“Pray that if God wills it I may be able to help souls by writing this book. It would be indeed good to write something that might help souls to God, and might give glory to Him even after my body has gone to dust in the grave.

“When I have written it you must read it and tell me if it carries out your idea.

“Mother Prioress at Stoke has kindly asked me to give the retreat there this year, and if I do I will take that idea and work it out, and give the retreat, to be written later. After all what is the use of *anything* if it does not help us to be united closely and without medium to God? That gives a meaning to life, which without that key seems so unmeaning and so wearisome.

“I only wish I could practically carry it out, and really desire myself to be united to Him.

“‘One thing have I asked of the Lord.’ I am taking that idea now with these holy nuns.

“Let us pray one for the other that we may both be united to God for His own sake, because it is His will, and in the time and the way, and to the degree He wills, now and for ever.

“‘As a wanderer who can find no rest, and a poor famished beggar without food, so is man until he perfectly embraces Him, the immensity of whose dignity makes it impossible not to desire Him.’”<sup>1</sup>

*To Miss Buchanan.*

“HAWKESYARD, June 22, 1900.

“*Feast of the Sacred Heart.*

“The letter of Savonarola is quite charming and it reads very well. I trust the Catholic Truth Society will like and print it. It is likely to do good. It contains a truth so necessary for all to remember at all times and in all places.

“The titles of the other little treatises sound most inviting, and I hope you will have time to do them. The one on ‘Humility’ I like very much;—it is very practical.

“How well I can sympathise with you about leaving the dog! They are such dear companions, and so evidently

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritual Instruction*, p. 7.

intended by God in His kindness to be the companions of man. They are so faithful too, and what an example in the simplicity of their tastes! They never get drunk, never smoke to excess, never annoy you with snuff, never talk when you want to be silent, always glad to welcome you.

"Then they are such a type of man's duty to God. They leave all their kind to attach themselves to a higher being; they love his company. Though they love a walk, they will not go alone, but are delighted to accompany their lord and master or mistress.

"Dear dogs. The only objection is that one would get too fond of them. Lasso at Oulton, near Stone, is a great favourite of mine.

"On page 5 of the *Hail Mary* of Savonarola I see now, for the first time, that our Lady is called 'Queen of those in Hell.' Could you give me the original words.

"I do not see how she can be called Queen of those 'in Hell'; perhaps purgatory is meant. Hell is not the kingdom of God. It is curious I did not notice this when correcting the proofs."

Another letter on Ruskin is dated:—

"WATERLOO,  
"LIVERPOOL, July 7, 1900.

"You may be sure that all our defects and all our shallowness in spiritual life come from not knowing God. 'This is Eternal Life, that they may know Thee, the only true God.' The more we know Him and the better we know Him, the more everything is right with us. St John tells us that the Word of God, God the Son, is the Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. The light of reason is as much and as truly from Him as the light of faith. The first is in the natural order, the second is in the supernatural order, but both are from the Light of the world. That Light delivers us, if we follow it, from the darkness of sin and the everlasting darkness that is the consequence of being separated from the Light, God, in the world to come. Ignorance is the darkness of nature, natural reason is dark unless as far as it is enlightened by God. 'They have not known nor understood; they walk in darkness' (Ps. lxxxix. 5).

"The darkness of sin comes from turning away from the light, as the darkness of night from turning away from the sun. The earth turns away and puts *itself* and its shadow between us and the sun; the sun shines all the time. God always shines, but *we* turn away and put self between us and

God. That is sin, 'You were once darkness, now light in the Lord' (Eph. v. 8).

"God is the one universal light, and nothing can possibly be seen, that is, understood, by any created mind, except by His light, either direct or reflected. He is the 'Father of Lights.' The Father, that is to say, the Source of Lights, that is of the light of reason and of faith. What is wanting in Ruskin is that though he had very much of the light of reason, he had not the gift of faith, though much of the light of faith was indirectly reflected on his mind from the Bible, the Church, Christianity altogether.

"Another error of his in this book is about the principle of working for a reward:—

"'There is no measuring the poisoned influence of that notion of future reward on the mind of Christian Europe in the early ages' (Ruskin, *Ethics of the Dust*).

"Yet God's word is full in Old and New Testament of the future reward. To take only one of a thousand texts, our Lord, the Light of the World, tells us to heap up treasure in Heaven, etc. Ruskin is wrong from want of knowledge of what the reward means; he looks on it as a mere selfish desire of external riches, like the treasures of this world. It is again want of the knowledge of God. For what is the future reward? God Himself. 'I Myself will be thy Reward, exceeding great.' To work for the reward, then, is to work for God. To heap up treasure is to add to our knowledge of God for ever and ever. To gain a degree of merit means to know God better and to love Him more for ever. No one can fully know God, or comprehend Him as it is called, except God Himself. Our Lady knows God more than all the saints and angels together, but what she does not know of God is simply *infinite*. Even the created mind of our Lord cannot comprehend God, though the Person, Jesus Christ, does, because the Person is God the Son.

"To despise future reward, then, is to despise God.

"To say, 'I do not care to get high in heaven' means, 'I do not care to know God better and to love Him more for ever.'

"To say, then, that the desire to gain God, the future Reward, is a 'poisoned influence' would be blasphemy, if it was not said from ignorance. The idea arises from total want of appreciation of God. 'I AM.' 'HE IS ALL.'

"Ruskin again says: 'Half the monastic system rose out of that, acting on the occult pride and ambition of good people.' If half the monastic system rose out of the desire to gain the everlasting reward that God has prepared for those

that love Him, it was a very good motive to arise out of, and though there may have been a want of purity of intention and a good deal of hidden pride, still the main end was good.

"He (Ruskin) also says: 'There is always a good deal of pride in what is called "giving oneself to God." As if one had ever belonged to anyone else!'

"Certainly it is true that no one ever really belonged to anyone but God. Nothing truer. We all belong to Him by right of creation, of redemption, and of possession. But we can act as if we did not. We can use our time, our money, talents, life as if it belonged to ourselves and not to God. We can forget that we belong to God. Now, when a man comes and solemnly gives himself to God, it shows that he remembers that he belongs to God and acknowledges it.

"Is there pride in this? There *may* be, it is true. Impure love of our own excellence may mix up with even the best and holiest actions. But there need not be any deliberate pride, if we are thinking of God and trying to please Him.

"There may be pride also in every good action. Even an art critic may give way to pride and esteem himself and his own opinion more than others.

"What a blessing it is to have the faith, and not to be blown about by every wind of doctrine."

*On the same Subject.*

"As to evil. Evil is a defect. It is not a thing existing of itself. For what really *is*, so far must be good, and as good, in God. If evil really existed as a substance it would be in God.

"Truth is real and eternal. Truth is God and God is truth. Falsehood is not a real existing thing but a lack of truth. It cannot therefore be in God, because God cannot lack truth, or He would not be God. Ignorance is not a real substantial thing existing, but a lack of knowledge.

"God is infinite in knowledge, He is knowledge, therefore He cannot have lack of knowledge. If he had, He would not be God.

"God cannot tell a lie. Is this from want of power? No; it is an imperfection to lie. It shows want of power; therefore God cannot lie because He is almighty: there can be no lack of power in Him.

“How grand it will be to see God face to face.  
“We must do all we can to be united to Him.”

A letter to a lady, on the value of sufferings as a mark of God's love, is dated :—

“WATERLOO,  
“LIVERPOOL, *July 11, 1900.*

“Your letter of yesterday filled me with sympathy both for your friend and for you.

“‘How hard it is to understand why the good suffer in this world.’ The good are those to whom God has given many graces, and their sufferings are among the most noble of His graces. You are not asked to believe that those who do not suffer so much will not be saved. Some will, some will not, and who will be, and who will not, God, and God only, knows.

“Why should it try our faith to see God's friends suffer, when He has prophesied so often that it will be so, and when He, their head and their model, has suffered so much more?

“St James tells us to rejoice: ‘Count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations,’ that is, tribulations of all kinds, within and without.

“Why? How can we rejoice?

“1. Because nothing so clearly shows that the love of God for His own sake, and not self-love, is dominant in our souls, as the fact that we bear crosses and pains patiently and joyfully. Our nature cannot rejoice at pain, loss, sorrow, etc. Therefore, if we are patient, and still more, joyful, we show that the love of God's will moves us, and not self-will. Nothing could make us rejoice more than to find that the love of God is dominant in us. The love of God's will is the love of God, for there is no distinction between God and God's will.

“2. God allows His friends to suffer that they may be polished and beautified, that their love may be purified, and so that they may not only go straight to heaven, but may also have a far higher place in His kingdom than if they had not suffered so much and so many things. It is not in anger, but love.

“She is bright, you say, and clever, etc. Who gave her these qualities? God. Now He wants to perfect her, to ornament her soul, and to give her union with Himself. It is sad to lose her, no doubt, but, ‘let not your heart be troubled.’

"You can't help the sensitive part of your soul being troubled, but do not allow the higher part, your heart, that is your spirit and will, to be troubled. 'He cannot be troubled,' says St Thomas, 'who hath God always with him.'

"'You believe in God, believe also in Me,' for I am God, and I, your Head, have suffered, to show the world that I love the Father.'

"Then you say, 'Why are so many prayers unavailing?' Are they? Do you think one has gone unanswered? Not one but is answered abundantly and in the highest and best way. 'Why do you doubt, O ye of little faith!' God has answered them by sending bodily crosses, and giving spiritual graces, and promising life everlasting.

St Catherine of Siena's mother was dying. She told her daughter to pray for her recovery. Our Lord said to St Catherine, 'My daughter, tell your mother that if she persists in desiring to live, I will grant her request, but that it would be much better for her to die now.' Would you believe it? The foolish woman persisted in having God's will put aside, and her own granted, and got well. Afterwards she longed for death, owing to her troubles.

"When we say, 'Thy will be done,' etc., we must take care not to mean in our hearts, 'My will be done on earth, as Thine is in heaven.' We must not wish to impose our will on God. How glad we shall be, when we see God, that He answered our prayers according to His wisdom, and not our folly."

The treatises of Savonarola, of which mention is made several times in Father Wilberforce's letters of this period, are those on the *Our Father and Hail Mary*; on *Prayer*, on *The Love of Jesus*, and the commentary on the Psalm, *Miserere*. These little books were edited by Father Wilberforce, but the translations were made from the originals by a lady whose name has not been given to the public.

Father Wilberforce writes from Waterloo to this friend:—

"July 13, 1900.

"The little treatises of Friar Jerome are charming, and certainly will keep perfectly clear of the waste-paper basket.

"Thank you so much for your perseverance and your good work, for the translations are excellent. . . .

"Your account of the dear grateful dog is quite touching! Dogs are so evidently intended by God to be our companions, protectors, and in many ways, examples.

"Partings are painful things; real crosses; but the cross,

borne for Christ, is a privilege and a joy. 'My eyes are ever on the Lord.'

"Wait on the Lord ;

"Do manfully ;

"Let thy heart take courage ;

"Wait thou on the Lord' (Ps. xxvi. 14).

"I am glad I am not on the bench of *examined* at C—. I should be sure to be plucked !"

## CHAPTER XIII

1900—*continued*

ON the 25th of September 1900, Father Wilberforce wrote to a lady who had been ill :—

“ We have been fellow-sufferers, for I have been an invalid since July 30, with a severe attack of iritis in both eyes. I am only now able to use them for reading and writing with caution.”

He had in truth been very seriously ill. The attack of inflammation in the eyes had seized him whilst on a visit—intended to be of a few days' duration—to his brother-in-law, Mr Froude, then living in Devonshire. His sufferings were acute, and permanent blindness was threatened. The iritis, however, yielded to skilful treatment, though he was unable to leave Newton Abbot till September.

All who had to do with Father Wilberforce in times of sickness and suffering have borne witness to the way in which such occasions brought out the extreme simplicity of his character. In the course of his missionary career it often happened to him to be taken ill in some convent or priest's house, and those whose charge it was at such times to tend him found that his obedience, sweetness, and childlike docility, together with that complete absence of self-consciousness, which was one of Father Wilberforce's greatest charms, made it a delight to wait on him. At times, it must be acknowledged, he was irritable: as the mortal disease that was gradually sapping his strength grew upon him, his nerves would sometimes be wrought up to such a pitch that the slightest sound became unendurable. This was evidently physical, and the fits of irritability were followed by such humble regret, such gentle kindness of word, and manner, that the fault was soon more than repaired. One of his penitents recalls a visit that she paid Father Bertrand at a time when he was in a state of

much suffering, and he showed something of this impatience and irritability. Knowing him well, she thought little of it, but late that same afternoon, in the midst of driving wind and snow, Father Wilberforce called upon her, and though shivering with cold and wet, sat down and talked for an hour in his most genial and kindly way, interesting himself in all her doings and giving her the advice she wanted. “Never,” she says, “had I felt him to be more truly my father and friend. When he rose to go I ventured to remonstrate with him on having come out in such weather. He looked at me with his peculiarly sweet, half-humorous, half-pathetic smile, and an expression which plainly said: ‘I know I was cross, and so I came to make reparation.’ ‘You kindly came to see me this morning, my dear child,’ he replied; ‘and so I thought I would return the visit this afternoon. Is not that only proper politeness?’”

Father Wilberforce’s character presented a singular combination. Together with the clear strong mind of a man, there was in him a sensitive delicacy of feeling, a gift, not only of wide, but also of very tender, sympathy, which, without bearing the shadow of resemblance to effeminacy, was decidedly feminine; and to these were united the simplicity and naturalness of a little child. “*Ecce vere Israelita, in quo dolus non est,*” are words used by many of his friends in seeking to describe him;—and it was just these latter qualities that came out so strongly in times of mental or physical prostration.

At the beginning of September the doctor decreed a change and “long rest” to be necessary, and Father Wilberforce went to the convent at Stone. Here at first he seemed to be gradually recovering strength, though for some time he could not use his eyes at all.

We are told by those who waited on him that during those weeks of comparative helplessness he was exceedingly patient, and generally cheerful. Very grateful too was he when the Religious came to read to him, and his pithy remarks and comments made the task a delightful one. A regular order was observed in the matter. In the morning he would have two chapters of one of the Gospels read—generally St John; then one or two chapters from St Paul’s Epistles—his favourites were the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians; and these were followed by some pages of the *Following of Christ*. Chosen portions from Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and Job he also liked to hear. Lighter literature he did not seem to care to listen to, except occasionally, but the evenings were devoted to St Augustine, whose treatise on the Holy

Trinity, translated by Mossman, had just been lent him. The Religious whose task it was to read to Father Wilberforce afterwards wrote that his explanations of the saint's words brought home to her mind the reality of the doctrine in a way she could never forget. He would listen particularly with intense pleasure to the passages relating to the Eternal Generation of the Divine Word, a mystery to which, especially in his later years, he bore an extraordinary devotion. Those who assisted at his daily Mass can indeed scarcely fail to have been struck by the peculiar emphasis with which he would dwell on the words of the *Credo*: "Deum *de* Deo; Lumen *de* Lumine; Deum verum, *de* Deo vero"; resting on them lovingly, as if he were drinking in their meaning and beauty in the depth of his soul, and pronouncing them with a solemnity that filled the souls of his hearers with feelings of awe and renewed faith in the sacred mystery.

Many hours of these days were spent in silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and when unable to go to the church, he was generally to be found in his room, kneeling before his Crucifix, or sitting in his chair in the corner, reciting the Rosary, which, indeed, scarcely ever left his hand.

By October Father Wilberforce had recovered sufficiently to make his retreat, which he began on the 7th, hoping, directly it should be over, to start for a mission at Aughton, in Lancashire. It had, however, been otherwise decreed.

His retreat turned entirely on union with God, through conformity to His will, and the words of the *Following of Christ*: "He to whom all things are one, who referreth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and abide in God at peace," formed the dominant note, to which all the retreat exercises were tuned. His constant prayer was the cry: "O Truth! my God! make me one with Thee in everlasting charity."<sup>1</sup>

His petition was answered, and through the crucible of mental and physical pain he was to enter into the union he longed for.

During his retreat Father Bertrand wrote to a Religious under his direction:—

" . . . Yes: Union is to be sought by conforming our wills to the loving will of God. In that there can be no danger of delusion, and if the will is one with God's will, we are united to Him.

"If I, a poor sign-post, pointing out the way, have been

<sup>1</sup> Book I., ch. iii. 2.

used by God to help you, *Deo Gratias*. If we help one soul to go to God, life has not been in vain. Thank you so much for praying for me: to have said Mass since 1864, and to be what I am, is a terrible and inexplicable thing.

"I hear constantly the words: 'The night cometh when no man can work'; so I must do what I can. When I think how often I have preached to others, I feel how well our Lord can say to me, '*Ex ore tuo te judico*.'

*"Domine miserere mei.*

"Probably I shall go to Aughton on Tuesday afternoon, as I have to begin on Wednesday. But I have written to ask Father Prior, so as to act under obedience."

On the last day of his retreat violent inflammation of the ears set in, and the doctor declared that to travel under such circumstances would be madness, and probably drive the inflammation to the brain. Under the pressure of this fresh attack Father Wilberforce's brave spirit nearly gave way. The violence of the pain and sense of extreme weakness on the one hand, and on the other, the anxiety of an almost oversensitive conscience as to what was really his duty in the matter, combined to throw him into a state of intense suffering. Added to this was the dread of permanently losing his hearing—a loss which would necessarily have involved the entire relinquishment of his cherished work for souls. God could not demand anything that would have cost him more, and for a short time the prospect crushed him. He seemed at this time to be passing through "the valley of the shadow of death," but the rod of God's will, to which he had for so many years been lovingly subjecting himself, now became the staff that supported him. He offered himself to be quite useless, if such were the will of God; the sacrifice was accepted, as Abraham's had been of old, and peace took possession of his soul.

Comparatively little of what he then went through appears in the letters of this period. Whilst still confined to bed, he penned a note in a trembling hand to an intimate friend:—

"Thank you so much for your kind letter which helped me. At 2 A.M., when I found the left ear beginning, I had to make petitions for resignation and grace to thank our Lord. 2 A.M. is a ghostly hour when the nerves are low.

"I am sorry about Aughton, but God will make it all 'work together,' etc. I think I did right not to go against the doctor's warnings, though I suspect St Lewis Bertrand would have done so.

“Deafness, noise, and pain in ears trying; but all is in God’s loving hands, so I repeat, ‘I thank Thee, O Lord, for doing Thy own will in Thy own way.’”

A few days later he writes:—

“Many most hearty thanks for all your kind solicitude for me, and your most comforting words. As you say, if I love Him (and to love His good will is to love Him), He will give more grace to those I might have worked for than He would if I had been there, probably hindering His work in too many ways. I do not want to do any work except when, where, and how He wills.”

A specialist was now consulted, who gave it as his opinion that the whole thing was the effect of overwork on a system weakened by disease, and that complete rest would be the only chance of prolonging life. He recommended a visit to a southern climate, on which advice, as we shall see, Father Wilberforce made his own comments. It was finally decided that he should remain at Stone till the following Lent, acting, as far as his health allowed, as chaplain to the community. This arrangement satisfied his conscience; the temporary rest from missionary work seemed to be a great relief, and he soon began to recover health and spirits.

Whilst the arrangement was pending he wrote:—

“If God wants me to have benefit, He will provide. I have a calm and joyful certainty about that, which makes me quite easy and peaceful.”

Father Wilberforce had of course written to the parish priest of Aughton, expressing his sorrow at having to disappoint him. His friend’s answer has been preserved, and a portion may be quoted, which gave Father Bertrand much consolation:—

“As to your great sufferings, my very dear Father, I feel more inclined to envy you than to sympathise with you. Who can doubt but that they are those mysterious purifications of the senses and the will, that God grants to those whom He lovingly calls to a closer union with Himself. From these proofs of His love no ‘sunny South’ will ever deliver you. They will endure until they have done their good work in your soul, and not one moment longer. I thank God for all that He has done and is doing for you and in you.”

Towards the end of October, Father Wilberforce again took up his correspondence. A letter to one of his penitents is dated :—

“STONE, *October 26, 1900.*

“Excuse delay: I have been very unwell with acute inflammation and abscess in one ear, and sub-acute in the other, and now am an old man, ‘ard of ‘earing, and a nuisance to his friends.’

“The doctors hope it will return (not the inflammation, but the hearing), and advise a long rest in a sunny southern clime, which is easy to talk about and difficult to accomplish. I daresay there are many poor men and women to whom the same treatment would be highly beneficial, and who have to do without it.

“Happiness is not got by changing our external surroundings, but by making up our minds that the best way we can please God, is to be conformed to Christ and save our souls, and gladly to suffer something for the love of God. . . .

“You say you have ‘given up all for God’: happy you to have given up even small things for Him who has given you all, and given up His life for you.

“‘And I have not found our Lord.’ Have you not? What do you mean by finding Him? You have found His will, and can love it. If you find and love His will, you find Him. You want to leave His will for an imaginary happiness, in a cottage with books. If there is some real sign that this is His will, well and good; but take care of self-will.

“‘The Lord direct your heart in the Charity of God and the Patience of Christ’ (2 Thess. iii.).

“Pray for me, that I may be patient and love God’s will.”

To one of his nieces, who, during his illness in the summer, had read to him his favourite Book of Job, Father Wilberforce writes on the 30th of October :—

“I enclose a picture of Job and his three friends: ‘Eliphaz the Themanite, and Baldad the Suhite, and Sophar the Naamathite.’ Which is which? You must decide. This represents Bertrand, the son of Henry, the son of William, of the tribe of Wilberforce, sick of iritis, and visited by B—— the Munjahlakite, and M—— the Trottite, and W—— the Froudite,—all doing what they can to console him.

“. . . I am so glad you are learning the 102nd Psalm; it is my favourite.

“Ever my dearly beloved Chaplain,

“Your affectionate Uncle.”

A letter to his sister is dated :—

“STONE, *Nov.* 2, 1900.

“Thank you so heartily for your loving and consoling letter. I am not distressed at not working, when I know it is not God’s will I should do active work ; the only troubling thing is when the question is doubtful, and it is not clear what one ought to do. But then obedience comes in. . . . It is a trial to disappoint people, but God makes it work together unto good by sending Father Albert [to Aughton], a far more apt instrument for good than I. Now I am practically well again, only quite deaf with one ear, and have imperfect hearing with the other, which is a bore to my friends. I am sure it is a penance for having been impatient with deaf people. . . .

“Father Prior considers that till Lent I had better keep quiet (watch and pray). The doctor advised ‘a good rest in a southern sunny place,’ but, thank God, there is no fear of that. We cannot afford it, and I should hate to go and kick my heels in a Riviera health-resort, with no one to speak to and nothing to do. Ten times sooner would I work and die. What matter whether you die two or three years later or earlier. I shall die when God wills, and that is enough. *Ego autem mendiculus sum et pauper: Dominus sollicitus est mei.* So if our Lord is solicitous for me, I need not be anxious. The doctor says the eyes in August and ears in October are ‘two warnings.’ No doubt they are merciful warnings, saying, ‘get ready.’ All August I was quite blind, and I felt it to be a real grace. When all the sights of outward things were shut out, it was easier to keep with God. I can well understand blindness to be a very great blessing. A blind priest could do more for souls than a deaf one. To be quite blind and quite deaf would be a great penance. No use to tell an old buffer who was quite blind and deaf that ‘dinner is ready’ ; they would have to pull his mouth open and stick a potato in to show him.

“Blosius is selling well D. G., and I hope to have a second edition. I got a very nice letter from a Paulist Father in Washington about it, and a review of it he had published. The Paulist Fathers have bought ‘quite a few’ copies and are promoting its sale.

“In a few days I hope the *Life of Canon Bathurst* will be out. Short sketch ; only 1d. He was a holy man ; a true man of God, with only one passion :—love of God, and of the poor for God’s sake. He is just the man to go straight to heaven, which I fully expect he did.

"Dear Wilfrid wanted me to go to Clevedon, but I am better here. Of course I could go to one of our own houses in the 'sunny south,' but I should have to conform to their diet. Macaroni, bread, polenta, etc., etc., would not be the best for my complaint.

"How very delightful, and how true, are the words of the *Following of Christ*: 'He to whom all things are one, who seeth all things in one, and referreth all things to one, shall remain steadfast in heart, and abide in peace with God. O Truth, my God! make me one with Thee in everlasting charity' (Bk. I., ch. iii.)."

*To a Lady.*

"Nov. 5, 1900.

"A glance at the date of your two interesting letters makes me ashamed, but the truth is I have been ill, and have got sadly behind with letters.

"What you say of yourself is true of so many who are trying to serve God; our falls and mistakes come from looking at self instead of God. So our motto must be, 'My eyes are ever on the Lord; He shall pluck my feet out of the snare' (Ps. xxiv. 15). It is never a pleasant thing to look at self, it is a hideous object, like looking at a dunghill, and if we contemplate it much we shall go down to the depths of sadness, depression, and despair; so resolutely look at our Lord instead—'I set the Lord always in my sight: He is at my right hand that I be not moved: Therefore my heart hath been glad and my tongue hath rejoiced: Moreover my flesh shall rest in hope. Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance' (Ps. xv. 8-11). I would advise you to learn these verses by heart.

"I recommend you to read at least one chapter of the Old and one of the New Testament, every day; and if you can, two. The Sapiential Books particularly, in the Old, which St Jerome, writing to a young lady, says she ought to know by heart. The New Testament you should have at your fingers' ends. The Psalms too. You will find how wonderfully these inspired prayers will help you in prayer. The Psalms formed the prayer-book of our Lady, St Joseph, and the apostles. How often Jesus, Mary, and Joseph said them together, and how our Lady saw in them all about her son! No one, before the Great Apostasy, I believe, was professed in a Religious Order, till they knew the 150 Psalms by heart.

"Day-dreaming is waste of time, dissipates the mind, and almost always leads to thoughts dangerous to humility."

*To his Sister.*

"Nov. 21, 1900.

"MY DEAREST SISTER,

"Here is the little memoir of my dear old friend Canon Bathurst. Often I think the life of a modern contemporary saint like this helps more than one of past times, who seems not of this work-a-day world. Tell me how you like it, and try and promote its sale. Costing only a penny, the poor can get it. The portrait hardly does him justice. He did not like being taken, and so he has not the sweet expression habitual to him. No one ever heard him speak an unkind word of anyone. He was so humble that he did not a bit know he was more humble than everyone else.

"I cannot tell you how I enjoy the quiet here and the feeling that I have not to rush off by train in a day or two; as far as personal feelings go I should so like to remain quiet now for the rest of my life. I want to go nowhere and see *nothing*; you I should like to see.

"Your loving Brother,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

*To X—— on hearing the news of her reception into the Church.*

"Nov. 25, 1900.

"Thanks be to God!

"I cannot tell you how thankful I feel to God. It is a long time since I felt such a thrill of joy as when I opened your letter this morning. *Deo Gratias.*

"I felt so sorry for you through your long agony in making up your mind, but God has been with you, leading you on His way and in His way, and has at last led you to His Holy Hill.

"'In Thy mercy Thou hast been a leader to the people which Thou hast redeemed, and in Thy strength Thou hast carried them to Thy holy habitation' (Ex. xv. 13).

"I have offered the Holy Mass in thanksgiving and said many Glorias.

"My eyes, thank God, which were bad with iritis in August are now quite well again, so do write to me and tell me whatever you like. All will interest me much. Your letter to-day, far from trying my eyes, has done them much

good. I shall be always ready to do all I can to help you, but it little matters who the instrument is that is used by our Lord to open the door of Holy Church to you, as long as you get safely inside.

"And now thank God. Praise and magnify Him for His mercy and goodness.

"Do not be in a hurry. Go quietly and gently to work, with your eyes ever fixed on the Lord. There may be things at first you don't quite understand or feel in sympathy with, but give yourself time, be patient and all will be well.

"Be brave and rejoice if you are accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.

"Wishing you every grace and joy in believing,

"I remain, etc."

*To — on Reading.*

"Nov. 27, 1900.

"If a person, knowing that certain kind of food is dangerous or fatal to bodily health, eats it abundantly because it is nice, and then is violently sick and in danger of death, what should you say of her?

"Is it not worse to read bad or dangerous books, cram full of hideous blasphemy and insult to our Heavenly Father, which fill the mind with thoughts that must be instantly vomited forth to avoid sin and spiritual death. Is not this worse, as the soul is of more value than the body, than eating from mere pleasure till you vomit? Much worse in God's sight.

"Blasphemy is worse than gluttony, as God is above mere food, and blasphemy conveyed in clever books is more dangerous. Avoid them like poison, especially as you have not the antidote of deep theological learning. Have you read all Cardinal Newman's works? They are far more clever, far more interesting, far better written, by the greatest mind of the present century.

"They would bring light, peace, and strength, so they are neglected, and the blasphemy of a clever woman, who has not the light of Faith, is preferred, because it satisfies curiosity, and fills the mind with darkness, trouble, and poison.

"Is this wise? Remember we shall be asked when we die, *why* we have read every page and line we have read. Read Cardinal Newman."

To X—.

“Nov. 29, 1900.

“Thank God you were able to receive the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation so soon. As you are now a ‘strong and perfect Christian,’ you will have grace to bear patiently and even joyfully the troubles that may come to you from loving God, and following His voice.

“On Sunday next I shall think of you much and unite with you in prayer. Our Lord will strengthen you. You have often received Him spiritually, now He will come to you sacramentally as well as spiritually.

“The storm in the village is natural but will be quite temporary. It will all pass away.

“It is a very great pain and grief to a sensitive heart to be obliged to afflict those you love and respect. It is a trial you must offer to our Lord and bear for Him. You may be sure that the poor people will not get any harm from the shock—perhaps good; they will soon see you have followed your conscience, and have pleased God, and they may ‘stagger’ into the Church. You need not be at all troubled at having been the perfectly innocent cause of things being said against the priory and convent. What is bad is stagnation and indifference, and the false kind of peace that makes it appear all one whether we are Catholics or Protestants. It is much better that an event like your conversion should show what a great gulf there is between the two, and that *one* only can be right and true.

“You are right—everything can easily be forgiven except giving up all and joining the one true Catholic and Apostolic Church. Nothing else would matter. You might believe what you like, but if you leave the Establishment, that is the one unpardonable sin. The Jews never forgave St Paul. In my opinion it was far better and braver to be received at—.

“Don’t be ashamed of the Gospel. In the same way I hope you will stay where you are. Why not? Of course the Protestants would like you to go, as if you had done some wrong and disgraceful thing. But why yield to that? Go wherever you like of course, but if you can, stay where you are, and live down opposition and convert anyone you can. You need not begin, but if people ask, ‘Why did you become a Catholic?’ tell them plainly and boldly.

“If anyone feels it his duty to abuse the Church on account of your action, all the better: it will be sure to do good. When first the priory church was built, the then

rector began a sermon, I am told, by the words: ‘Satan hath built a synagogue in my parish.’ The sermon sent two ladies of his parish to look at the ‘synagogue,’ and they both became Catholics and one of them a nun. Do not be afflicted because people are scandalised. Remember how our Lord said, ‘All ye this night will be scandalised in ME.’ He will overrule all this scandal for good. The storm will soon pass over and there will be a great calm. Read chapter xxviii. of Book III. of the *Following of Christ*.

“Please write again when you have time and if you feel it any comfort. On my part I shall be delighted to hear of, from, and about you, and if I can do the least thing to help and strengthen you, or to explain anything you do not understand, I shall be so delighted.

“As to devotions of different kinds, that are not, like the Holy Mass and the Sacraments, essential (I mean things like the Rosary, etc.); be calm and wait till you are attracted to them. You cannot expect to like a number of new ideas at once at your age. A lady that I know was received some three or four years ago, and a relative of hers was distressed because she did not care for the Rosary. I said, ‘Leave her alone, the Rosary is not essential; it is comparatively quite a modern thing.’ Now I hear that this lady, left alone, has taken to the Rosary and loves it.

“The Our Father, Hail Mary, and Gloria you already say; the different gospel mysteries you love and contemplate, but at first you may not care to join them together and to say them in order with ten Hail Marys. Well, if this does not attract you, leave it for a time; none of the early saints knew it. Wait, and as your Catholic life goes on, you will feel drawn to the devotions of the Church of to-day. I love the Rosary privately much better than publicly myself.

“Remember, essentials only are necessary. Devotions are according to taste. Go on loving the Psalms and Gospels particularly.”

*To a Religious, on Union with God and the Prayer of Contemplation.*

“Dec. 1900.

“By union (perfect) of will with God, we can go to Him. This is the essential union. But it can come about in different ways. The ordinary way is by the exercise of self-denial and prayer, and the different virtues, and the grace of sacraments, etc.

“I. Contemplation is a special visit of God to the soul,

either within or exceeding His ordinary providence with souls. That visit, when vouchsafed, unites the will very quickly and perfectly with the will of God, but union can come without that special inpouring of grace, called *contemplation*, because it enables the soul by the light of God to see Him (by faith), and the mysteries of faith with supernatural clearness.

“The gift of contemplation is most desirable, if God pleases to bestow it, and gives union of will more easily and quickly.

“Commonly it is not bestowed till the soul has laboured much to produce union by self-denial and prayer.

“In like manner the ordinary way of learning Latin is by grammar and dictionary and much trouble. But God can in a moment infuse the knowledge into the mind. Though this infusion is not necessary for the knowledge of Latin, it is certainly the easiest way and the best, when God pleases to give it.

“2. No. Sometimes, as in the exercises of St Ignatius, the word contemplation means a quiet looking at a subject without much discursive thought or reflection. Ordinary contemplation in the proper sense is a visit of God to a prepared soul, which is not miraculous, but within the scope of His providential ways with souls.

“Active contemplation in the sense of St Ignatius would be where the soul looks quietly at a mystery, making acts of love, resignation, etc. Meditation is where the reflections are more and longer. The one can run into the other.

“3. To contemplate means to look at without many reflections; but the *gift* of contemplation implies a new and peculiar light of God to enable the soul to see truth in a higher, clearer way.

“4. The state of a soul when the will is united to God's will is a state in which God can give, at any moment He pleases, a more or less perfect inpouring of His light, and strength to enable it to be united more perfectly with Him.

“5. Prayer is the means of union. Meditation excites the will to prayer. The knowledge must go before the will. We cannot love except as far as we know the object to be loved, and why it should be loved.

“We all have *some* gift of prayer. If we had not, we could not pray. And as time goes on, and we use the gift, it grows more and more. The more we pray the more we feel the light and strength of prayer, and the more the gift of prayer increases and becomes more perfect.

"6. We are created to know God and must strive to know Him better. It is quite right to desire contemplation (ordinary) if we desire it purely for God's honour and to do His will, and not for our own delight or honour. But as self-love is so apt to come in and make us desire it for our own delight and honour, it is safer to leave it to God. He will give us the highest contemplation or sight of Him in the next world when He makes us 'happy with His countenance,' and gives us 'to drink deeply of the torrent of His pleasure.'

"If an imperfect soul were thinking much and desiring much, for its own pleasure and honour, this infusion of God, it would be in a state in which the devil could easily work on its lower, sensitive nature, and make it imagine that God was infusing Himself into its powers. Then the devil would suggest very subtle vanity and self-satisfaction, and preference of self to others, and thus put a bar between God and the soul.

"7. 'Contemplation, the gift of special light, is union with God, but not necessary for union.' So also being carried in an instant to London by an angel is 'going to London,' but is not 'necessary for going'; for you can go, and most do go there by train, or on horseback or on foot. On foot is the slowest and most laborious and humble, but it gets you there in the end.

"If we grieve for all our sins because they displease God; if that is the chief or predominant motive, then we have contrition, and contrition, however remiss and imperfect, puts the soul at once into a state of grace. If we grieve for sin purely for God and in a very intense degree, that is perfect contrition, which unites us to God more closely and blots out the debt of temporal punishment, altogether or partly, according to its perfection and intensity. So the vows or martyrdom, or, I should think, coming into the Church, or renewal of vows, blot out temporal punishment (which implies separation from God), because all these things and others imply union with God. If the union is perfect, you have got to God, so there is nothing to keep you from Him.

"The nervous fear you had was in the imagination. When the nervous vigour and vitality are low, the nervous imaginations are vivid and overpowering. The only thing then is to offer the will to God. 'Here I am, O God, do with me *whatever* Thou wilt, only give me Thy love,' that is desire to do and suffer what Thou wilt. That is love.

"Pray that I may begin to do as well as to talk of these heavenly things."

To X——.

“STONE, Dec. 19, 1900.

“First let me thank you heartily for your welcome and most interesting letter, and then let me exhort you always to write whenever you feel you would like to do so, feeling sure your letters will always be a real pleasure and will never fatigue.

“Your principle, when there are things you do not understand, is quite the true one, ‘The Church of God must know better than I do.’ Then always remember the immense difference between what the Church teaches as our Divine Guide, and what you see in books written by the private authority of some man or woman, however holy, that may be contrary to your own mind or taste. You are by no means obliged to adopt or like these things, or to take the slightest notice of them. What you mention in Dom Guéranger’s book is a case in point. He, as a private writer, takes some words of a Psalm and turns it to our Lady. You, as a Catholic, are by no means obliged to like this; if it grates upon you leave it alone. I do not care either for this kind of thing, though the instance you quote seems to me very mild.

“After all, think what it is. The writer of the Psalm says, he was glad when they said, ‘Let us go unto the House of the Lord.’ In the literal meaning he was thinking either of the tabernacle or afterwards of the Jewish temple. That now is not the ‘House of the Lord.’ It has gone. We can no longer rejoice to go there. What is the House of God to us Christians?

“1. Our own parish church.

“2. The Catholic Church, which is indeed the House built by God’s Wisdom.

“3. Heaven.

“4. God Himself. ‘In My Father’s House there are many mansions.’ What is the ‘House of My Father’? A person’s house is the place where he dwells. Where does God dwell? In Himself. No created place can contain Him, for He contains all. ‘My Father’s House’ then is God Himself, and the many mansions are the different degrees of knowledge and the love of God. The deeper our knowledge of God and the greater our love, the higher is our mansion.

“5. Our own souls in which dwells the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19) is God’s Temple or House.

“Then the most lovely of these houses of God is our Lady, the holiest of all God’s saints. She certainly being His Mother is the most eminent of all the created Houses of God. Why, therefore, if we may rejoice at going to Church as the house of God, may we not rejoice at going to salute our Lady the ‘Ark of the Covenant’ on Her feast day? Yet, you are by no means bound to apply the verse to Her unless you like.

“ROSARY.

“Leave it till you feel attracted by it. Begin it by degrees. For instance at Christmas, think of our newly-born Saviour in the manger, and after having meditated on the mystery (the third Joyful), adore, make acts of thanksgiving, love, contrition, and petition, and then say one Our Father to Him, one Hail Mary to and with our Lady, and one Gloria. You say that you think to say a number of Paters and Aves is a ‘useless repetition.’ That it is a repetition is clear, but why ‘useless’?

“If it is good to say an Our Father once, why is it useless to say it twice or five times? You already say it at least twice a day at morning and evening prayer, and much oftener I suspect.

“If someone said, ‘You have already recited the Our Father once this morning; it would be useless repetition to say it again at your evening prayer,’ how would you answer?

“Have you ever realised that our Lord in the garden spent three hours in prayer, always repeating the *self-same words*? (St Matt. xxvi. 44). The words were shorter far than the Pater, and yet He repeated them over and over again for three hours. He must have repeated them many hundreds of times. This was repetition, but not useless.

“If we do not ‘lift up the mind and heart (intellect and will) to God’ while saying the Paters and Aves, the repetition is useless, but also *one* Our Father under similar conditions would be useless.

“St Catherine of Siena before dying, said, ‘I have sinned, O Lord, have mercy on me’ sixty times. Would you have told her it was useless to say it more than once?

So you must reflect whether the prejudice created in your mind by always hearing that the Rosary is mere *vain* repetition has not made you think it so.

“But as I say, begin by degrees, and at first think for five minutes of the mystery, adore, and make acts of contrition, etc., and say *one* Our Father, one Hail Mary, one Gloria—

then you can gradually add another Hail Mary. If you had been in the actual stable of Bethlehem, after adoring and loving the Sacred Infant, would it be a trouble and distraction to turn to our Lady, and looking in Her face, to say, 'Hail Mary, full of grace, Mother of God, pray to Him for me'? Why then should it trouble and distract you from Him to say it to her, now she is in Heaven, and you can see her only by faith?

"The thing I should like you to read about our Lady is the 'Letter to Dr Pusey on his Eirenicon,' by Cardinal Newman, as well as his two beautiful sermons on our Lady in the *Discourses to mixed Congregations*.

"The letter to Dr Pusey you should read several times. As Cardinal Newman says, if you are astonished at some of the names given to our Lady, think how everyone of them fades into insignificance compared to that unique title that our Faith teaches:

"'Mother of God'—pray for us.

"She is 'our life, our sweetness, and our hope:' why?

"Because as Mother of God, she is Mother of Him who is our Life. She brought life and light to us. Because she is Mother of Him who is our sweetness and our hope.

#### " CONFESSION.

"It is not being a 'pharisee' to say that by God's grace you have not been and are not committing mortal sins. I hope not, indeed. But lesser sins we all commit. You are not *obliged* to confess these, but to do so humbly and in a contrite spirit is good, and the best way to satisfy for them and to obtain their complete pardon. It is an exercise of humility, and it secures the grace of the sacramental absolution to purify and strengthen the soul. One venial sin is quite enough; and it is better to spend time in making acts of contrition and resolutions of amendment than to spend it in collecting a number of imperfections.

"You might go to confession once a fortnight and to Holy Communion as many times a week as you can prudently get to the church fasting, that is if your confessor approves of this.

"At Christmas time I shall pray for you, of course, especially. But I will every day always.

"If people ask, 'Why did you become a Catholic?' you can answer: 'Because after much thought, and (deliberate) study of the Bible, I came to the deliberate conclusion that I

should go against the will of God and lose my soul if I did not.'

"It is indeed an immense encouragement to you that your old friend has been helped to the Church by your example. What a joy, and perhaps others will follow. When the first shock has subsided, many in —— will be glad to know why you acted thus. If you are the means of bringing one soul, you will not have lived in vain!

"Wishing you every Christmas grace,

"I remain,

"Yours most sincerely in the Holy Infant,

"F. BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

## CHAPTER XIV

1901

IN the beginning of January 1901, Father Wilberforce went to the Benedictine convent at Oulton for a week or two, returning afterwards to Stone, where he remained till the middle of February, when he went back to Hawkesyard, and by the month of March he was able to begin mission work again. He never, however, fully recovered from the effects of this illness. It placed him on a much lower level of strength, and though he worked, if possible, harder than before, it was evident that—to use his own words—the “slowing down for the terminus” had begun, and the frail body would not be driven on much longer, in spite of the heroic efforts of the spirit that dwelt within. Nature, indeed, sometimes cried out imperiously for mercy, but its voice was unheeded, and the work went on to the end. In a letter from Oulton, written about this time, Father Bertrand says:—

“As far as liking goes, how I should like to remain quiet at Stone all the rest of my mortal pilgrimage. But—it is not God’s will. After all, quiet is a form of selfishness, and ‘the night cometh when no man can work.’

“How glad I should be never to get into a train again!

“I do not feel so equal to missions as formerly. But I leave that to our Lord, and I fear that in — [another kind of life, where, it had been suggested, he might work for souls, but more quietly] I should be too comfortable, and that a less easy life is better for me. But if I saw it was God’s will, not mine, I should be very happy.

“Perhaps I may break down: if I do, what then? We must all do that soon.”

From Oulton Father Wilberforce writes to a Religious:—

“Jan. 6, 1901.

“If the Magi rejoiced with exceeding great joy at seeing the star, the light of which led them to the house where they found Jesus with His Mother, how intense should be your joy at the light of the faith which has shone down on you and brought you to the house of God, where you have found the Child and His Mother. We ought to spend all our life in joy and thanksgiving (1 Thess. v. 18).

“Instead of enumerating all the pros and cons when you are told to go anywhere, say simply to yourself:—

“‘I am to go, blessed be God. I thank the Lord.’

“Do not confuse confession and direction. You need not confess ‘being worried,’ unless it causes you to commit sin. If the worry makes you commit a deliberate sin against patience or charity, then accuse yourself in confession of having fallen into a sin against patience or charity in a time of trial. Bad thoughts, if clearly venial, you are not obliged to confess. If more serious, then you *must* confess them. Use the simplest and most direct words. Remember in confession you are speaking to our Lord directly: forget the particular priest.”

To \*.

“OULTON ABBEY,  
“STONE, January 7, 1901.

(1) *On the case of an extremely weak person who says he cannot pray.*

“God is infinitely good, wise, and powerful. He knows, better than we do, our extreme weakness, and He only wants us to do what we can by the help of His grace.

“Now as to the case you imagine of ‘a sinner in an extremely weak physical state, who says he can hardly pray at all,’ God expects and requires him to pray only according to his weak powers. Having only weak powers of brain left, he cannot pray like a saint. If he goes on three or four times a day saying from his heart ‘God have mercy on me a sinner,’ he *does* persevere in prayer. His good will perseveres and goes on speaking to God, and our merciful Father hears him; ‘bows down His ear to hear him’ (Psalm lxxxv.). This is a lovely psalm to study and say often, for it teaches us so much about prayer. The prayer of the publican was not long nor the prayer of the repenting thief on the cross, who must have had very little power of brain, reason, memory, or judgment, in such a state as he was then.

“If the sinner of whom you write could ask pardon for five minutes a day, he would be persevering in prayer. No articulate words are necessary. The heart and mind speak to God, and to pray is to lift up the mind to God by thinking of Him (even for a moment) and to lift up the will to God by good desire.

(2) *Can an old inveterate, scarlet-dyed sinner pray with humility, confidence, and perseverance?*

“It is quite possible for ‘an old, inveterate, scarlet-dyed sinner’ to pray with humility, confidence, and perseverance.

“*With humility*; surely his very sins must humble him, and make him see he can do nothing of himself without God. What can he be proud of?

“*With confidence*; because God is infinitely merciful and good, and has promised pardon to those who ask. The very title of ‘scarlet-dyed sinner’ suggests the gracious promise, ‘If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow,’ in *Isaias i. 18.*

“*With perseverance*; he can *always desire* pardon, and often ask for it. ‘Lord have mercy on me.’

(3) *The poet Cowper’s despair.*

“The poet Cowper, poor man, was a Calvinist. It is true he was tempted to despair, and his gloomy religion, invented by the devil and promulgated by that archheretic and blasphemer Calvin, drove him out of his mind. When in that state he said most despairing things, but when sane he was such a good and religious-minded man that we must hope that God did not hold him responsible for these ravings. In fact we can be certain He did not. How beautiful and full of love is that couplet of dear old Cowper:—

“‘Give what Thou wilt, without Thee we are poor;  
And rich with Thee, take what Thou wilt away.’

(4) *On those who do not follow a vocation to the Religious State.*

“St Alphonsus Liguori exhorts a man who knows God calls him to the Religious state, to follow grace and give himself to God, because if he resists it is very likely he may lose his soul. But if he prays and goes on praying, he will be saved. Only the fear is that if he has wilfully gone against his vocation when his confessor has told him he has got one, he will give up prayer and not try to save his soul. We must remember, too, that St Alphonsus is not speaking of a man who has tried to be a Religious, and failed

because he never had a vocation, but only fancied he might have had one. This man will have merit for having tried ; and God will be with him."

*To a Religious.*

"STONE, Jan. 30, 1901.

"About Esser,<sup>1</sup> I agree with you, and it made me feel the same, and try to make the Rosary more of a prayer. I also thoroughly agree with what he says about slowness, but then I am a regular old slow-coach about everything. For myself, I would rather say one mystery deliberately than fifteen gabbled. I suppose public prayers must go pretty quick ; any way, they do.

"If the novice mistress approves, Esser would be good for the novices. . . .

"As for what you say . . . it is the plainest possible temptation of the devil.

"Did you expect to keep your resolution? Had you not enough knowledge of human nature and of self to know that you would not? What you meant was, 'I will try to do this.' 'I will constantly renew it after every failure.' It is the constant trying that God approves, and the constant failure is so good to teach me HUMILITY, to know my absolute weakness, instability, and nothingness. When you know, and *love* this, and *rejoice* at it, then God can give you the victory : perhaps twenty minutes before you die.

"How good and excellent a thing it is to feel quite useless, like an old boiled rag, and to know ourselves.

"'Something'—that is the devil—'keeps telling me that I shall not persevere.' Answer the something : 'Certainly not, I shall not, for I can do nothing, but God will keep me.' *Dominus custodit parvulos*, in the *Dilexi*.<sup>2</sup> I am a *parvula*. therefore the Lord will make me persevere. Here I am, O Lord ; do with me, etc.

"If I am not to persevere, I will at least love Thee *now*.

"If I am to go out of my mind I will love Thee while I am in it.

"There is no sign that you are likely to go out of your mind. But if you really thought the 'Something' was God or your angel, and not wounded self-love, that would be a sign.

"Believe me, that feeling of being no use is nothing what-

<sup>1</sup> The author of a German treatise on the Rosary.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxiv.

ever but wounded pride and self-love. If you did not do your work, someone else must. Why should not others say the same? No one is necessary, but all can do what they are told.

“Why should not I feel the same? I cannot fill any office. I must do something, so I have to give missions and retreats, as I am fit for nothing else. Would you advise me to listen to the devil, and go off in a huff?

“Why do you bother your head whether you are of use or not? You came not to be of use, but to do as you are told, to do God’s will. What use is Sister M——?”

“I comfort myself by this: ‘I have made, O Lord, *one* vow, and one only:—That I will be obedient until death.’

“Let us keep that and not wonder at our imperfections. So cheer up. Your liver must be out of order!

“Yours ever,

“F. B. W., O.P.”

Another letter to his correspondent \* bears the heading:—

*“Advice to one who said that God appeared to act in a harsh and strange manner towards him.*

“STONE, Jan. 31.

“God leaves us free will, and does not interfere with it. Although the event of which you speak has caused you suffering, if you submit to God and try your best to serve Him, He will, according to His promise, make it all in the end to work together for your true and ultimate good (Romans viii.). This is absolutely certain.

“We cannot understand God’s action here in our dark and blind state, and many things He is pleased to do, and to allow, we cannot explain or comprehend; but we know that He is infinite in wisdom, power, and love, and therefore we are sure that He has some wise, holy, and loving reason for what we do not understand and cannot explain, and we must *adore* and practise complete resignation and abandonment to Him. We should remember our Lord’s words to St Peter (St John xiii. 7), ‘What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.’

“We should say when we are tempted to criticise God, which it is presumptuous to do: ‘I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are righteous; and that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me’ (Psalm cxviii. 75). And ‘Thou art just, O Lord;

and Thy judgment is right' (Psalm cxviii. 137). 'Here I am, O Lord, do with me whatever thou wilt; only give me Thy love.' 'I thank Thee for doing Thy own will in Thy own way, because it is Thy will.' Job teaches us this. And more than Job or any saint, our Lord Himself teaches it by word and example."

"Of course God knows all, past, present, and future, as all is present to Him. If you now desire to please Him and do His will, He will overrule all for good."

*To his Brother-in-law.*

"THE CONVENT,  
"STONE, Feb. 5th, 1901.

"On Sunday came the book you so kindly ordered for me as a Christmas present from you all. Most hearty thanks: it is interesting and very useful, not only to me, but to those at Hawkesyard when I return. It is far wiser to ask what will be useful than to give at random. A lady sent me a very pretty office book which is utterly useless, as it is the Roman Rite. That Boer priest at Lourdes,<sup>1</sup> who took mine, never sent it back, though it had not only my name but also my full address. His, useless to me, is at Hawkesyard.

"My pleasant quiet life here ends next Monday, on which day I am to return home to Hawkesyard. . . .

"Every Catholic should begin now to agitate, and move public opinion against the monstrous coronation oath. As it stands, it is a gross insult to every one of the loyal Catholic millions of the king's empire. He is not called on to insult any other class of his subjects. It is a relic of the old persecuting days, that ought to be abolished.

"When the queen took it more than sixty years ago, things were very different, and she, being a child, could know nothing of the real significance of the blasphemous and insulting words she was uttering. I hope Edward VII., who is sixty, and has often been present at Mass, will put his foot down and refuse to take such a diabolical oath. I am thinking of writing to Basil, and asking him to talk to the speaker, whose grandfather was a Catholic, and to other M.P.'s about it, so as to help to get up an agitation, and to show men of station and influence what Catholics feel. . . .

"I am grieved to see from the letter that you are suffering. God's will must be best, but it is a very heavy cross,

<sup>1</sup> Father Wilberforce went to Lourdes in the summer of 1899, but no account of his visit is to be found.

especially for a man of your active disposition. But I know you will thank God for doing His own will, in His own way, because it is His will. By this way of the Cross, He has decreed to bring you to Himself. I shall pray for you every day and in every Mass. In 2001, how glad you will be for having led this suffering life.

“With love to all,

“Your affectionate Brother,

“B. W., O.P.”

*To a Religious.*

“CONVENT,  
“STONE, Feb. 5, 1901.

“The change of air, I hope, agrees with you, and that you are serving the Lord with joy. Pray do not fidget about work or anything else, but abandon all to God, and think only of the present day, every morning resolving to persevere till night.

“‘I am ready,  
And am not troubled,  
To keep Thy commandments.’

“This you say every day.

“What does it matter where we are, or what we do, provided we do God’s will, and unite ourselves to Him?

“God has bestowed a special gift on you for your salvation, in giving you so wise, prudent, large-hearted, and loving a superior. You must thank Him much and always for it, and show your gratitude by following her counsels.

“St Alphonsus says clearly to a nun who had deliberately entered an Order for mere family and earthly motives (by which she sinned), that if *now*, being professed, she will turn to God and do what she can, He will give her the graces of vocation to make her a good Religious. How much more so, *if* you did make a mistake, not wilful.

“The angels are created beings, and therefore imperfect. God only is, and can be absolutely perfect. It is an imperfection to have begun: God only never began. It is an imperfection to have goodness given you: God only has, or rather, *is* goodness of Himself, etc. The angels are perfect in the sense that God, having confirmed them in charity and united them to Himself, cannot sin.

“‘Is it wrong to mind the fact that some companions are not educated and refined?’

“No more than to feel a natural repugnance if one had a cancer in the face. But it should not make you less charitable and kind, but more. How loving our Lord was with the rough, uneducated working men, His apostles. A little trial of that kind must be used as a penance.

“Last Sunday week I preached about the late queen, and spoke of her love of and devotion to duty, rather than frivolous pleasure, a thing we can all imitate her in, whether we are Saxons, Normans, Boers, or Celts.”

A few days after his return to Hawkesyard, Father Bertrand writes to another Religious:—

“HAWKESYARD, *February 14.*

“No one can know in this world, for an absolute certainty, as we know the Holy Trinity, by the certainty of Faith, that he is in a state of grace, unless God revealed it: but we can know by moral certainty. You know only by moral certainty that you live at N——, etc., etc., not by the certainty of Faith. So we can be sure, if we try our best, and exercise Faith, Hope, and Charity, that we are in a state of grace, but with a humble distrust of our own judgment. ‘I am not conscious to myself of anything, but I am not therefore justified; but He that judges me is the Lord.’

“I am fairly well.”

*To a Lady.*

“HAWKESYARD, *Feb. 28th, 1901.*

“May our Lord give you every grace.

“As the desire of prayer is with you, it cannot be really the case that you cannot pray, for the very desire is prayer speaking to God. Prayer is only lifting the mind to God by thinking of Him and speaking to Him by the will in any way. To desire to pray is to tend to Him, which is prayer.

“You cannot desire pleasure from prayer, but you do pray.

“When the leisure moment comes, your mind, or rather the brain, which is the organ of the mind, is tired; tired, remember, by work for God. Then you feel the inability to do what you desire and to give yourself to prayer. God is no more offended at this than you would be if a child felt tired and unable to talk to you, because she had been working so hard for you.

“But still even in the dark you can do something. You

can put your crucifix before you and offer up the Precious Blood, and you can make short acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition. Even without enjoyment.

“Take a verse of a Psalm and repeat it in your mind to God. For instance, lxxxv. 1.

“Even in the dark, misty valley, you can cry out for help : ‘Son of David, have mercy on me.’

“‘Though I should walk through the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.’

“You cannot do better than meditate on the beautiful chapters the Church selects for Lent ; and also on the verses of Psalms for Introit and Tract. I do that and find help.”

*To the Same.*

“ST CHARLES’ RECTORY,

“HULL, *March 18th*, 1901.

“Prayer is to raise the mind and heart, that is, the will to God. We raise the mind to Him by thinking of Him, and the will by desiring His Light and Help, even tho’ no word is said. That is Mental Prayer.

“Study the 85th Psalm. It is an inspired treatise on Prayer. But one needs to think of, and pray about, each clause.

“Verse 11 has two readings. The Latin says, ‘*Rejoice my heart,*’ which is much the same as verse 4: ‘Give joy to the soul of Thy servant, for unto Thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul.’

“It is right to ask for joy, you see. Spiritual joy ; a fruit of the Holy Ghost. It is the joy that makes us rejoice that God’s will is done ; that God is God ; that He is ‘Lord of heaven and earth.’ See St Matt. xi. 25.

“Joy is got by lifting up our souls to God, by thinking of Him and loving Him.

“The Hebrew of verse 11 is ‘Unite my heart’ ; that is, give me an undivided heart ; a will that loveth Thee only. Compare Ecclesiasticus ii. 14.

“The effect of a united heart is to be full of the holy fear of God, not servile fear, but reverential and filial fear, which implies faith, hope, and charity.

“If our hearts are made one, they are full of joy, and at once they break forth in praise.

“‘I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my (united) *whole* heart ; and I will glorify Thy Name *for ever.*’ Always ; not only when things go well ; but in trial and suffering, as

Psalm xxxiii.: 'I will bless the Lord *at all times*; His Praise shall be *always* in my mouth.'

"The 'token for good' is our Lord Himself. What token could we have better that God loves us, than His own Son?"

"Pray for this mission. We are five giving it: three in this church and two in a chapel of ease. Many very good people. Many sheep astray."

This mission at Hull was the first Father Wilberforce had given since his illness. He writes to a friend:—

"On Saturday I got here. On Friday evening I felt like a boiled rag, but the journey did me good, and I feel now much better. This week children only.

"Last night I preached and afterwards gave Benediction. During it a man died in the church, or a few minutes after they got him into the house. One of the curates gave him absolution, and a shortened form of Extreme Unction. It was very sudden and startling. A practical commentary on our Lord's words: 'Be ye also ready.' The man was just my age—sixty-two."

*To a Lady.*

"HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
"RUGELEY, *April 10, 1901.*

"Thanks for your Easter greetings, which I return from my heart.

"My labours at Hull did me good, and I enjoyed the work. Fine large church. I was tired, not overdone. You are always tired, by saving souls; so blessed be you. I am glad that pain has done you good spiritually. I have found the same, and doubtless God means that. He often sends us to bed to give the soul a rest and quiet time to think of Him and speak to Him.

"I am delighted to hear that your soul is drawn to contemplate the Sacred Passion. That is from God. Follow it generously, but quietly. It is the way of Love.

"How natural it is that the cares and preoccupations of mind should come to you during prayer. When they are very pressing I should advise you to pray about them and to recommend them to our Lord; for it does not so much matter, as long as we converse with Him what the subject of the conversation may be.

"How well for us that our loving Father, God, has to choose the time of our death and not we ourselves. The

next world is so unseen, so unimaginable, that we cannot but feel awe when we think of it; but our Lord's Risen Body we can more imagine.

"Wisdom iii. 9 is consoling. Yet after all the Precious Blood is our one and only hope. It is good to realise our own utter weakness. Still what a blessing for you to have spent money and time, in spite of health, in trying to save the little ones of Christ. It will be joyful to meet Him after doing that, and supported by the many little ones to whom you have been a temporal and spiritual mother."

Father Wilberforce appears to have been ill with some kind of an attack in April, for we find him writing to one of his penitents:—

"HAWKESYARD, *April 22, 1901.*

"Your kind sisterly anxiety touched me much. It is worth being unwell to have such affectionate inquiries and such good prayers. This day week I was ill, but this charming weather has put me all right. The sun makes life quite a different matter (Psalm xx. 7). My old septuagenarian doctor brought his nice silky white beard here, and considered the attack came from 'chill on the liver'—a safe verdict, for no one could show it did not. Anyway, whether it came from chill arising from what Eliphaz the Temanite says a wise man ought not to do (see Job xv. 2; revised Protestant version), or from over-eating and drinking, it has now gone, and is one of the past things.

"This week I am going to consult Lloyd Owen, in Birmingham. My right eye seems inclined to strike. On a mission it does not so much matter, but here he is wanted.

"Next Sunday begins the mission at Glasgow. Father Robert Bracey and I, helped by eight Franciscan friars, for confessions. So St Francis and St Dominic ought to do some good.

"The great remedy in 'the time of clouds' is to look steadfastly at our Lord and not at self. This is real humility. The sense of failure is met by humility. 'O Lord, I am a failure, but Thou art not. I thank Thee that I am a failure.'

"'Loneliness' is what you sought when you entered religion. We went into the desert to seek God only.

"I wish you every blessing and joy in God.

"P.S.—I am reading Father Taunton's *History of the Jesuits in England*. Very clever and well written. To me it is a sad book."

A day or two later he writes to the same correspondent :—

“*Ap.* 25.

“I have finished Father Taunton’s book, and I am sorry it was ever written. I cannot understand how it can promote the glory of God or the good of souls. I think all agree (S.J., as well as others) that it was a pity Father Parsons and others mixed in political intrigues instead of working for souls. But having so many to abuse us, we should defend each other.”

A letter to another, bearing the same date, contains some advice on reading for Religious :—

“. . . As to papers, the Rev. Mother asked me whether it was well for you to read them.

“A nun has left the world. The news of the world is nothing to her. Fancy St Antony paying a man regularly to come and retail to him all the gossip of the country! Curiosity is a thing to be mortified. If one sister has regular newspapers, why not all?

“*Moderate* use of them for a purpose, reading particular articles that are instructive and useful, is not to be blamed.<sup>1</sup> But newspaper and magazine reading is not the most appropriate reading for a Religious, and hungry appetite for it is highly injurious. I hardly read papers at all, and I do not miss them. There are far more useful books that I can read, and it is difficult to say what real good has come from papers.

“Recreation is trying; look on it as your rack and gridiron, and go to it not only as obedience, but for others; an act of charity to entertain others.

“Go on quietly each day as it comes. Fight the good fight. ‘Behold I come quickly.’”

To \*. *The meaning of “out of the Church there is no salvation.”*

“ST FRANCIS,  
“GLASGOW, *May 1, 1901.*

“As I am giving a mission my answer must be short.

“‘Out of the Church no salvation’ is the same as saying that there is no salvation except through Jesus Christ, for

<sup>1</sup> Father Wilberforce used to say that to nuns engaged in teaching or other apostolic work, greater liberty on this head should be allowed, and he often recommended such papers as the *Tablet* to them.

the Church is His body. It means that if a person wilfully and culpably cuts himself off from Christ and the Church which is His body, he commits mortal sin.

"A man who has been baptised as an infant in a sect became a Catholic then (there is only one baptism), and remains a Catholic till by a wilful act of heresy he leaves the Church. So we may hope that many Protestants are members of Christ by baptism, and are out of the body of the Church only by inculpable ignorance. If they die in God's grace by perfect contrition, God can save them.

"How many are saved no one on earth can know: but God knows."

### *To a Religious.*

"HAWKESYARD, *May 17, 1901.*

". . . I am glad you appreciate Dr Sheeben's work. It will do you good. It would be well, I think, if nuns read more theology.

"Though not ill, I was tired in body, mind, and soul at Glasgow. The friary is gloomy; the street poor and populous, and the neighbourhood not nice. The good point was the grand church. The parish immense (some 18,000 souls). Of course the majority never enter the church, but a very large number do.

"I felt very low during the first week, low and depressed in body and soul—in the valley of the shadow of death—but better the second. On Monday the Father Guardian and two others took me 'adown the watter,' in a steamer, through the Kyles of Bute. The perfectly fresh air of mountains and sea revived me.

"On Tuesday we were delayed at Gretna Junction, just on the border, by an accident, not to our train, but a collision of two luggage trains. One engine in the river, and a pile of broken trucks on the line.

"Mrs S—— is not correct about the date of my father's death, nor are you. He died on St George's day, 1873, and he was in the middle of his sixty-sixth year. I said to Mrs S—— that I often thought I should die about the same age, that would be, not this year, but four years hence."

As we know, Father Wilberforce died a few months before these four years were completed.

On the 13th of June, he writes to another Religious from St Benedict's Priory, Colwich:—

“Our great work in this world is to do penance and to heap up merit.

“Our Lord knows all :

“He can do all :

“He wills our greater good :

“Then, why fear ?

“Plan not, nor scheme, but calmly wait :

His choice is best ;

While blind and erring is thy sight,

So trust and rest.

Desire not ; self-love is strong

Within thy breast,

And yet He loves thee better still ;

So let Him do His holy will,

And trust and rest.’<sup>1</sup>

“The detestable French Government is distinguishing itself just now, persecuting all who want to do good and serve God. The longer I live and the more I see, the more thankful I am to God that I am an Englishman.”

*To a Religious.*

“HAWKESYARD, June 27, 1901.

“My remembrance of East Farleigh is very distinct, though childish. A perfect home in the truest sense, before any of the trials of life. My beloved mother brought me up a Catholic in mind. I had not a Protestant idea, and in fact I did not know Christians differed except as good and bad.

“Do not let — upset your mind. Be ‘fast-knit to Christ,’ as Dante in Cary’s translation says our Holy Father St Dominic was :—

“And I speak of him as the labourer,

Whom Christ in His own garden chose to be

His helpmate. Messenger he seemed, and friend ;

Fast-knit to Christ.’

*Paradiso, Canto xii.*

“Do not, for God’s sake, O spouse of Christ, put your peace and joy in anything that can be denied you. Be fast-knit to Christ your Love. Do not let your peace and joy depend on any transient or changeable circumstance ; otherwise your peace and joy will be always variable and not stable and permanent. Rest on our Lord and you will not find your peace and joy restless and rising and falling like a

<sup>1</sup> Adelaide Proctor.

barometer with the weather. 'They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him' (Wisdom iii. 9).

"I do not know who is interested in me now.' Indeed. Is not your holy spouse? Our Lady? St Catherine?

"Obedience is only the practical love of our Lord and humility is truth."

To one of his correspondents Father Bertrand writes in answer to some questions:—

"RUGELEY, *June 24, 1901.*

"(1) Created wisdom I should say is that participation in the Eternal Wisdom (which is God) which is created by God and given to rational created beings. The first gift of the Holy Ghost is created wisdom. This created wisdom is not a person but often personified.

"(2) The reconciliation of the supreme dominion of God and the perfect freedom of man is a mystery as incomprehensible as the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God moves us to every good work, but moves us freely.

"No man can come to ME unless the Father who sent ME draws him,'—but He draws freely.

"How this is, God knows. Whether we shall understand it when we see God, I do not know.

"If a soul is lost, it is against the will of God's good pleasure, but not against His permissive will. Sin is against His will of good pleasure, but He permits it. Why? Because such is His will. We must adore.

"Sin is a mere defect, therefore it does not require God's help, except in the mere physical act.

"(3) No mere natural act can merit supernatural reward.

"The conversion of a soul is always gratuitous; a soul can never claim it as an act of justice because of what it has done; yet living up to good natural principles may make it more likely that God may give a gratuitous favour, that He is not bound in justice to give. People often speak most untheologically, according to nature and not according to faith and grace.

"A tremendous amount of sentimentality and nonsense was talked of the queen. The only thing we can do is to make no judgment one way or another, and to leave her to God. Whether she was in a supernatural state of grace we cannot tell. But we know that mere natural good qualities cannot merit heaven.

"Read and digest Cardinal Newman's Discourse viii.

on 'Nature and Grace,' in the *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*.

"If God has not given such an one the gift of Faith, how could he help it?"

"Was the person baptised? If so, the gift of Faith was given in Baptism. Was it followed? If not, was it the person's fault? God knows, and God only.

"Was the person not baptised? Then, even, God gave the grace to pray, and, if that grace was followed, other graces would be given, and at last union with God.

"What an utterly profound mystery it all is! God, the Infinite, alone can know and judge.

"Cardinal Newman could have put away every light and grace and gone on at Oxford, and all would have said: 'Of course he is saved, he was in invincible or inculpable ignorance!' But he would not have been. By following light he came to the Church.

"(4) When a person is unconscious, there is no meritorious action, because there can be no deliberate human act. In the same way there can be no sin.

"Sometimes unconsciousness is only to external things, then the soul can merit. But often it is entire, and as the soul acts here below by the organs of the body, then there is no deliberate act, good or bad. 'There could be no opposition to the will of God.' No, nor conformity either.

"(5) Our Lord had no inclination to sin or danger of sin in temptation. I suppose He was tried that He might show us how to act in temptation. There was nothing in Him to answer to the temptation; no concupiscence. He did not feel the temptation in the sense of feeling any inclination to sin.

"As to the Blessed Sacrament, it is not presumptuous to desire to know the history of the Dogma and its development. It is too long to enter into.

"If you can, read my Uncle Robert's book on *The Blessed Sacrament*; it explains much. Have you it? Dr Ullathorne testified that it was quite orthodox. Remember that the Church would teach the same even if not one word had been written in the Bible about it. Christ left it in the deposit of Faith with the apostles, and it remains. The definitions gradually develop it, and make it plain and explicit.

"The *Conversations*<sup>1</sup> are very helpful, but quite different from those in the *Spiritual Instruction*."

<sup>1</sup> *The Oratory of the Faithful Soul; or, Conversations with Jesus*, by L. Blossius, Catholic Truth Society.

*To a Lady.*

"A first Communion is very touching: joy mingled with pathos in thinking of the present and the future. We had one at Kidderminster last Sunday.

"Far from a mistake, I think it a very right and just and salutary thing to feel a great rest of soul in the thought of God, One and Three. He is to be our eternal rest.

*"Oculi mei semper ad Dominum.*

"The only mistake would be to refuse to think of the Human Nature of Christ on the plea of being above that, and occupied with the Holy Trinity. But short of that quietistic nonsense, you cannot rest on the thought of the Holy Trinity too much. Father Faber somewhere speaks of this very rest in the Holy Trinity. Where?"

*To a Religious.*

"SIENA CONVENT,  
"DROGHEDA, July 4, 1901.

"You must remember that what your friend (I forget if he was your nephew or cousin) said about the natives of India being 'as good or better' than Catholics, etc., proceeds upon the Pelagian basis, that we gain Heaven, the *super-natural* possession, sight and love of God by our own natural good works.

"But this is false, it is given by grace, 'not of works,' as St Paul says, Eph. ii. 9, 10: 'It is the Gift of God, that no man should glory.'

"How striking is St Paul's teaching in verse 10: 'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus' (created to be a member of His Body) 'for good works, that God prepared before, that we should walk in them.'

"'All our good works,' done in grace, were prepared from eternity in Christ, and we do those prepared for us, not by necessity but freely, which is expressed in the words, 'that we should *walk* in them.'

"Here is the inexplicable mystery of God's absolute dominion and man's freedom.

"But if a heathen by mere natural works could gain heaven, it would be by works and not by a gratuitous gift and favour.

"People often speak inexactly and say, 'Inculpable ignorance will save a man.' No one can be saved by ignor-

ance, but only by faith, hope, and charity, given as a grace. Inculpable ignorance prevents men being lost for the sin of wilful heresy or infidelity. The Pelagian doctrine goes on the principle that all have a right to heaven, unless they do something to forfeit it. This is not the Christian faith. It was freely promised, rejected, and freely given back to the elect who 'were chosen in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world' (Eph. i. 4).

"The question why God gives this favour to one and not to another is answered by St Paul in Romans xi. 33-36.

"As to the heathen, they are in God's hands. He made them; He knows them; He loves them as His creatures; He will do what is right with them.

"When St Antony was troubled about this, God said to him: "Antony, Antony, I am wise enough, good enough, powerful enough to govern the world without you. Save your own soul.' That is to say: 'Mind your own business, and do not instruct Me as to how to rule the world.'

"If a man says: 'That native of India does not deserve punishment,' this proposition is either true or false. If true, we may be certain God will not punish him. If false, God will know what to do. Whether true or false, God has to judge.

"'Judge not, and you shall not be judged.'

"This is a fine big convent and a fervent community, and a very sensible one. The town has five Catholic churches; two very large, with tower and spire. The Dominican church very good with tower; clean, and well kept.

"Pray for the retreat."

*To the Same.*

"SIENA CONVENT,  
"DROGHEDA, July 9, 1901.

"MY DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST,

"On the subject of Grace, I would advise you to read Father Raphael Moss's *Conferences—Oxford Conferences*. They are clear and solid and in no way requiring more knowledge of theology than you possess, being delivered to youths, undergraduates.

"God is incomprehensible. No created mind can comprehend Him, because to comprehend Him a mind must be equal, at least, to Him, and every created mind must be infinitely less than He is—Blessed be His Name.

"How wonderful! Our Lady must see God with the light of glory in a way we cannot conceive, in greatness and abundant clearness, yet what she cannot comprehend is Infinite.

"You cannot measure God. You cannot say our Lady knows and comprehends half God, or three quarters. He is Infinite. Nothing can be added or taken away. Every created mind in heaven He fills, satisfies, contents; but no mind can comprehend Him.

"We shall say much and yet want words. But the sum of our words is, 'He is All' (Ecclesiasticus xliii. 29).

"So we cannot wonder that it is utterly impossible to explain *how* He is absolutely Sovereign and yet man is entirely free; *how* He moves, but moves *freely*; that is, without taking away freedom.

"You must remember that the Thomist system asserts that all who come to the use of reason have sufficient grace to be saved. All *have the grace* to pray, and if they pray, and go on praying, they will have other graces and come to God.

"All Theologians must give the *first* impulse to God, or else the first beginning of man's salvation is from himself, not from God, which is the heresy of Pelagius.

*"Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac.*

"As we must give thanks in all things (1 Thess. ult. 18), so we must thank Him it is so mysterious.

"Ever in Him."

#### *Advice to an Invalid.*

LONGTON, Aug. 29, 1901.

"Your letter this morning was a pleasure, as it showed me that you are now rather better. It has been a serious attack, and you must take the greatest care, and not neglect yourself. Do not venture out before eating until it is quite prudent. Eat as much and as well as you can. Instead of fasting and abstinence, which are very good and useful for robust people, who have too much blood and an excess of animal life, you must take the penance of your illness, and all the pleasant things it obliges you to abstain from. You have too little blood, so you do not need fasting to diminish it more; you have too little animal life, so abstinence to decrease it is not necessary or good. This you must remember *when you are better*.

"God wills, for the present, at least, that you should not be able to go to Holy Communion. So,

“1. Humble yourself, and acknowledge that you are not worthy to go.

“2. Make one, at least, and, if you can, several fervent Spiritual Communions in the day. *Short*, fervent acts of Faith, Humility, Contrition, Desire, Love, and Thanksgiving.

“3. Offer the privation of Holy Communion as a penance for all past sin. It is a most efficacious penance, and will atone for sin. The whole illness, with all its circumstances, is the best possible penance, because it comes direct from God our Lord Himself.

“You need not then regret fasting, abstinence, haircloth, etc., etc., for you have a penance far more pleasing to God, far more atoning for sin, far more meritorious, because it is a penance sent direct from our Lord. So you *know*, and are certain that it is *the* penance He wills and appoints you to do. No other could be half so good. When you spit blood, you are shedding your blood according to His will, in love to Him who shed His blood for you.

“As to confession, you need not be troubled. If you do not feel drawn to go to the priest near you, wait till you return home. Any daily little faults confess lovingly to our Lord, sweet and righteous, and make short, loving acts of sorrow, confidence, and love. Venial sin you need not confess except through devotion. Acts of Contrition blot it out, as also, of course, mortal, but in the case of clear mortal sins the obligation to confess them remains. God preserves you from mortal sin.

“Always direct your thoughts to those truths that will give you confidence, hope, joy, love, thanksgiving, and turn away your mind always from those that would inspire you with fear, sadness, depression. Often say and meditate on the psalms of hope, confidence, thanksgiving; as, for example, Psalms cii., xxii., xxiv., xxvi., etc.

“Your predominant passion is *fear*. So you must do all you can to mortify and act against it. Think continually of the mercy, goodness, sweetness, and loving-kindness of God our Lord. His justice is for those who desire and intend not to serve Him or care about Him. You have—it is His gift to you—a good will. You are weak and defective; who is not? But our Lord is no more *angry* with you for being weak than a mother is angry with her baby, who is learning to walk, for being weak and unstable on its legs.

“Your ill-health and weak state tempt you to depression.

“Thank God that He gave you patience in your illness. He will use it for good to others.

“Don't try to go to Holy Mass till the doctor and nurse think it prudent.

“Don't fidget in the least because you are not drawn to various devotions. The will of God is the great devotion.”

About this time a very appreciative review of the *Spiritual Instruction* appeared in an Anglican paper, which gave Father Wilberforce great pleasure. He entered into correspondence with the reviewer, who in course of time became a Catholic. Father Bertrand writes to a friend on the subject:—

“ST GREGORY'S,  
LONGTON, August 1901.

“Enclosed you will find a very interesting letter from Mr N—, the writer of the notices of Blossius that I sent you. He must be very near the Church, and what a spiritual man he is, and how much he values prayer. He has sent me his little book on *Prayer*. In it he quotes only Catholic writers—St Alphonsus, Blossius, St Augustine, etc. He makes remarks about meditation with which I cordially agree; in fact, though I have not read all yet, I have not seen a word with which I do not entirely agree.

“I cannot guess whether he is a layman or a clergyman. Do pray for him, that he may come into bodily union with the Church, whose spiritual child he evidently already is.

“How curious, too, is what he describes about the men on Caldry Island: how earnest and devoted they must be, and how they put us poor, weak, cowardly men to shame. The grace of God is quite clearly leading these men in His mysterious and secret way, and we must pray for them.”

To Mr N—.

“LONGTON, Aug. 30, 1901.

“I cannot tell you how deeply your letter interested me, and I shall hope for others when you have time.

“Thank you also very much for your delightful and most useful little work on *Prayer*. You have skilfully put together the teachings of such men as St Alphonsus, Blossius, etc., and presented them in an easy simple way for beginners. I have not read all, but I intend to do so carefully, and it will do me good; for I am still, alas! a beginner among the beginners. Though old in years, in spirit only an infant. But the saints tell us we ought to begin every day anew, till the day of Eternal Life comes. May we meet there.

“You did my little Catholic Truth Society book honour by using it, and I thank you for so doing. I wrote it years ago, when I began to find out that many had the false idea that they must meditate all, or nearly all the time, and so I wanted to point out that meditation is only a means to help the soul to pray. The old name, ‘Mental Prayer,’ is so much better than the word ‘Meditation,’ which is a subordinate part of the exercise. It amuses me sometimes, when good simple souls say: ‘I can’t meditate, so I am obliged to pray!’

“One good soul said to me: ‘It’s no use, Father, I can’t meditate, and so I read instead; but if only I might be allowed to *pray* during that time, I should do very well.’

“‘Then why do you not?’ I answered. ‘Do you mean that I may pray during meditation time? In that case it is quite easy!’

“This kind of misunderstanding of the Ignatian plan made me write that little 1d. tract, which I hope may have helped someone. To help a soul towards God is the greatest joy of this life—the greatest honour—worth all gold and precious stones.

“Have you read the two chapters on ‘Mental Prayer,’ in the book called *The True Spouse of Christ*, by dear St Alphonsus Liguori, the Doctor of Prayer? You would enjoy them. It is a beautiful book, though badly translated. If you can read Italian, get it in that language, the original. These two chapters were most helpful to me years ago.

“Have you read *The Way of Perfection*, by St Teresa? It is a wonderful book.

“I quite agree with you about ‘half an hour’s meditation, with six minutes’ prayer.’<sup>1</sup> The longer a soul practises prayer, the shorter will the exercise of memory and intellect become, and the more immediate the prayer. ‘In my meditation a fire burst forth.’

“Your description of the men who have retired to Caldry Island is most interesting, and I shall pray for them constantly. Are they laymen? May God’s grace lead them to Him! Most earnestly do I hope they will get into union with the superior-general of the Trappists: but you know, of course, the preliminary step necessary for that. Do let me hear more of them.”

The little book on Mental Prayer, here referred to, came

<sup>1</sup> Father Wilberforce’s correspondent tells us: “It was in a Catholic book that I had found the direction that a half-hour’s meditation should contain ‘at least’ six minutes of prayer: colloquies; and, fresh from the teaching of Father Bertrand’s book, it shocked me.”

out in 1884, and has been in circulation ever since. It has been aptly described by a layman as "worth its weight, not in gold, but in bank-notes." Probably it would be difficult to number the souls, in and out of the cloister, whom this little book has helped to draw near to God, and to unite themselves to Him in that intimate converse, which, as Father Wilberforce says, alone constitutes real prayer.

To \*.

"HAWKESYARD,  
"Sept. 7, 1901.

"(1) 'Can the will be almost or quite annihilated by excessive and prolonged grievous sin?'

"It is possible that long habits of evil may weaken both intellect and will. We see this in drunkards. The habit gets so strong as to be a kind of mania, and they are almost like mad people, with no control over themselves. Yet if they pray, God will give them strength.

"(2) 'Is it possible that the will resides in the brain, or in the grey matter of its cortex?'

"The will does not reside in the brain, but in the soul. But in this mortal life the soul acts by the brain.

"(3) 'Can the most wicked person in the world repent even up to the last conscious moment of his life?'

"God wills all to be saved (1 Timothy ii. 4). Therefore He will turn to *all*, however wicked, in this life, who turn to Him and pray. Blossius, a great spiritual author, relates that a certain friend of God said: 'Even if I had lived for the space of forty years in sins, and now the hour of my death had come, if I had sincerely confessed my sins, if I could with perfect love from the depth of my heart, even for the space of one Hail Mary, turn myself to God and betake myself to Him, in order that I might turn utterly away from sin and entirely to God, then I might go from this world as a pure and innocent man.' This would be a tremendous grace, but prayer is powerful. The fact that a man turns to God and prays, shows that God has not given him up.

"(4) 'Can we put absolute trust in the alleged promises of our Lord to blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque?'

"The promises made to sister M. Alacoque are not of faith, like those of the Gospel. But we can trust in our loving Lord to fulfil them, if we love Him and try to do His will. Certainly you can try the effect of a novena to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, for health of body as well as

soul, leaving all to the will of God. God can do all He pleases, and can and will cure you if He sees it better.

"No one can give you God's reasons for doing or not doing things, except His will, which we must ever adore and bless and praise, feeling sure that if we love Him He will overrule it all for good.

"God bless you. Love God's will and trust in Him."

*To a Religious.*

"HAWKESYARD,  
"Nov. 14, 1901.

"In three weeks or so, I hope my book, *A devout Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, will be out. I hope you will like it. It will not be dear, and it is well got up.

"I hope you are making more consistent efforts to unite your will with God. We must practise that as fervently as we can before death comes, that it may then have all the ease of a long confirmed habit. We may be so weak then as not to be able to do much.

"As to confession, be open, sincere, and candid as the light with your confessor, and say simply and straightforwardly just what you have consented to.

"If you have been wilfully unfaithful in your heart to your vocation, say, 'I accuse myself so many times of being deliberately unfaithful to my vocation in my heart, and ungrateful to God.'

"Often meditate carefully and fervently on death, judgment, hell, and heaven. Think how short is the time you have to live, how strict and terrible is the judgment, and how awful hell is, and how desirable is heaven for ever. 'To serve God is to reign.'

"Yes, I do think it quite possible for you to grow holy with God's grace, by the means of prayer and self-denial. Give yourself at once, entirely and for ever, to God, and you will never regret it in this world or the next, and try to begin to thank Him instead of grumbling in your own soul."

Father Wilberforce had promised to write an Introduction to the *Life of St Catherine de Ricci*, which Miss Capes was then writing; a promise he fulfilled, though the book was not published till after his death. Writing to her on the 8th of October, he says:—

"I have left you unanswered for a long time, having been away giving a retreat.

"The diffidence I feel [about writing the Introduction] comes from knowing how very elementary and superficial is my knowledge on the subject. *On Christian Mysticism*, I think would be the best title.

". . . Huysman's book about Saint Lidwina I have not seen. I looked through his *En route*, and thought it a most ill-judged, and in some parts, disgusting book. A convert should confess to God in the Sacrament of Penance, and then go into the desert apart and weep over his sins, instead of writing novels about them. St Mary of Egypt did the former."

A letter to a Religious with an explanation of Romans v. 4, and on the effects of venial sin, is dated :—

"HAWKESYARD, Nov. 16, 1901.

"MY DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST,

"I do not think I answered your letter of October 11. I was glad to hear that the retreat had enlightened, strengthened, and refreshed you. That is what we all need: to be put *in locum refrigerii lucis et pacis*.

"Isaias xli. 8-14 contains most encouraging words, and as they struck you, often go back to them.

"I am most thankful that the *Commentary*<sup>1</sup> has been a help; it encourages me to hope that others will find it so also, and that it may help souls. I trust it may. That is my hope; and though lower in the scale, I do not want the publisher to be out of pocket! An old Protestant arch-deacon wrote a book on the prophets; he was a dry old stick, but he had some quiet humour, for he said: 'Where the *effect* of my work may be, I do not know, but the whole *impression* is in Longman's shop!' I trust I shall not have to make the same dismal joke! I hope to send you a copy in a few days.

"Now for Romans v. 4.

"'Patience worketh trial.'

"The Revised Version has: 'Patience worketh probation:.' *Patientia autem probationem.*

"The Protestant Authorised has: 'Patience worketh experience.'

"In verse 2, the apostle says that he 'glories,' or rejoices, 'in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.' The Anglican and Revised leave out the words, 'of the sons,' and the Greek

<sup>1</sup> *Devout Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, the proofs of which had been lent to his correspondent.

has not got them, but only, 'we glory in the hope of the glory of God.'

"Then verse 3 shows the vehemence of his hope. For when a man hopes for a thing very strongly, he willingly bears bitter and difficult things, in order to gain it: as, for example, a sick man, hoping for health, will go through an operation that he may obtain it.

"The sign, therefore, of strong hope in Christ is that we glory, not only in the future reward, but also in the sufferings we bear for Him.

"*Not only so;*' that is, not only do we glory at the thought of heaven, but also in our tribulations, through which we get to heaven. Look at Acts xix. 21.<sup>1</sup>

"The reason for this glory, and for counting tribulations to be 'all joy' (St James i. 1) is threefold:—

"1st. 'Tribulation worketh patience.' Not that tribulation is the *cause* of patience, but the *occasion* of exercising it.

"2nd. The apostle lays down the effect of patience. 'Patience worketh probation,' or proof. 'For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation' (Ecclus. ii. 5).

"It is clear, as I said, that we suffer the loss of a thing easily, on account of another thing that we love more. If, then, a man suffers willingly the loss of visible and temporal things, for the sake of eternal and invisible things, which he enjoys now only in hope, it is clearly *proved* (*probatio*) that he loves eternal more than passing things.

"But, we may object, is not James i. 3 inconsistent, where it is said, 'The trying of your faith worketh patience'?

"In answer, we must remember that *probatio* (proving, testing) has two meanings. We may look at it, first, in the man proved or tried, and then the probation is the very tribulation by which the man is tried. Thence it is the same to say, 'Tribulation worketh patience,' as to say, 'Tribulation proves patience.'

"In another way of looking at it, probation is understood as meaning '*to have been proved*, or tried. Thus, when it is said, 'Patience worketh probation,' it means that from the fact that a man is patient in tribulation, he is put into the state of one proved, of one tested.

"3rd. Having been proved (by a trial that needed patience) 'worketh hope,' because, by having stood the test,

<sup>1</sup> "Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God."

a man can have hope, and others hope for him, of admission into the inheritance of God. See Wisdom iii. 5.

“So it is evident that tribulation prepares the way for hope. Whence, if anyone should glory in hope, he should also glory in tribulations.

“‘Does Venial Sin lessen Charity?’—that is, habitual or sanctifying grace? No. If that were the case venial sin might take away charity, which it does not do. Suppose a man in ten degrees of charity. If each venial sin took away one degree, ten venial sins would take away all, and the last venial sin would leave him without charity—in mortal sin. Venial sin impedes actual grace. Charity is in the essence of the soul; actual grace in the intellect and will; venial sin darkens the intellect and weakens the will.”

*To an Invalid.*

“STONE, *Nov.* 21, 1901.

“Pray do not worry yourself about anything anybody may say. It is not worth a moment's notice.

“God knows all, and if some silly person thinks you are not so ill as you really are, how can it hurt you.

“‘Let not your *heart* be troubled,’ our Lord says to us (St John xiv.). You cannot help trouble on the surface of the spirit, and our Lord allowed trouble to come to Him, though He never allowed it to distrust the higher part of His soul. So we must do, uniting our wills absolutely to His.

“If a woman in health thinks there is a special providence over those going to Mass, let her have her opinion, and go: you use your judgment, and go when it is prudent, and hear Mass in spirit on other days.

“The great thing is to try and increase in familiar loving intercourse with our Lord, about all little and big troubles and anxieties and fears, as well as joys, etc., and cultivate much the spirit of thanksgiving.

“To-day I go to Melton Mowbray, to give a week's mission. Pray for it.”

*To a Lady.*

“HAWKESYARD, *Nov.* 16, 1901.

“What weak mortals we are! In prayer we feel ready to be martyrs, and five minutes after we grumble at a slight suffering. We say ‘Thy will be done,’ and then murmur when it is done. When you see a fault, ask pardon *cheerfully* and

go on ; take care not to be miserable about it or upset ; for that shows a want of humility, often worse than the fault itself. If you do not tire of asking pardon, God will never tire of giving it.

“ . . . The fact is the less we talk of ourselves the better—it is difficult to talk of self without sin—self-satisfaction, self-love in various forms.

“ I quite agree with you that if we try to serve and love God, every day is happy, though the mere high spirits of childhood go, as do the gambols of a kitten or a pup.”

*To a Religious.*

“ CATHOLIC CHURCH,  
“ MELTON MOWBRAY, *December 1, 1901.*

“ As to the difficulty :—

“ On the words of St John xiv. 1, St Thomas writes : ‘ How could our Lord command them not to let their hearts be troubled, when He said of Himself’ (xii. 27), ‘ Now is my soul troubled ’ ? He always did what He commanded’ (Acts i. 1).

“ The contradiction is only apparent. For He was troubled in spirit, but His heart was not troubled ; and here He does not command His disciples not to be troubled in *spirit* but not to let their *hearts* be troubled. For there is a kind of trouble proceeding from the spirit, *i.e.*, from the reason, which is praiseworthy and is not prohibited by Him (2 Cor. vii. 10).

“ But another kind of sorrow or sadness is the disturbance of the reason itself. This is not praiseworthy, because it leads away from that right reason that ought always to rule and guide us, and this is forbidden. See Psalm xxxvi. 24 : ‘ The righteous man when he falleth shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His hand under Him.’

“ ‘ For he cannot be disturbed or troubled that always hath GOD.’

“ St Thomas’s reading is, ‘ The Righteous shall not be disturbed, for the Lord putteth His hand under him :’ *Justus non conturbabitur Quia Dominus supponit manum suam.*

“ That is, his reason—the higher part of his soul—cannot, though the lower part may. This is what your extract must mean, tho’ it is put in a rather unusual way. Our Lord was not carried away even in the lower sensitive part of His soul ; He allowed sadness and sorrow to come, and to come to a certain degree and no more. His reason was never in any degree assailed ; I do not mean in the way of madness coming

—that is physical—but in the sense of sadness troubling the higher part of His soul.

“We must resist the passion of sadness, etc., so as not to let it trouble and darken the higher reason.”

To \*.

*On the Fire of Hell.*

“STONE, Dec. 10, 1901.

“The Church of England ecclesiastic whom you mention, is heretical on the awful dogma taught by God of the eternal punishment of sin. We cannot comprehend that mystery, but when we see God we shall understand how it is in perfect harmony with mercy, love, and goodness. Here we must believe without understanding.

“It is a matter of no importance to know the nature of the fire of hell, but all important to keep out of it by hating sin, and loving God.

“(2) *The adoration (i.e., veneration) of the Cross.*

“When we adore the Cross we really adore Him who hung on it. As He is God we adore Him with the supreme worship of *latria*; so when we venerate the Cross, the worship is relative, *latria*, which passes to Him. We do not adore the wood, but Him who died on it.”

On the subject of Religious Vows, Father Wilberforce writes to a Religious:—

“STONE, Dec. 10, 1901.

“Dispensation, if complete, does away with all ecclesiastical obligation of simple vows; so that a person is free to possess and use money, to marry, and to live independent of the order they had joined. I should never feel I was the same after taking vows to our Lord and not keeping them.

“God is so great that He can receive us, and does, whenever we turn (by His Grace) to Him.

“‘Dark moments’ come to all; to me often (Eccles. ii. 2). Let nothing prevent you from praying always, for the Reward of the Lord lasts for ever.”

"CATHOLIC CHURCH,  
"CROOM'S HILL, GREENWICH, Dec. 12, 1901.

"The doctrine of St Thomas and all other theologians about the complete blotting out of sins by the Religions Profession as if by a second Baptism is a great and solid consolation. You can be at perfect peace about the past, as if our Lord had revealed to you that all is forgiven, and now all you have to do is to increase day by day in His Love.

"Whatever has been the past, God looks at the present and will receive you and draw you to His Heart and accept your vows."

*To Miss M——, an Invalid.*

"STOKE ON TRENT, *Christmas Eve, 1901.*

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"S. A. C. tells me you are suffering much just now, and I want to tell you how deeply I feel for you.

"God has been pleased in His wonderful and inscrutable Providence to give you a suffering life, which is the hard and bitter but most safe way into Heaven. It is the way our Blessed Redeemer who was born to-day went Himself, and He has given you the privilege to walk in His footsteps.

"You must remember what He said to St Peter (John xiii. 7): 'What I do you know not *now*, but you will know hereafter.' All you have to do is to offer yourself to Him: 'Here I am, O Lord, do with me whatever Thou wilt; only give me Thy Holy Love.'

"I shall pray for you on Christmas day at Mass, as well as always.

"May the Holy Mother watch over you, and the Holy Infant give you every grace.

"I remain,

"Yours affectionately in Christ,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

## CHAPTER XV

1902

THE year 1902 seems to have been a comparatively quiet one for Father Wilberforce. The majority of his letters are dated from Hawkesyard, and his superiors spared him as much as possible the very heavy missions, for which he had now become quite unfit, giving him in preference the preaching of retreats to convents. There was one hard mission at Workington and one at Greenwich, where Father Bertrand broke down. He fell into a sort of coma, and for a day or two could not be roused; but according to his usual custom, he makes very light of the whole thing in his correspondence.

Some letters of direction, written in January to different persons, from which we give extracts, are all dated from the convent, Stone.

“Jan. 10, 1902.

“To *feel* like a stone, when you desire to feel like a burning fire, is not a sin, but a mortification. It is not a sin to *feel* cold when there is a frost, though you would prefer to feel warm.

“Pain is a valuable gift of God, and every minute of it, borne with patience and resignation of will to God, will heap up treasure and high honour for ever.”

“Jan. 13.

“Certainly no one deserves ‘Well done, good and faithful servant,’ as salvation is a gratuitous favour of God’s goodness, through Jesus Christ. What we all deserve is hell: what God’s mercy gives us is Himself.”

*Undated.*

“It would be very much better and wiser if, when you are vexed, and things go contrary, you would learn to say one of the Advent Antiphons, beginning with a great O. For instance: *O Radix Jesse; O Emmanuel, Rex et Legifer*

*noster*, etc., instead of saying, ‘Oh dear me!’ ‘Oh, how tiresome!’ etc. If people would only do this they would find their troubles grow very much less.

“If, through frailty of human nature, anyone says what she had better not say, it is a pity, and very likely she is sorry as soon as the words have passed her lips; but the one who repeats the unwise remark, and most probably exaggerates it, deserves to have her ears boxed by her superior.”

“Jan. 28.

“The imagination must be restrained by interior mortification. It can represent all the nice parts of a life, such as you describe, leaving out all the trials.

“The one question is, not ‘would it be nice?’ but ‘is it God’s will for me?’

“If you are trying to put the distraction away, it is not sinful, even though you cannot succeed. There is the double self, the lower part attracted by earthly things, and the higher enlightened and helped by grace.

“Do you read Church History? *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, by Silvester Hunter, S.J., would be very good for you. Fiction, if ever useful, is useful only as dessert; not as solid food.”

*On Perfect Docility.*

“Jan. 30, 1902.

“We see an example of ‘Perfect Docility’ to meditate upon in Simeon, next Friday. The Holy Ghost tells us he was what all of us should be: (a) just; (b) devout; (c) waiting for the consolation of Israel. (a) *Just*: he was in grace—loving God more than himself; God’s will more than his own. What more just? (b) *Devout*: prompt to do God’s will directly he sees it, whether it pleased his taste and self-love or not. That is what is meant, says St Thomas, by devout. (c) *Waiting*: full of hope and anxious for one thing, the Coming of Christ, yet ready to wait as long as God pleased—not impatient—for the consolation of Israel. Jesus Christ is the only consolation of our souls—the more we *know* Him, and love Him in Himself and in others, who are His members, the more we have true consolation. (d) The Holy Ghost was in Him. So He is in us, if we are in grace: ‘You are the temples of the Holy Ghost.’ And he came—in the *Spirit*—into the Temple. How? By force? Carried in as a dry leaf by the wind? No—freely—the Spirit moved him—but freely. He could have resisted, but he had the grace of

'Perfect Docility'; he was docile in will to the Holy Spirit and allowed himself to be guided. And his reward was that he came into the Temple, just as our Lady had carried the Holy Infant into it. He had been promised he should see the Christ of the Lord. But these promises are generally conditional: 'if you persevere in obedience to the Holy Ghost.' Very likely the devil tempted him that morning not to go—to stay in bed—but he had the habit of obeying the leading voice of the Holy Ghost in the secret centre of his soul—so he went and *found the Lord*. We must do the same, and at death our eyes will see Him, who is the light of the world and the glory of His people."

To the same correspondent Father Wilberforce writes from Workington:—

"Feb. 9, 1902.

"When ill, the chief daily duty is to be patient and cheerful and thankful. Your resolutions seem to me very good and practical. I know so well, alas! too well, what you mean. It is so easy to look forward in imagination to great trials, to be very patient, and five minutes afterwards to be very cross, in a small trial.

"St Paul seems to me to recommend us all to have 'rose-coloured spectacles,' for instance, Philip. ii. 3. But he never tells us to be sarcastic and cynical, and noticing the faults of others.

"I should advise you not to read G. Sands, for I do not believe you would be one bit nearer God by reading it. Why go to the trouble of taking a lot of ideas into the mind, filtered through G. Sands' mind and imagination, and then have to cast them out again? The same about G. Egerton. Neither you nor I care what he thinks, and what is the use of assimilating his ideas? How much better to read things written by the friends of God, that will fill the soul as with marrow and fatness. 'Let my soul be filled with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips' (Ps. lxii. 6). Instead of fasting, say two psalms, and three when they are very short. Pray for the mission here, a trying one."

*To a Lady.*

"HAWKESYARD, Feb. 27, 1902.

"Next Sunday I am to begin at Greenwich. During the winter you must content yourself with Spiritual Communion, which we can make, not only every day, but every hour.

"As you are so much alone, some light reading is not only licit, but quite advisable.

"As you say, life is very hard in countless ways for single ladies of small means. It is a great penance. So, as it must be endured, make it supernatural and meritorious, by uniting it to the poverty of our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

"To lead a quiet, humble, peaceable, interior life of personal love with our Lord, not caring what other people do, think, or say, is the only way of happiness.

"The great problem of suffering and moral evil we must leave to God. When it presses much on the mind, the best way is to say to God: 'I thank Thee, O God, for doing Thy own will, in Thy own way, because it is Thy will. Here I am, do with me whatever Thou wilt; only give me Thy Love.'

"When we see God we shall understand all He wills us to understand. The only peace is in entire submission to His most holy but incomprehensible will (Rom. ii. 34).

"We cannot explain the inexplicable, or comprehend the incomprehensible, but our personal, interior experience tells us that God has always been wonderfully kind and courteous to us."

Father Wilberforce, as we have said, was unable to finish the mission at Greenwich, and as soon as he could travel, returned to Hawkesyard, whence he wrote to a friend:—

*"March 11.*

"Do not be alarmed. The 'rest-cure' has done me great good, and I shall soon be all right, if such be our loving Father's adorable will. In truth, whether I get stronger or weaker, it will be all right (Rom. viii. 28).

"At Greenwich everybody was so kind and sympathetic. How grateful I ought to be for such charity! The parish priest could not have been kinder. It must be trying to have a man come to work, and get ill and require attention instead. Yet not by one word, or look, or hint was this shown. My own brother could not have been kinder.

"If I had had more fortitude and self-sacrifice, I should be still working at Greenwich, but superiors thought I had better give in from precaution (lest the last state of that man might be worse than the first); so I hope I did right, and must say, 2 Thess. iii. 5. I expect you have heard exaggerated reports."

To his sister he writes :—

“April 1.

“MY DEAREST,

“I was overtired and had neglected the diet, and on the first Monday of the mission a chill came in my ears and the head felt disabled. Father Albert was with me, and by Thursday it was thought better I should give up, and Father Prior of London came to help Father Albert.

“Now I am keeping the diet rigidly, and am far better and stronger. I see it is absolutely necessary if I am to work, and Father Provincial says I must look on it as my form of fasting and abstinence. Since March 3rd I have not eaten any bread, nor taken wine, and avoided other things.

“I see no prospect at present of a visit to Woodchester. The next event is the chapter at Hawkesyard.

“I am very glad you like the Ephesians. It does not seem to me a book for the refectory. It is more for quiet study, referring to the texts quoted, and meditating on St Paul's words and ideas. They expand so much if the mind dwells on them and prays on them. What knowledge and love St Paul had for our Lord! No wonder, as he not only saw Him several times, but was rapt to the *third* heaven, which St Thomas says means that he had the same illumination that the third and highest hierarchy of the angels have.

“What you feel the lack of and I also, is the feeling in the sensitive part of the soul of personal love to our Lord. That would be most intensely delightful, far the greatest pleasure we could possibly have. But happily, as St Francis de Sales is always pointing out, it is not necessary, and our Lord sees it is better for us to be without it. That is our penance, and we must accept it. Read and digest the 19th, 20th, and 22nd chapters of his *Practical Piety*.

“When you say for yourself and me, ‘How I wish I could *realise* our Lord's love for me,’ etc., you are expressing what we all feel as a trial, having to walk by faith instead of by sight. With St Thomas we want to *see*, and our Lord's words show us His will, ‘Blessed are they that have *not* seen.’ We do not ask, it is true, to see with our bodily eyes, but with our mental eyes, the eyes of the mind and soul, but our Lord does not will that, but that we should walk by faith. This is trying, and we are always apt to kick against the pricks.

“You do love Him. You are dedicated to Him, sacrificed to Him, and every day you say . . . *Tuus sum Ego, salvum me fac: Quoniam justificationes Tuas*—that is, Thy will,

which makes me holy—*exquisivi* and *Servus Tuus sum Ego. Da mihi intellectum*, etc.

“Nothing possible on earth could give you such joy and happiness as to know that to-morrow for two minutes you would see His Face. Why? Because you love Him. We want to see those we love. Only, that not being able to see Him, you do not *feel* you love Him. This is the cross. It is the trial of faith and must last till death. Then when we see Him and He says, ‘Peace be to you: Fear not. It is I,’ we shall feel we love Him. Faith will change into sight for ever. But till then we must walk by Faith: but if we walk even through the shadow of death, we need fear no evil, for He is there with us to lead us by the hand. To your will our Lord is a living reality: it is only to your sensitive and lower nature that He is not.

“‘Thy wounds as Thomas saw I do not see,  
Yet Thee confess my Lord and God to be.  
Jesu! whom for the present veiled I see,  
What I so thirst for, oh, vouchsafe to me;  
That I may see Thy countenance unfolding,  
And may be blest Thy glory in beholding.’

“Does N—— like the Ephesians? It was our grandfather’s favourite, I think.

“Yr ever loving Brother,

“B. W., O.P.”

*To the Same.*

“HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
“RUGELEY, April 15, 1902.

“Our Lord loves our commonplace uninteresting souls, and they are neither, to His Eternal Father who sees them, as members of His well-beloved Son. So we must plod on bravely, ‘in a desert land where there is no way and no water,’ till we at last see Him. Look at Psalm xv. 8, 9, 11. As I have not time to write a long letter, I will send you instead a little work of Blossius that I have just finished, and hope to publish.<sup>1</sup> Don’t you think it would make a nice little 6d. book? Read it and mark amendments on a sheet of paper, and correct in pencil evident slips, words left out, etc.

“Do write to me quite freely: to a brother you can say anything, and why should we not speak of God and our souls, the only interesting topic. All else wearies.

<sup>1</sup> *Short Rule for Beginners in the Spiritual Life.* Art and Book Co.

"The Prior has given me leave to say Mass for you to-morrow."

Art and Book Co. having undertaken to publish the second translation of Blossius, Father Wilberforce writes to a friend :—

"HAWKESYARD, *April 23.*

"I am rejoiced; I had feared they would not undertake it. It looks as if our Lord means it to be published and to encourage souls. I hope so. It is a very helpful treatise. The very title will attract people, I think.

"We had a long list of dead, both friars and sisters, read out at the chapter to-day. I felt that probably my name will be in the list next chapter."<sup>1</sup>

The following letter contains some interesting remarks on Blossius, and explains the distinction between "saints" and "holy men" :—

"HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
"May 1, 1902.

"My ordination day 38 years ago.

"What an old buffer!

"MY DEAR MISS CAPES,

"I have the *Life of St Catherine*, kindly lent by Stone. So ask anything you like.

"Translating *Comfort for the Faint-hearted* has done me much good spiritually, and so I hope and think it will do good to very many souls. What 99 out of every 100 want in religious orders and in the world is encouragement. This Blossius administers as a skilful and learned doctor, and with much discretion.

"His comfort is for men of good will, not to encourage anyone in sloth or carelessness. He always points upwards and urges forward.

"His comfort is a true tonic, and not a mere stimulant bringing reaction.

"He 'enlarges the heart' and this makes us long 'to run in the way of God.'

"I feel most grateful to God for allowing me to translate it, for I am convinced it will help many, and the one thing worth living for is to help souls on to God. That is the grandest ideal we can have. The 38th chapter I am now

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, in May 1906. The Provincial Chapter is held every four years.

at, makes me inclined to shout out at my desk, ‘*Laudate Dominum omnes gentes.*’

“I saw that it was Father Bayonne who called Savonarola and his companions ‘Blessed of the Order.’ They are blessed men but not ‘Blessed of the Order.’ That, and the name ‘Saints,’ especially with a capital S, has a technical meaning. Both imply that the Holy See has enrolled them in the list of ‘Beati,’ or ‘Sancti,’ and has authorised their *public cultus*. This is not the case, and therefore, the words should not be used.

“Call them ‘blessed men’ if you like, they certainly are; and instead of ‘Saints,’ call them ‘holy men,’ or ‘holy men of the Order.’

“No one can object to that. A saint is a holy man; and a holy man is a saint; but all holy men are not ‘Saints’ in the technical sense.

“The difference is twofold:—

“1. When a man has been canonised and declared a saint, we know by the infallible voice that he is in glory.

“With a ‘holy man,’ we only know with human, moral certainty.

“2. A ‘Saint’ can be venerated by public *cultus*, and honour; but a ‘holy man’ only by private *cultus*.

“This distinction will help you thro’ many difficulties. ‘ces Saints chéris du monastère,’ translate ‘These holy men they loved so much in the convent.’ ‘Monastery’ in English, is only used for men.<sup>1</sup>

“The vision can be described as a certain fact. The Church has approved St Catherine’s visions. It was without doubt a certain fact.

“Savonarola and his companions were really saints, but are not ‘Saints.’ As to their being martyrs, they may have been in a certain sense, as being persecuted for righteousness, but not in the technical sense.

“To call them holy (saints) is not *against* the decision of the Church. To call them even ‘Saints,’ would not be against the decision of the Church, for she has never declared they are not; but it would be anticipating the decision of the Church, canonising them on private authority, which is impertinence.

“Certainly God may, and often has, allowed uncanonised people to appear in glory. Why not? Many who were afterwards canonised have so appeared: many who will never

<sup>1</sup> This is no doubt generally true, but is not universal. Benedictine nuns, *e.g.*, prefer having their homes called *monasteries*, and speak of them as such themselves.

be canonised. Many saints, no doubt, who have been afterwards canonised have been to purgatory. The Church does not in canonisation say they went straight to heaven, but that they *were* heroic in virtue, and are now in heaven.

“If the fact of Savonarola’s hearing St Catherine de Ricci’s confession is well authenticated, there is no harm in mentioning it; only a note should explain that he could not absolve (being separated from his body) by his ordinary power as a priest, but by extraordinary power given by God.

“Have you studied the Bull of Canonisation of St Catherine de Ricci? It would be useful, as for everything there mentioned you have complete authority. You would find it in the British Museum, very likely in Bollandists, certainly in the Bullarium Romanum.

“There is no canonisation in likening him to St John the Baptist. Some people think as I do that Savonarola was certainly a saint in the sense of a holy man, but not a Saint technically.

“Whether he was justified in disobeying Alexander VI. depends.

“1. Certainly Alexander’s character could in no way or sense justify disobedience. We do not obey Leo XIII. because he is a good man, but because he is Pope.

“2. There might be more to be said about the validity of his office. He was simoniacally elected, but being received by the Church was real Pope. . . .

“The whole controversy is about facts. Was Savonarola deliberately disobedient?

“If he was he did wrong—that wrong no doubt his death expiated. But that did not prevent disobedience being wrong, and disobedience would prevent canonisation on earth.

“But was he ever deliberately disobedient? He, before his death, declared he never had *intended* to disobey. He certainly did not go to Rome when ordered, but *he* says he was too ill.

“Ask anything else you like.”

To a nephew who had just passed his examination:—

“HAWKESYARD, May 6, 1902.

“MY DEAREST W—,

“I cannot tell you, my dearest boy, how delighted I felt when I received Dad’s card, telling me of your success. It is a very great success, and I feel proud of you, and I thank God for giving you the talents necessary, and for giving you the diligence and earnestness necessary to use

them. In every success (and I hope you will have many in life, if God sees them good for you), we must always remember to give the honour to God, 'without whom we can do nothing' (Acts xii. 23). But you deserve praise for your diligence and application. I am so glad you are not a mere frivolous youngster, caring for nothing but cuffs and collars and cigarettes. . . . There are many specimens about.

"Thank God always for having given you a devoted father, with such true love for you, and make him always your most intimate confidant. Thank God too for your most sweet and gifted mother, who has been watching over you though you can't see her. Thank God too for giving you so wise and loving a second mother, who, I feel with great thanksgiving, has always done for you just what your first mother would have desired.

"If I had got 18th out of 44, I should have considered it excellent. . . . I am sure you must have had the reward of all your labour in seeing your father's joy. God has given him the Cross, as He does to those He most loves, and He has given you, dear boy, to him as his greatest earthly joy.

"With much love, and wishing you a most happy holiday after your work,

"I remain your affectionate uncle,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.

"Are you going anywhere in the holidays? If you could come here for a day, or two or three, it would give me such pleasure; and it is a nice place in summer."

*To his Brother-in-law.*

"ST MARY'S CONVENT,  
"ENGLAND'S LANE, May 26, 1902.

"MY DEAR H—,

"As to the Anglican Orders, there is some difference of opinion. Most, nearly all I think, agree that it is not a decision of Faith in this sense: that to assert that the form used was valid, though the Pope declares it null and void, would not be formal heresy, as it would be to say, for instance, that our Lady was not immaculate. The Pope did not use any form of words to imply that anyone contradicting the decree 'would fall from the Faith.' So it is thought that though he would sin by opposing the Pope, and would assert an erroneous 'temerarious' opinion, it would probably

not amount to formal heresy. This applies to the part of the decree which is dogmatic, a question whether the form presented to the Holy See, as used for a hundred years, could or could not be valid.

"The fact that it *was* used is founded on historical grounds, on purely human evidence, and I do not think the Pope decreed anything about it. It is not called in question by any Anglican that I ever heard of.

"It was admitted that the form was used for a century and then changed, and the question was 'could this form convey orders?' and the Pope declared solemnly that it could not.

"As to the question of fact: 'Was the form used, and for how long?' it might be modified by further evidence and so might be reconsidered; the Dogmatic Decree is made for ever.

"I hope that you are at least not worse. I am better, and if we can afford it, I am going to try a French medicine, that my doctor advises, and that, they say, does wonders for my complaint."

*To a Religious.*

"June 22, 1902.

"It is not wrong to pray for your own death or that of others, provided it be God's will. But we should never try to impose our will on God (*my* will be done on earth, as Thine is done in heaven), and so it is far better, as we never know when it is better we should die, to leave it entirely to the Divine Wisdom.

"I am glad you made that remark about the love of our Lord for us because it shows that you make the common mistake about the love of God, thinking it to be, like mere human love, the movement of the passion of love which our Lord, as Man, has not got, and much less Almighty God. The love of God our Lord is absolutely supernatural and intellectual. Our Lord loves us because God has made us to His image and likeness, because we belong to Him, and the Eternal Father loves us, that is, wishes us well, not only because we are created after His image, but also because we are members of His Church, the Body of His Son, and the fruit of His Blood. There is nothing merely human and the result of passion in God, though we often speak as if there were; *e.g.*, God, repented, God was angry, etc. His love, His mercy, His justice are absolutely the same, and are all Himself. He cannot be, like us, now full of love, now of hate,

now inclined to mercy, now to justice. He is absolutely and eternally unchangeable. So all those expressions are speaking of God in a mere human way; there is a truth in them if rightly understood in an 'eminent way.' When thoughts against God come, adore, and make acts of love, love of preference, that is to prefer God's will to your own.

"Every saint minds suffering, or else it would not be suffering, but biographers cannot tell you the feelings of the saints, and speak only of their higher nature. But Blessed Henry Suso wrote his own life, and so reveals the lower nature also and the struggle."

*To a Religious Superior on Subjects of Meditation for Retreat.*

"HAWKESYARD, June 23, 1902.

"... I think selections from De Ponte would be excellent; his meditations are so suggestive and devout. Those I marked for N—— would be very useful. I know nothing better than De Ponte. His work is indeed a noble one; but he is long, and so, for a retreat, careful selection is necessary. One point, or even less, is enough for one meditation.

"It would be well to spend the first day, if not the first two, on such subjects (the fundamental truths) as God, our Beginning and End; ('I am, and thou art not') how we belong to Him:—

"'I am the Almighty God:  
Walk before Me:  
And be perfect.'

"How to make our actions perfect:—

- "1. His Grace should begin them.
- "2. His Love should be their motive.
- "3. His Will their Rule.
- "4. His Presence the presiding influence.
- "5. His Glory their End.

"I would advise one day of Great Truths.

"*Death*: as a thing mightily to be desired, as the moment in which we shall see Him we love and serve. Conclusion: work whilst thou hast the light; the night cometh when no man can work.

"*Judgment*.

"*Heaven*: as the possession of God—the one thing to be desired. *Unum petii a Domino.*

"Then, our Lord's life, from the Gospels; certain incidents. De Ponte will help here very much, but select the point before the meditation. Especially choose those scenes and events that draw the soul to look at Christ, and not at self; that encourage and don't discourage. One can be the lovely event related by St John in his first chapter; how the two disciples, St John and St Andrew, were with the Baptist, saw our Lord for the first time, in the distance, heard St John the Baptist say: 'Behold,' etc., and went after Him. 'What seek ye? *Rabbi*, where dwellest Thou? Come and see. And they staid with Him. It was about the tenth hour'—4 P.M.

"Our Lord says to us, 'Come and see.' He dwells in the Tabernacle, and also, where we can stay with Him always, in the secret sanctuary of our souls.

"That is an example only.

"The last chapters of St John, from xiii., are full to overflowing with subjects for mental prayer. If you read them slowly, dwelling as long as you can and like, on any word or verse, you will find your soul drawn to prayer and union, very likely, much more than by trying to assimilate the thoughts of De Ponte or anyone else. The thoughts of other men often do not fit; suit the mind no better than the armour of Saul did David; but the words of God, the inspired Word, always adapts itself to every mind. I find this very true.

"For instance, the one word St John uses, i. 1, 'His own.' What a prayer that suggests.

"1. I am one of His own.

"*Tuus sum ego; salvum me fac.*

"How am I 'His own'? Creation, redemption, possession, election, baptism, and the other sacraments, religious profession, etc.

"2. What is implied by being 'His own'?

"3. As 'His own,' He loves *me* to the end—to the last extremity of love.

"As a spiritual reading book, besides the Bible and *Following*, I think you will find Blossius useful: both *Spiritual Instruction* and *Comfort*, of which last, if you like, I can let you have the proofs. Also, as you are superior, St Bonaventure's little book for religious superiors would be very appropriate.

"If I can be of any other help, pray use me. What can we do better than to try to help each other to know our Lord better and to love Him more?

"If it is not presumptuous I think of trying to write a

retreat, to help souls 'of good will.' They so often get hold of books written for souls 'not of good will,' and by applying things meant for these to themselves, get into spiritual consumption or fear of it; just as people reading medical books imagine they have all the diseases described.

"Begging your prayers, and wishing you grace, light, and peace, and the gift of prayer,

"I remain,

"Devotedly yours in our Lord.

"I like so much the short terse way Blossius has, so different from the long-winded verbose way in which many hide the meaning in an ocean or labyrinth of their own verbosity."

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO \*.

[Undated.]

*"Why are prayers for good health, etc., not heard when it appears it would be beneficial to the person to have them granted?"*

"When we ask for temporal things such as health, a situation, etc., we do not know for certain that what we ask is the will of God for us or not. So we must say, 'if it be Thy will.' We may think health, etc., better for us, but God may see the contrary and will it. Then we must submit our wills to Him, sure that He knows better than we know. When we see God He will show us how this is. If we ask for spiritual things, as for example, pardon, contrition, love, salvation, we know that we are asking what is pleasing to God."

*"I have read that St Rose of Lima suffered terrible temptations and darkness of soul and mind, felt no love of God, and feared she was already among the lost. Why did our loving God permit such awful and dangerous suffering in a saint?"*

"The trials of St Rose were allowed by the loving God in order to humble and purify her soul. He helped her to bear them, and crowned her. As a member of Christ, she had to suffer with Him, as a proof of her love, and then to be crowned with Him for ever."

*To a person who had suffered long and wished to be cured.*

"The Lord hath *not yet* healed all your diseases; but if you trust Him He will, either here, if it is for your good, or hereafter in the world to come."

*On the awful dogma of hell.*

"Hell is a great mystery, of course, that we believe without being able to understand in this world. If a person deliberately turns obstinately from God, rejects His love, and refuses to submit, God's love of right and justice is obliged to cast him out. No one is in hell except by his own free choice. And God has suffered and died for each one to prevent him going there. Is not that love?"

*Can faith, once lost, be regained?*

"Faith is a free gift. If the gift be deliberately cast away, God *can* give it again, of course. He is almighty. He could give it a thousand times. We can't tell whether He will or not. I have no doubt that He would if the unhappy person who lost it desired it, and asked for it humbly. He is not bound in justice, but He is infinite in mercy."

*Advice to a person tempted to, or actually in, despair.*

"Look always on the bright and happy side of religion. Forget God's justice, and look on His mercy and love."

Father Wilberforce spent some weeks at the Benedictine Abbey at Oulton in Staffordshire, during the summer of 1902, supplying for the chaplain, Monsignor Schobel. He suffered greatly this year from hay-fever, an ailment to which he had always been subject. But though it weakened him exceedingly, and, to use the words of one of his friends, "he dragged himself about, looking more than ever like a walking corpse," in his own estimation it was a very slight thing; and, compared with his other sufferings, no doubt it was so.

To his sister he writes:—

"OULTON ABBEY,  
"STONE, July 25, 1902.

"MY DEAREST,

"Here is a little book that I hope you will like.<sup>1</sup> Say a prayer to our Holy Father out of it for me.

"It would be nice to have one like it for St Francis, and it would have a wider circulation.

"Next Sunday evening I am to begin a retreat to the Dames here. It is a very quiet, quite country place, just a mile from Stone.

"I saw Sister M—— of St F. de Sales at the Manchester

<sup>1</sup> *Devotions to St Dominic*, which Father Wilberforce had just brought out.

Good Shepherd, where I have just finished a retreat to 209 penitents. She has to instruct the penitents and has funny experiences. She found one woman always said: 'Out on the steps have I cried to Thee,' instead of the 'depths.' No doubt she had often cried 'on the steps,' poor thing.

"Another for 'the King in the court of the blest' used to say 'in His coat of the best.' Another gave 'despair and Extreme Unction' as the sins against hope; and another defined sin as 'a supernatural gift of God.'

"It is a grand work. Most are in for drink, and some innocents to be preserved.

"Ever your most loving,

"B."

Severe as Father Wilberforce was to himself in matters of health, the merciful way in which he dealt with others in time of suffering appears in many of his letters of direction. We have already given several instances of this large-heartedness, and the following letter to a lady who had been ill is another example of the spirit of compassion which was extended to all except himself:—

"OULTON ABBEY,  
"STONE, *August 5, 1902.*

"Now that my retreat here is finished, I have time to attend to letters, in which I have got sadly behind hand.

"No doubt the blank of mind you felt in prayer, and which I now trust has passed away, was in a great measure due to bodily conditions. The mind is so affected by the body, as long as the soul is imprisoned in the body.

"You are quite right then to look back and examine all the reasons you have to thank and to trust in His loving-kindness. This is a safe and admirable practice, and fills us with hope and love.

"Most certainly look after your health in every way that the doctor advises. Whatever theories people may have, this is the advice St Francis de Sales would give you. If for no other reason you should do so for your mother's sake. Give way and take things easily without any fear or scruple, according to the doctor's advice. Do it for God's sake to please Him.

"I hope you are gradually gaining strength."

In a letter to his old friend, Mr Montgomery Carmichael, Father Wilberforce expresses the pleasure he had experienced

in reading the latter's books. *In Tuscany* had been lent to him during his illness at Stone, and it helped to relieve the tedium of many an hour of weariness and pain. He used to say that Canon Bathurst might have stood for the portrait of the Italian canon depicted in one of its chapters. With *John Walshe*, Father Bertrand was simply charmed, and would recommend it to his penitents. His words of praise to the author were by no means empty compliments, but rather, scarcely express as much admiration as did his words, when speaking of the book.

"ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY, SOUTHAMPTON ROAD,  
"LONDON, October 23, 1902.

"MY DEAR MR CARMICHAEL,

"How long it is since we had any kind of communication with each other, and yet you have never been forgotten by me.

"Lately you have been much more before my mind by your books, two of which, *In Tuscany* and the *Life of J. W. Walshe*, I have enjoyed intensely. To have the religious side of Italy is so delightful, and to hear about St Francis from one who loves him as Mr Walshe himself did.

"My one regret about that charming book is to be told it is not a real biography.

"The account sounds so like history that it is almost impossible not to believe it, and it is like reading the life of a saint.

"I congratulate you from my heart on the production of so admirable, instructive, and fascinating a book, so utterly unlike the ordinary run of books.

"Is no part of it founded on fact? Are any of the works written by Mr Walshe to come out with you for their author?

"By-the-bye, lest I forget, ought not 'precepts' on page 154 to be 'counsels'?

"Where can I see some account of 'St Michael of the Saints,' page 158, who I suppose is a reality, but an utter stranger to me?

"Thank you very heartily for the whole book, Catholic to the very marrow; it has done me much good.

"I should so like to see you again and to chat with you about Italy and St Francis. Do not forget to let me know next time you pay England a visit—a thing you sometimes do, I suppose.

"Now I am living in a delightful place, our new house of

studies, Hawkesyard, a most quiet home, suited to Mr Walshe. I am here only to give a retreat.

"Livorno I was once in for a few hours, having arrived dreadfully seasick, in 1860.

"With every good wish,

"I remain yours very sincerely,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

In a note to one of his nieces he says:—

"Nov. 7.

"Your letter was most welcome, as I began to fear that you had forgotten your poor old uncle Bertrand was still on the face of the earth. It is such an age since I heard from you or M——.

"The old bishop (of Plymouth) had plenty of quiet time at the convent to prepare for death, and, I hope, has already got to heaven. But as we never know, it is well to pray for him.

"I am well and able to work a little, though sometimes a little low in body and mind, and a little cross from diabetes.

"Has mother got a copy of *Comfort for the Faint-hearted*? Not that I think her faint-hearted, more than her neighbours, but comfort is often good for all.

"A friend of mine, Miss Olive Parr, has written a most poetical book of stories (in prose) about Dartmoor. It is not to appear this year, but when it does you must get it."

The following short extracts are from various letters of direction to Religious, written about this time:—

"Sept. 10.

"In your prayer keep to St Alphonsus' method. Use a meditation book; the best I know are the Book of Psalms and the four Gospels. Prepare over-night, for three or five minutes, the verse you are going to use in mental prayer, so as not to waste time in the morning.

"If our Lord hides His face, be humble, contented, and resigned, and feel you deserve it (Ps. cxiv. 6). Resist the temptation to read during the time of prayer. That is sloth. It would be better to pray during reading-time.

"*Per Ipsum, cum Ipso, in Ipso*, is not easy, because it is perfection. If you did it perfectly, you would be in heroic sanctity, higher than St Catherine of Siena, who did it very well, but not perfectly."

"Sept. 16.

"There is no command of God or the Church to finish a sacramental penance before going to confession again. You should try to finish it within a month, unless a long one is given you; *e.g.*, for three months. A very short penance had better be done at once, for fear of being forgotten."

"Nov. 4.

"The only thing you can do as a Religious is to say all you feel to your superior (but not to the sisters), and then to act as you are told. What would you say to me if I were to consult you whether I had better live at Hawkesyard or London? I have to live where my superior tells me, and do as I am told.

"Obedience means doing the will of another, rather than my own, and not getting a superior to do *our* will. . . . Courage is certainly necessary, and grace that comes from prayer and loving devotion to the Passion.

"It is not for long; not for long."

"Nov. 5.

"The *Short Rule* of Blossius will, if I mistake not, hit your mark very well, and if you or I follow it we shall go straight to heaven. But how much easier it is to write (and translate) Rules, than to keep them.

"One reason for translating, rather than writing, original books, is that when translating a man like Blossius, I have certainty of doing good. His works are of approved worth, whereas what I wrote might be bosh, or at best third-rate.

"I have had such a cheering letter from Father M'Sorley, a Paulist at the Catholic University of Washington, about the good that *Spiritual Instruction* has done. It was news to me to hear that the *Spectator* had noticed the *Commentary on the Ephesians*. The *Spectator*, of all papers!

"Proverbs xxii. 11: 'He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the King for his friend,' means, that if we want to be pleasing to the King of Heaven, we must cultivate purity or cleanness of heart. With an earthly monarch, a clean heart, a pure loyal heart is shown by words. 'From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'

"Serve God joyfully; try to love our Lord's will very purely, that His daily visit to you may profit you."

In a note referring to himself, Father Wilberforce says :—

“Work and pain are two admirable things to train the soul. I have very little of either. A little inconvenience sometimes, but nothing that can be called pain.

“No work for souls : that seems to have stopped.”

What we can only call Father Bertrand's *greed* for apostolic work must surely have been difficult to satisfy! In the same letter that contains the above remark we read that he had just returned from “a little work at Southampton,” was then in London, whence he was to go to Richmond in Yorkshire, and afterwards to Stone and Stoke. Whilst driving to the station from the London priory he was taken so ill that he was forced to return, but insisted on keeping his appointment in Yorkshire the next day.

*To a Lady staying Abroad.*

“HAWKESYARD, Nov. 7, 1902.

“You see I am again at home, and having given many retreats to others, I am now to begin my own, and then to give one to our own Fathers at Pendleton, Manchester.

“Your description of the lovely sunshine makes me envy you! The sun is the most lovely type of God. In the outward, physical world the sun is what God is to our souls in the spiritual world. It is like the Face of God shining down upon us (Ps. iv. 7).

“When the sun shines the plainest country looks beautiful, when he is clouded nothing is bright. So Ecclesiasticus speaks of ‘the time of clouds,’ chap. ii.

“We are, and have been for months, suffering from absence of sun—constant clouds (he has just, as I wrote, sent out a gleam between clouds). The continual gloomy sky has a depressing effect.

“Your present confessor is certainly quite right. Your chief failing is want of loving confidence in God. This the *Comfort for the Faint-hearted* will help you to cultivate, and to gain it ought to be your one object in the spiritual life.

“The meaning of the frontispiece is, that St Mary Magdalene, as long as she stood looking at the sepulchre, even that of Christ, was cast down, depressed, weeping, and miserable, but was cheered, raised up, happy, and the tears wiped away, directly she turned round and looked at Christ.

“Wherever you are, and whatever happens to you, you

have Him. He is enough for you, and no one can take Him away. This, in one word, is the teaching of Blossius.

"Every depressing and troubling thought is from self, helped by the devil; the voice of our Lord to and in your soul will always encourage you.

"There is nothing discouraging in taking your illness and weakness as a loving punishment for sin and unfaithfulness. If it is, how loving and merciful a chastisement it is. How much more do you and I deserve. I have to take my disease in this way—a merciful penance. But that should only increase, not lessen your loving trust and confidence in our Lord. It is a punishment not of wrath, but of love. If He did not love you, He might give you prosperity, and visit your transgressions in eternity. So, as St Augustine and St Lewis Bertrand used to say: 'Here cut, here burn, here never spare; only spare in eternity.'

"Diabetes depresses me often, and makes me feel fretful; but the only remedy I find is to turn to Jesus Christ, to look at Him, believe in Him, trust Him, hope in Him, love Him, thank Him.—I Cor. i. 30.

"I assure you I often feel I have done nothing with my life for God: nor have I; but after all, O Lord, I belong to Thee. I am a branch of the true Vine, and if by His grace I have borne some fruit, the Eternal Father purifies me, that I may bear *more* fruit. So you also. Abandon yourself lovingly to Christ our Lord, and be at peace.

"Pray for me, please, and write whenever it is any comfort. I am so glad if I can help and encourage you.

"Ever in the Heart of Jesus Christ,

"B. WILBERFORCE, O.P."

A letter to his sister contains some beautiful thoughts on Spiritual Consolation and on Purgatory:—

"HAWKESYARD, *Nov.* 13, 1902.

"MY DEAREST SISTER,

"My retreat is to end next Sunday morning. I have enjoyed it very much, and I am quite sorry it is to end. But on Monday I am to begin another to the Fathers at Pendleton, which will be almost like making one for myself.

"In the free time it will not distract me to write to you, my dearest, whom I love as my only sister and ten times more, in the Lord.

"I have had no book of meditations for the retreat, and find that I have got on far better by taking the words of St

John's Gospel. I find nothing so helpful as the words our Lord said. I would advise you to try that; have the words before you to rivet your attention. It seems to me that God our Lord speaks to the soul through these words.

"I was struck the other day in a new light by the Collect of the Holy Ghost. We might ask, should we pray for consolation? Can we doubt, when Holy Church makes us pray *et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere*? What are we without His *spiritual* consolations? What a garden would be without rain and without sunshine, but only cloud and mist. No rain for the roots, no sunshine for the fruits. What kind of consolation, we can well leave to Him, but spiritual sweetness and spiritual consolation, even if not flowing over on to the senses, are very necessary. We are poor beings without them.

"Do you remember how Father Faber speaks of this in *Growth in Holiness*, chapter on 'Right use of Spiritual Favours'? He quotes St Teresa. It seems to me plain that the Church directs us to ask for them, and to ask that we may always rejoice (joy being a fruit of the Holy Spirit) in His consolation.

"Your word on Purgatory did not quite please me. There is a want of hope in what you say, and when you said it you were looking at yourself and not at our Lord. When I asked if you had seen the *Comfort*, I must have meant, have you had time to read and digest it. There is a good deal said about not having an inordinate fear of Purgatory, and if it prevents a Religious from desiring death in order to see our Lord it must be inordinate. Blessed Henry Suso's letter to a dying man, page 103, teaches this, and chapter xxxiii., part 5, and chapter vii. Have you read Note A on page 173, and do you catch my meaning and the difference between an act of contrition, however remiss, and an act of intense contrition? We must pray continually for intense contrition, which is a gift of God—a really humble and contrite heart—and God will of course give it. Then we shall go straight, or nearly straight to God.

"'Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips' (Psalm xx. 3).

"If we look at ourselves, we certainly have every reason to fear a very long and severe purgatory; but if we look at our Lord and are determined to ask for intense contrition, then we may legitimately hope for a short one, or none. It is certain that our Lord does not want us to go there.

"It is a great thing to look at Purgatory as a very spiritual thing—like the passive purgation of the saints. Fear it as

keeping the soul from God, much more than as suffering to us. Shorten it by humble acceptance. 'Do with me in life and death, in this world and the next, whatever Thou pleasest, O Lord.' Of course if we were so silly (to be proud is always to be silly) as to imagine we did not deserve Purgatory we should be ourselves grievously and horribly mistaken; but to ask for a truly humble and contrite heart, and to trust in the mercy of the Sacred Heart; and thus to believe that we shall not have the long and terrible time of suffering we deserve, must be pleasing to our Lord.

"We cannot trust Him too much, too thoroughly, except when we say 'I don't care. I will do my own will, and I daresay it will be all right somehow'; exactly as many do about mortal sin and hell."

"Sunday.

"Will you notice a passage in which St Gregory<sup>1</sup> says that 'even in examination of conscience it is better to look at God than to self, then we cannot help seeing the things that stand between us and God.' I think it is in the first volume, but cannot find it. When you come across it, give me the reference. It is an important passage coming from so high an authority. Also tell me how the passage strikes you; I mean, how are we practically to examine our conscience looking at God. I have one theory, but I should like to hear what idea is suggested to Mother Abbess, you, and other holy sisters. It is useful for us all to *think these things out*.

"Some of the allegorical sense is rather far-fetched, and not very helpful, but a great deal is suggestive and aids meditation."

*To a Religious.*

"CONVENT OF MERCY, Dec. 30, 1902.

"When you have finished the book of Bishop Hedley you are reading, begin his vol. called *The Light of Life*. It is truly excellent: notice the discourse on 'Life Everlasting.' You, like others, feel the ups and downs of the spiritual life: now spiritual things seem near and bright, then again eclipsed and dark. Feelings are good to help us on, but we must not let them rule. Go bravely on, fighting the good fight, till you have run your course, faithful to the end, and then are able to receive the crown from the just Judge (2 Tim.).

"*Mary Sybella Holland* I have read, and like very much. She had a beautiful mind, full of lovely pictures, and a most

<sup>1</sup> St Gregory, M., *Morals on Job*, bk. i., 47.

gifted soul; a truly spiritually-minded person. I should like to have known her. No wonder the history of a soul revealing itself in her own writings is more attractive than most religious biographies: the mere external, or an attempt to describe the inner life. All the beauties come out spontaneously in letters, like fresh bright water, gushing forth and making glad the city of God."

## CHAPTER XVI

1903

IN Father Wilberforce's letters of this period there are many references to the translation of Blossius' *Comfort for the Faint-hearted*, the second edition of which was now being printed. In a letter to one of his penitents he says :—

“CLIFTON HALL,  
“TAMWORTH, Jan. 14, 1903.

“The *Short Rule* is very like Blossius, brings out his spirit, and is very good. *Multum in parvo*.

“You are quite right in your estimate of Blossius. No one but our Lord can get our feet out of the snare of self-love, and He will do it in His own way if we co-operate.

- “1. *Lead*—not drag—us on Thy way.’  
“2. We will *walk* in Thy truth.’

“When you have not the spiritual help you want, you must be content with what God gives you, being sure He will not let you lose. No creature is necessary to anyone, but only God's instrument. If I have been any help to you, it is God using me.

“The passage in the book you refer to means that if at the time of Holy Communion we have a wilful affection for a venial sin, it is an *obex* or impediment to grace. We do not reap the actual fruit from the Holy Communion that we ought, though habitual grace is increased. Your instance was a temptation disturbing, but not a calm intention to persevere in sin. But a ‘bad Communion’ cannot be made except by mortal sin. So there is no question of that. All that you doubted was whether the turning to God was quite prompt. Let nothing of this kind keep you from our Lord.”

*To a Nun, on the Promise to the Religious Life.*

"January 17, 1903.

"Evidently your letter was written in the doleful dumps. Consult Eccl. xxxv. 11 and 20: 'In every gift show a cheerful countenance, and sanctify thy tithes with joy.' 'He that adareth God with joy shall be accepted, and his prayers shall approach even to the clouds.' And xxxviii. 19: 'For of sadness cometh death, and it overwhelmeth the strength, and the sorrow of the heart boweth down the neck.'

"The promise to the religious state is, 'life everlasting.' This is invisible, and must be taken in this world *on faith*. What you say expresses the difficulty of walking by faith and not by sight. That is why the religious life is a great act of sacrifice, like martyrdom: giving up all visible delights in faith for invisible things known only by faith. It is unmeaning, of course, in this world. We are fools, but fools for Christ, and when He shall appear, the reward will appear. *Scio cui credidi.*

"The permission of evil is the most utterly inscrutable mystery. Volumes have been written on it, but it is so absolutely mysterious that God has instituted the Great Day of General Judgment to explain it. God is incomprehensible, is He not? Compare Isaias lv. 8 and 9.

"If we could understand, our thoughts *would* be His thoughts. The fact is that God knows better than we. Read Psalms lxxii. and xxxvi., noticing that '*Noli aemulari*' means: fret not because of evil doers. God is wise enough, strong enough, good enough, just enough to govern the world in His own way without either you or me to direct Him. Though we might think we could do it better. '*Vacate et videte quia Ego (non tu) sum Deus.*'

"Out of the miseries and sins and persecutions in poor France good will arise for those who love God (Rom. viii.); but how or when, God knows, not I. God has decreed to leave man *free*, and He does it."

To a lady he writes "on what keeps us back":—

"Jan. 27, 1903.

"*Comfort for the Faint-hearted* will, I feel sure, help your soul very much by turning your eyes to our Lord and inspiring confidence in Him and in His fatherly love. You are quite right; what your soul needs is to look at God at all times as your loving and generous Father. In the chapter of

*Growth in Holiness* called 'What keeps us back,' Father Faber points out that many are kept back because they do not look on God as their Father, though they are constantly saying 'Our Father.' Study Psalm xxxiii., it gives you this spirit. In the second verse the Hebrew has, 'My soul will glory in the Lord,' which is just what our Lady said. '*Magnificat anima mea et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo Salutari meo.*' Joy in the Lord is often the want in devout souls.

"It is a common mistake with children, as you notice of yourself, to make out our loving Father to be a 'hard man,' as the slothful man in the parable called Him; who delights in noticing faults, to punish them, and not the most loving Father, writing down every least little effort to reward. He hates to punish, and loves to reward. This is the idea constantly given of Him in the Old and New Testament. So, as you are rightly sickened of yourself, turn your eyes away from yourself and look at our Lord. This the *Comfort* teaches you throughout."

On the subject of Self-examination Father Wilberforce writes to a Religious who was about to keep her jubilee:—

"To be present at your jubilee will be indeed a great pleasure. . . .

"As to detailed examination, I should think it would do you nothing but harm—turn your eyes from our Lord to yourself; trouble and worry your soul; and pour bitterness into the cup of sweetness our Lord wants you to take from His hands, that He has prepared for you (Ps. xxii.).

"You are quite right: 'Shall not my soul be subject to God?' are words that exactly express the one thing to aim at.

"Do not be disturbed about not feeling certain that you would not have joined a contemplative order, if with all your present experience you were young and free. It is only a feeling. You might not do God's will if you did. So the best answer is to say, 'Here I am,' etc. Many have those feelings, often from mere self-love, helped by the devil. A purely contemplative order would not, I am convinced, have suited you so well, though when tired with work for God, you might fancy so. I have often felt, when fagged with confessional, 'I should like to be a Carthusian'; though I know I have no vocation. At other times I have just felt the opposite. But God's will is the only thing. *Deduc me in semitis Tuis.*

"Ever yours devotedly in Christ.

“P.S.—St Gregory (on Job i. 5) writes about examination :—

“‘It often happens that the mind is taken in and deceived, either in the quality of what is evil, or the quantity of what is good. But these things are much better found by prayers than by examinings.’ (By prayer we look at God, by examining, at ourselves.)

“‘For the things which we endeavour to search out accurately in ourselves, we oftener see plainly by praying than by investigating. When the mind is *lifted up* by compunction, it surveys all it sees in itself more surely by passing judgment on it beneath its feet.’

“This is a deep thought of the holy Father, and will be found most true in practice. In another place (I cannot give chapter and verse) he repeats the same in other words, saying that as, if you look at the setting sun, you see what is between you and it, so, if you look at God.”

A little later he writes to the same :—

“Feb. 23.

“How I came to forget this little card that I had put into a book especially to give for your jubilee, is one of those things ‘no fellar can understand.’ It is an appropriate one, and I hope we shall both overcome, and inherit the promises of Christ.

“Psalm lxxx. is a capital one to meditate on in Lent. ‘Honey out of the Rock’: bees in Palestine often build in the crevices of rocks; and the Rock is Christ: the crevices, His wounds: the honey, the sweetness that comes from devotion to the Passion.”

*To another Religious.*

“ST DOMINIC’S PRIORY,  
“LONDON, March 7, 1903.

“Cheer up. The clouds will pass away. Keep in the open air as much as you can, it is very necessary for you.

“I had to say Mass on Thursday in a convent near here, and I was almost stifled with hot pipes and shut windows. The first thing I did after Mass was to open two windows in the sacristy to make my thanksgiving, and I smiled as I thought of you, and sympathised with you. It is trying, but you must think of our Lord hardly able to breathe on the Cross.

"I was reading to-day for my spiritual reading Vol. II., Treatise I, chapter xxii. of Rodriguez' *Christian Perfection*. Read it.

"I always return to Rodriguez for spiritual reading with delight, it is so truly *practical*. It is a pity it is so *abominably* translated, and I wonder much that the Fathers S.J. allow such a member of their company to go about in such atrociously shabby clothes.

"The text from Hebrews xii. is translated in a way to make one wince.

"You say you 'feel angry and contemptuous to others.'

"Well, dear sister, you must fight such feelings, and you would have to do so just as much if you were not a nun.

"In the epistle to-day (I hope you read and meditate on the proper ferial epistles and gospels for each day in Lent), St Paul exhorts, or even commands, us to be 'patient with all men'; and that is written not only for Religious, but for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. When you feel these temptations, bring forward the nobler part of your soul and pray for those you feel tempted to despise. The devotion to the Passion of our Lord will teach you this. The daily stations, etc.

"Then, as He looks on all we do for others as done to Himself, we must take care not to be angry and despise His members.

"If you give up Mental Prayer, you throw the anchor overboard and break the rudder; so of course the ship will drift on to the rocks.

"What you 'have to do' is what I and you and all of us have to do when we are tempted: that is, to cry out to God; and when we have sinned, to come back to Him with humble and contrite hearts; and when 'in the depths,' as you say you are, to say, 'Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.'

"We all of us have a good deal of mollycoddling spirit nowadays. I feel I have.

"I think you have no Trappist vocation! It would only be a trap of the devil for you. I could not be a Trappist, I know, any more than I could be a trapper in Canada. Let us be content with being what we are, and living well where God has put us."

A letter of advice for keeping Lent well, with some remarks on contrition, bears the same date as the above:—

“*March 7, 1903.*”

“MY DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST,

“May our Lord give you choice graces. He, gracious and bountiful and rich in mercy, is not likely to refuse you grace because you cannot imitate seculars in giving up certain things during Lent, parties, picnics, balls, theatres, novels, cigarettes, etc., etc., for this reason, that you have already given up for Him these and countless other things, not only for Lent but for life!—Heb. vi. 10.

“For Lent, I would have you go in for quality rather than quantity, and to do all your duties better.

“To bear illness from the 2nd to the 17th patiently and lovingly, I should call ‘real Lent.’ This penance is greater than fasting; implies strict fast; and comes direct from our Lord. Why is that not ‘real Lent’?”

“You say ‘there is nothing we Religious can retire from in Lent!’ Cannot we retire from self? from our own will? Practise as much devotion to the Passion during Lent as you can. The stations, etc. That royal devotion makes us feel ashamed to be an unmortified member of a Head crowned with thorns, as I feel conscious of being—not fasting, and eating meat at dinner every day except Friday. If you do not see any good you effect, perhaps there is more than you see. I often feel the same. It seems to me my life, as far as visible effect goes, is most fruitless, but I hope there is hidden fruit. At all events we must both rejoice in the good others effect, for whoever is the instrument, God does it.

“No good is ever done by ‘flying out,’ that is, by anger. No one would help me to be contrite by being in a passion with me, and no angry words would teach me to love God more. I hope you read and meditate on the proper of the Mass of the feria every day in Lent: not only epistle and gospel, but introit, collect, tract, etc., etc. To-day, in the epistle, St Paul says: ‘Be patient with all men.’ To fast and abstain from anger and impatience is an admirable Lenten observance.

“In *Comfort for the Faint-hearted*, all is Blossius’ own. He shows that Tauler and Blessed Henry Suso and others taught the same, and by taking the doctrine from them he doubles the authority. It is stronger by being not Blossius only, but Blossius + Tauler + Henry Suso. The book is on this account thoroughly Dominican as well as Benedictine. Note A at the end is most important, for so many people have a confused notion about contrition. They confuse contrition and intense contrition, or contrition not only perfect in

motive, but also in intensity of will. Contrition, which is turning the will away from sin *principally* because God is so good, though there may be fifty other motives too, however remiss and imperfect may be the love, remits all mortal sin. If this contrition grows more intense, in will, not in feeling, and the love of God more pure and disinterested, it forgives more and more, not the guilt, that is wholly and entirely blotted out for ever by the lowest and most remiss degree of contrition, but the temporal punishment, which is the temporal separation from God. When the contrition has become perfect in degree of intensity, all temporal punishment is remitted and the soul can go straight to God. This is more difficult and rare, though quite possible for all (with God's grace), but it is monstrous to look on the first (a low degree of real contrition) as difficult (with God's grace) or rare for those who pray.

"Do you clearly understand what I mean, for it is most important for those who instruct others? To give children the idea that if mortal sin should be committed, it is very difficult to make such an act of contrition as will obtain pardon, and that practically they must live in guilt till they can go to confession, is to do them a serious spiritual injury—an injury often done.

"Everything that makes people imagine our loving God to be hard, unmerciful, is utterly contrary to revelation and a serious injury to souls.

"God is 'easy to forgive evil' (Jonas iv. 2)."

When speaking to those who had to instruct children, Father Wilberforce always laid great stress on the necessity of clearness in teaching them about the meaning of and the motives for contrition. He once told a story of a little girl who came to confession to him during a mission. She made her accusation very simply and accurately, and when she had finished Father Bertrand asked her if she was sorry for her sins. "Yes, Father," she replied. "Why are you sorry, my dear child?" "Please, Father, I don't know." The child had been well instructed in regard to the actual confession, but had had no proper teaching on contrition.

Father Wilberforce replies to a friend who had written to him for his birthday:—

"ST DOMINIC'S,  
"LONDON, *March 17, 1903.*

" . . . It was most kind of you to remember me. A birthday in childhood and youth is like spring, full of bright anticipations and hope of fruitful times: but at sixty-four it

is like autumn, with yellow leaf of 'bufferdom,' looking to the winter of old age and death—and also, I hope, after the winter, to the true Spring and Summer of Life Everlasting.

"*This* is the promise He hath promised us: Life Everlasting. May we both receive it.

"If you are having now your hundredfold, it is all right, for is not the hundredfold promised for this life, and Life Everlasting for the world to come?"

"The grand principle to cheer us [in interior trials], is that temptation and consent are widely different, and our Lord can never misunderstand."

*To his Sister, on Tennyson's "Enid."*

[Undated.]

"The other day at Hawkesyard I read, for the first time, I am ashamed to say, Tennyson's *Enid*. You have of course read it in old times, though you may have forgotten it. It is wonderfully beautiful. Grand in the highest sense. Exalted thoughts expressed in the most melodious and refined language. And what makes me mention it is that it is so easily interpreted and applied, in the truest spiritual and supernatural sense. It is true all through, as I could show you if I had it with me. *Enid* taken as the soul. The prince loves her in her poverty, and when dressed in her old faded silk, loves her in spite of all, and takes her thus to the stately queen, who dresses her like the sun. Our Lord takes the soul in the midst of her poverty and rags and misery, and from love arrays her in the most splendid robes of Grace. *Enid* afterwards is in great trial; tried by Prince Geraint, who loves, but tries her love; he misunderstands what he has heard—that, of course our Lord cannot do, but the truth is, He has such cause without any misunderstanding. Geraint is supposed to be dead. *Enid* is tempted to eat and drink and be glad when he is lying there as dead, though he really hears all. She replies:—

"How should I be glad  
Henceforth in all the world at anything,  
Until my Lord arise and look upon me?"

"That is just what the soul should feel, and more and more as life goes on and the time comes when He will come and look on us. Nothing should make us really glad but the

coming of my Lord. How unspeakable it will be to see Him. To see His face. If we could realise it, we should die of joy and desire to see Him.

"If the soul is in desolation, how true it is! Nothing can comfort it but our Lord. If He hides His face, 'how should I be glad henceforth in all the world at anything, until my Lord arise and look upon me?' The wicked knight Edyrn is converted; overcome by Geraint, sent to Arthur's court, talks much with the 'High Saint' Dubric (an old British saint), and then Arthur tells Geraint that by overcoming himself, he has done more than by killing many marauding bandit knights, as Geraint had done. It is exactly what the Holy Ghost says, Proverbs xvi. 32: 'The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities.' I wonder how far the poet himself was typifying grand spiritual truths.

"Father Reginald Collins, the brave army chaplain, is near here, and knows Arabic very well, and has the Holy Scripture in Arabic. Arabic is very near akin to the Syro-Chaldaic that our Lord and His apostles spoke. I asked him what was the Arabic for the verse in St John, 'What is that to me and thee?' at Cana. 'These words are a common idiom in Syro-Chaldaic and Arabic,' he replied, 'meaning "we have one thought, one feeling, one heart, in this matter," (Mata bain anta un ana," are the Syro-Chaldaic words, literally. "What difference is there between me and thee?" and in the Arabic the words are nearly the same, "Mâ bain entée wa ana," meaning the same exactly.)'

"To translate the words into English literally is to translate the words, but not the idea. The real translation of the idea would be: 'We have one feeling on this matter.'

"This is interesting, is it not?"

"Ever your loving Brother,

"BERTRAND, O.P."

Several letters written during the May of this year are dated from Harrow, where Father Wilberforce spent some weeks, supplying for the parish priest, work which in the later years of his life he always enjoyed. At such times he generally made a number of fresh friends, and did a great deal of quiet and unobtrusive work for souls.

The following letter is to Miss M——, a great invalid :—

“HARROW, *May 7, 1903.*

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“How are you getting on? It is indeed God's will that you should lead the suffering life, which will conform you more to the image of His Beloved Son, who suffered for us. ‘In the world you shall have distress,’ He said to His apostles and to you, ‘but in Me you shall have peace.’ And ‘you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you’ (St John xvi. 22).

“One good way to fight distractions during the rosary is to put in a few words after the Holy Name in the middle of every Hail Mary, to remind you of the mystery you are saying.

“For instance, in the first joyful (mystery); . . . Hail Mary . . . fruit of thy womb Jesus, Who was made Man for us. In the second joyful . . . Who sanctified St John Baptist. First sorrowful . . . Who prayed for us in the garden. First glorious . . . Who rose from the dead for us.

“This recalls the mind to the mystery in the middle of every Ave, and is a great help. It is a little longer, and one mystery said well is better than fifteen hurried over.

“God, who sends you a suffering life, will send you grace to bear it.”

The same day he writes to another invalid :—

“CATHOLIC CHURCH,

“HARROW, *May 7, 1903.*

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“Yesterday I wrote, and to-day your letter of May 1 reached me.

“I am so much grieved to hear you have been suffering, and still are, though I ought to congratulate with you on the grace; to you it is given not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for and with Him.

It is clearly our Lord's will you should suffer, and so you must look on that as the way in which He desires you to get to Heaven. It is clearly His will for you not to go to many services. Hear Mass on Sundays, when it is prudent to go out, in spite of microbes, but otherwise do what you can quietly at home.

“Our dear and loving Lord is schooling you for Heaven, teaching you to throw yourself more utterly on Him, and to

prepare for your happy departure to Him, whenever He pleases. 'Jesus, knowing that the hour had come that He should pass out of this world to the Father.'

"You know not the hour, but He does, so 'in Him you have peace.' St John, taken word for word, meditated on and prayed over, and the Psalms, will comfort you more than anything.

"I would give up all thought of cure, as I do about diabetes. My diabetes will never be cured. It will be a gradual going down hill, slower or quicker: a slowing down for the terminus. The same with you. You must make up your mind that our Lord's will is that you should serve Him as an invalid. The illness is your penance, the constant self-denial it involves is your cross to carry *daily*, the doctor and nurse your superiors to obey, as expressing to you God's will."

In a letter to a friend, which bears the same date, he says:—

"This is a delightful place; quiet and peaceful. Nice church and snug Gothic house. No noise. Work but gentle. No sick just now. All but four made their Easter.

"I hope, please God, to remain all the month, but thunder growls in the distance, in the shape of a retreat at Sidmouth, from Ascension to Whit Sunday. But I hope it will be put off till June.

"I am well, *D.G.* Not so strong as twenty years ago, but for a diabetic old buffer of sixty-four, very well. We have had a good many samples of weather here: wet often.

"I am reading Newman's *Parochial Sermons* right through. What a wonderful man he was!"

A note to his sister, dated Ascension Eve, 20th May 1903, was probably written from Harrow:—

"I have not set my heart [on dying at any particular age]. I daresay our Lord will call me in my sixty-sixth year, as He did our beloved father. Then I might hope to celebrate my full jubilee in May 1914, by leaving Purgatory and entering the Kingdom.

"On June 3, I begin a first communion retreat at Kensington Square.

"The text of my first meditation at Sidmouth will be that most lovely verse of the Canticle v. 2: 'I sleep, and my heart watcheth: the voice of my Beloved knocking: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night.'

A verse as touching as any to be found in the whole Bible. It is quite a ‘nun’s verse,’ is it not?

“He has opened heaven for us to-morrow, and we must open to Him.”

The following letter, addressed to one of Father Wilberforce’s penitents, bears no date, but probably belongs to this time. A portion of it has been destroyed, but the writer seems to have been speaking of St Gertrude. He says:—

“Beautiful flowers, etc., she loved as works and gifts of God, but she thought them nothing and vile compared to the Maker and Giver. Read Philippians iii. 8. Does not St Paul say the same, only in stronger language?

“The very reason that St Gertrude’s prayer disgusted you was because she was a saint, with great light, and you a sinner, in the dark, loving things created, for their own sake.

“You are both ungrateful and deceived. Ungrateful to God, and deceived by self-love. What you want you can never have: to rest and delight in God, and to do your own will and not His. To have light and darkness, white and black together. To please yourself, and yet have all the privileges of the servants of God. To eat your pudding and still have it.

“The mystery of hell you must take on faith, till you see God. You must love and praise His justice as much as His mercy, because both are simply *Himself*. You can never understand what is incomprehensible.—Romans xi. 33.

“I can no more comprehend it than you, but God can and does, and faith means being sure He will make it all clear, and being certain that He can do nothing inconsistent with infinite Goodness, Righteousness, Justice, Mercy and Wisdom, because He *is* all these.

“If we understood, we should have sight, not faith. By faith we are convinced without understanding and seeing. What is the use of running our heads against a stone wall? We only hurt ourselves, not the wall.

“Temper is moral; a want of mortification of the passion of anger and impatience.

“Hysteria (nerves) is physical; an illness, whether in or out of a convent. Surely you were not such a goose as to expect everyone in a convent to be perfect in temper except yourself. Why is hysteria to be an illness that cannot attack nuns? Why is it an unreality that pious and earnest persons should fall into many faults? It seems to me a *reality*.

“Ever in our Lord,

“BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

*To a Lady, on "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin."*

"23 KENSINGTON SQUARE,  
"June 10, 1903.

"Happy feast for to-morrow, and go to Holy Communion just as you would, had you not read B. Grignon de Montfort.

"I see from the letter forwarded to me that your mind is confused and upset about B. de Montfort's book. I have not time just now to enter into the whole matter, but I can say:—

"1. Neither you nor any one else has any obligation whatever to practise the devotion recommended by B. Grignon de Montfort.

"2. You have evidently a very exaggerated and distorted notion of what he wishes and recommends.

"3. In the sense in which you understand it, no one that I ever met or heard of adopts it. . . .

"To think that you ought to think of our dear Lady more than of our Lord is thoroughly unchristian and against the mind of the Church, and of St Bonaventure and De Montfort. If it *helped* you to go to Holy Communion with our Lady, you could do so, but if it distracts you from our Lord, our Lady herself would be the first to tell you not to do so.

"Practise B. Grignon de Montfort's idea thus. Once a week or once a day offer to God all you do through and with our Lady, and then go on as before, speaking directly to our Lord.

"There is not a direct prayer to our Lady in the Mass, which is the most solemn prayer of the Church. Say once an 'I offer to Thee all I do and say, through and with Thy Holy Mother,' and then trouble yourself no more about it.

"To say that the adorable Trinity is *subject* to our Lady, would be absurd and heretical in your sense, as if she were greater than God. It could only be said in the sense that the Holy Trinity allows Himself to be influenced by her prayers. This is such a truism that it seems absurd to write it down.

"Read what Cardinal Newman writes on devotion to our Lady.

"If B. de Montfort asked me to think *actually* in all my prayers of our Blessed Lady, I should say: 'Holy Father, that may help and suit you, but not me.' To be united *virtually* with the Blessed Mother of God, is different. Who would not wish this, and, by the communion of saints (wish to be united) with all the saints and angels.

"You would only be a heretic if you were to condemn devotion to our Lady, and to say we ought not to ask her prayers. To imagine that the Church or the Saints want you to love our Lady more than God is the height of absurdity, because it would be the worst of all mortal sins to do so. How angry our Lady would be!

"I wish I could see you. Could you not come here to-morrow? I have an appointment from 12 to 2, but after that I shall be here. Do try and come and have a chat.

"Who could be angry with you? You are all right, only a little confused. My advice would be to go quietly on, as if St Bonaventure and Blessed Grignon de Montfort had never written.

"Do come, or write to me. I sympathise greatly with you.

"Ever in our Lord,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

*On the same Subject.*

"23 KENSINGTON SQUARE,  
"June 11, 1903 (*Corpus Christi*).

"Whether I shall have to go off to-morrow morning I cannot say, till I get a letter by to-morrow's post. If I do not, 7.30 will not be too late. We shall be quiet, and I shall be delighted to see you.

"You must not think that we are bound to adopt every pious opinion advocated by a holy person, even though canonised.

"You are in no way bound to believe that God gives all graces through our Lady, only do not *condemn* the opinion. Leave it alone.

"If you love and reverence our Lady as Mother of God and the first of God's creatures, and say the Rosary, that is quite enough.

"All grace comes from God, *through* Jesus Christ our Lord: He came to us through our Lady: therefore as the fountain came through her, the drops of water come through her. But the idea that we must not go straight, direct, and without medium to our Lord is absurd.

"Look at St Alphonsus' books with prayers on every page to our Lord direct.

"Go on as you did before this misunderstanding. Go on

flying to our Lord in every trouble and anxiety, in every temptation and danger, and all will be well with you.

“‘Fear not, it is I.’

“‘Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid.’

“Read *Cardinal Newman on our Lady*.

“Yours ever in Jesus and Mary,

“BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

*To a Religious who was suffering from a painful illness.*

“23 KENSINGTON SQUARE, W.

“June 15, 1903.

“I hear you are favoured by God with a painful cross, to conform you more to the image of His Son and to prepare you for a higher crown. To-day I offered the holy Sacrifice for you, and I hope you will persevere in joyful patience till the end. Now you are with Him on Mount Calvary, soon you will be on Mount Thabor, and at last you will hear: ‘Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and *come*, for winter is now past, the rain is over and done,’ etc., etc. (Cant. ii. 10).

“It is a calm peaceful joy to feel in the hands of Him that loveth us.”

*To another Religious.*

“June 15 (evening), 1903.

“Your letter came this evening, and many thanks for it. I can quite understand that you must either leave the verses alone or rewrite them.

“I quite agree with you that the penances that God sends are far better and more searching than any we could devise ourselves. It is so good when He takes the helm. Ill-health and pain are as much His gift as good health, storm as calm. We must thank Him for both. Constant pain and uneasiness is very irritating, and I have often felt it. Pain teaches us what we are.

“Dr M. Jones thinks I may hold on some time, unless a chill came or some illness. In other words, I may very likely live unless I die; or, life is in God’s hands, and prophecies more certain after they are fulfilled. I suffer little, much less than you, and have less patience. May God give us both more.

“Certainly it is humiliating to have the fountain of grace in the Blessed Sacrament, and yet to be worse and less virtuous than many who have not got the Holy Eucharist. F. Tyrrell brings that out well in his *External Religion*.

“I am glad you have work, but I hope you have help. Go on straight and calmly, however dark the way may seem.

“I feel I do not make enough of my angel guardian and the angels of others. Invoke the angels of the members of your class, and the angel who takes care of the class, and has interest in it as God's work.

“Did I tell you of Mr ———, who wrote an admirable notice of *Spiritual Instruction* in the *Church Review*? We wrote to each other and he told me he had read all Blossius' works. Now I hear, to my intense joy, that he means to be received into the Church. What a blessing! . . .

“I hear to-day (Tuesday morning) that Downside retreat is on July 29, and that Selly Park begins on July 30. Therefore, in the present state of science, it is clear I cannot give both. Bilocation is still a difficulty; though whether it will be in 2003 remains to be seen. Father Provincial must choose between them.

“As to our Blessed Lord's hidden life, it seems to me we know enough. We know the principles, and we know that He led a poor, humble, hard-working life. It is so like divine revelation to give us just enough for our imitation and not enough to satisfy curiosity. This is always the case. Revelation is meant to make us better men and women, but not to give us full intellectual knowledge.

“‘He was subject unto them’: that is the outline, in one stroke. Details are to be filled up by patient, humble meditation. If an uninspired author had written he would have tried to fill up details to the loss of dignity and reverence, as you see in the apocryphal gospels. Only the outside of ordinary actions could be given, and the internal sanctity could not be expressed, so that the effect would be lowering. To hear that our Lady got up at 5, that she prepared breakfast at 7, that prayers were at 6, work at 8, etc., etc., would lower, not exalt.

“Do you see my idea?

“In the public life, only those things that bring out our Lord's office and work are given. In the Passion, too, no merely realistic details but the plain fact in one graphic line: ‘Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him,’ or, ‘the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and put it on His head.’ How grand, how majestic, are these short words. So I conclude that details of

the hidden life would detract from the dignity of the few gospel words which say enough.

"Speaking under correction, I should think that as our Blessed Lord was a *comprehensor*—or, in other words, enjoyed the beatific vision—He did not feel loneliness. How could He when His soul saw face to face the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and was united in person with the eternal Son? Nor did He suffer from misunderstanding,<sup>1</sup> as He could misunderstand nothing.

"Neglect and ingratitude' would give Him pain only from compassion for the ungrateful and neglectful.

"Monotony was nothing to Him, who had the beatific vision.

"He must have suffered pain from the sight of sin, a supernatural pain, but still with the perfect joy in the vision of God.

"It is difficult to understand the union of the two states of viator and comprehensor.

". . . In union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

"Yours ever,

"BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P."

Father Wilberforce's stay at Kensington was unexpectedly prolonged. A day or two after the date of the above letter he had an attack of his old enemy, the iritis, and was unable to leave London till the end of July. It was a repetition of his illness in 1900, and though perhaps not quite so severe a seizure in itself, the rapidly increasing weakness of his general health made it almost more trying. A lady who went to see him during this time has sent us the following account of her visits.

"I saw Father Bertrand many times during his illness at the convent in Kensington. He used to let me read to him, and write his letters, but sometimes he was in too much pain to bear reading, and then he lay on a couch in a dark corner of the room, saying a few words now and then.

"One day he had been speaking at intervals about his longing for death, and after a long silence he said: 'I want to have it out with St Ambrose about that homily as soon as I meet him in heaven?' I asked what homily, and he told me that for years he had puzzled over one that stands in the Dominican Breviary as an alternative for a feast *Trium*

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, from misunderstanding others, of course He was misunderstood Himself, and equally of course, He felt this.

*Lectionum Plurimorum Martyrum.* He quoted some passages from it, and said that he thought it quite unintelligible, and wondered what St Ambrose could have meant.

“He talked much one day of Cardinal Newman, and of the intense love and reverence felt by his father for the Cardinal; and how he had himself been brought up to think it the greatest honour even to see him. He was never tired of recommending people to read Cardinal Newman’s books.

“I was lamenting on one occasion that I could not see what God wanted of me, and was afraid life would end before my work began, and Father Bertrand replied: ‘We all feel like that; I am much older than you, and have hardly begun to serve God.’

“Another time I asked him if he would say Mass for a particular intention on a certain day, two or three weeks off. He answered at once: ‘Perhaps I shall be dead’; and then went on to say that death was the thing that he most desired, and that I ought to desire it too, for him and for myself. Death meant an end of work and suffering, and admission to God’s Presence, and the knowledge of Him as He is. ‘How glorious it would be to die and keep that feast [of which they had been speaking—probably the Assumption] in heaven!’”

Another friend, a gentleman who was about to be received into the Church, and who first made the personal acquaintance of Father Wilberforce during his stay at the Kensington convent, having previously corresponded with him, describes the impression made upon him by Father Bertrand’s remarkable personality. He says:—

“I had the great privilege of being admitted to, I think, a special friendship with Father Bertrand during the last eighteen months of his life—an experience I shall never forget. Somehow he took a fancy to me, and I went and sat with him day by day at the convent at Kensington during his bad illness there, besides going much to him when he was later at Notting Hill. One could write much of the unforgettable beauty of his personality, but others are far better qualified to do this than I. I knew he was very ill indeed, and did not worry him with much discursive talk. One could see, however, even in his illness, a great deal of that striking combination of natural brilliancy and supernatural ‘introversion,’ which was so remarkable in him.

“On one occasion he had to go out from the Notting Hill convent to visit some sick person he had heard of (or more probably, he took the act of charity on himself quite gratuit-

ously). He was changing into his walking dress with difficulty, owing to his weakness; yet, with his bright look, he merely remarked how 'queer' was the obsolete law against religious dress out of doors in England. 'I could go out in Father Cuthbert's habit, or he in mine; but neither of us in his own! The law only says: "A Religious is not to go out in *his* habit."'

"We passed on to speak of some of the Anglicans going about in all sorts of queer garbs, and he wanted to know whether they were 'coming on.' When I gave rather a pessimistic answer, he changed his tone quickly, and in a strong, thrilling voice came the words: '*Exsurge Domine, adjuva nos, et libera nos propter Nomen Tuum!*'"

The writer of these anecdotes had arranged to be received into the Church at the Dominican priory at Hawkesyard, and Father Wilberforce wished very much to return with him and direct his retreat. When it was first spoken of he was much too ill even to think of attempting it, but a few days later he was able to get about a little, and he then proposed the journey, subject to the doctor's opinion. Mr N—— was much struck by the spirit of submission to superiors' wishes that Father Bertrand evinced in the matter. The doctor's verdict was unfavourable to his travelling, and his way of deciding was characteristic. He evidently felt himself up to the journey, but only said: "Father Prior told me to go by what the doctor said. No; I don't think I shall go. Father Prior wouldn't like me to."

"When I got to Hawkesyard," writes his friend, "I found that the deference was equal on both sides, for when a technical question arose in connection with my baptism, the first question asked was, 'What did Father Bertrand think about it?'"

"Whenever I saw him afterwards, he was most eager to hear about conversions and possibilities in that direction, and was intensely interested in the fortunes and final break up of an Anglican review, owing to the manifest impossibility of its position, and the conversion of so many of its contributors, subscribers, etc."

On the 8th of July, Father Wilberforce wrote to a friend at Stone:—

"My eye is now well, only weak, and the main thing is to prevent a relapse. Hay-fever, by causing irritation, might bring back iritis in both eyes, and so has to be avoided. That is why I am still here. When the hay has gone, I am

to go to Sidmouth, till the retreat at Downside at the end of the month.

"I said Mass last Sunday and again to-day. *Deo Gratias*. Only part of the office, as yet, making up by Rosary. I can now walk out, though bright sunshine dazzles me, and I have blue goggles.

"Father Thurston paid me a very pleasant visit the other day."

*To the Same.*

"DOWNSIDE, July 29.

"I got here yesterday, and find, to my joy, they are not able to enter retreat till to-morrow.

"Thank God, I can use my eyes again.

"How diabolical the French Government is! Very good article in *Daily Mail* and *Graphic*.

"Love to all."

After the retreat at Downside, Father Wilberforce went to the Poor Clare Convent, Notting Hill, then to Woodchester, Baddesley, and Haunton. Though the work at these latter places was probably not heavy, he, nevertheless, can scarcely have been following the advice he gives, about this time, to a Religious who was out of health: "Rest, in body, mind, and soul."

From Notting Hill he writes to Miss M—— :—

"POOR CLARE CONVENT,  
"NOTTING HILL, W.,  
"August 11, 1903.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

"Your letter of Aug. 5th reached me to-day, and I am glad you are well enough to write.

"I am delighted to find that you appreciate Blosius. His *Comfort for the Faint-hearted* is a most solid and enlightened book, and one to be read often and pondered on and *used*.

"It is not written for the poor scrupulous souls (never wish you were one of them), but for the *faint-hearted*. Many are discouraged and faint of heart who are not given to scruples.

"A scruple means to imagine sin where there is none; a faint-hearted person is one who is sad and cast down, and tempted to give up and think he will never gain union with God.

"All are sometimes tempted thus against hope :—

"'Why art thou sad, O my soul,  
And why dost thou disquiet me?  
Hope thou in God,  
Who is the salvation of my countenance  
And my God.'  
(Psalm xlii.)

“I also am forbidden all sweets, all sugar, and bread also, which is worse. Well, we must deny ourselves. You, my dear child, have constant and great penance, but the glory will be eternal.—Read Hebrews xii. 11.

“God ever bless you.

“Yours most sincerely in Him,

“BERTRAND WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

“Do not be distressed because you feel often too weak to say forms of prayer. If you look at our Lord and *desire* to love Him and to praise Him if you could, that is prayer. Remember prayer is to raise up mind and heart to Him, and can be done easily and quickly without a word said. Our loving Lord will never be displeased because you feel weak and ill. Look at Him. ‘My eyes are always on the Lord,’ and He will look on you with great love (so great) and will give you constant grace. Trust Him; throw all your care and trouble on Him, and all will be well.”

In the next two letters Father Wilberforce gives some wise advice regarding the illusion of Religious who wish to change from the Order in which they are professed:—

“WOODCHESTER,  
“August 21.

“I can perfectly understand your feelings. The quiet of X—— and the beauty of the chapel would strongly appeal to your imagination, and the life of prayer and adoration to your religious sense, and as you are feeling very tired and your work is hard, you would doubtless cry out: ‘O Lord, why am I not here on Mount Thabor with Thee, instead of down on the plain with Thee among men? It is good for me to be here: let us make a tabernacle and dwell here for ever.’

“You ask: ‘Why did not our Lord bring me to X—— before, in my youth, instead of to A——?’

“Our Lord answers:—

“‘My daughter, the reason was because I did not want you to be there. If it had been My will you should be there, I should have brought you there. But My will was for you to come to Me by a different way, by labour as well as by prayer.’

“Another thing is this: Even if you had seen X—— early, before God had done for your soul all that He has, would you have been drawn by it as you are now? Probably

not. But whether or not, our Lord, if He had willed you to go there, would have sent you there.

"God knows all: God is almighty and all wise, so leave yourself in His hands.

"With heartfelt sympathy and every good wish and blessing,

"Yours devotedly in Christ,

"F. B. W., O.P."

*To the Same.*

"HAUNTON,  
"TAMWORTH, *Sept.* 14.

"Your letter of August 16th showed that you liked *Ideals in Practice*.<sup>1</sup> It has many good points, some excellent.

"I agree that she exaggerates. No one could possibly know or do half she advises. I asked them to modify that most absurd assertion that those who teach religion should be thoroughly familiar with every branch of human knowledge. No one ever was, or ever could be!

"St Francis de Sales says that he does not approve of a person in a Religious Order unsettling him or her self by wishing for another. We cannot be everything, and we must choose once, and then try to be as perfect as possible in that state we have chosen. It is a common snare of the evil one to try to destroy the peace of the soul by suggesting: 'You are in the wrong place. If you had only been in an active Order you would have done far better; and if *you* had been in a contemplative Order you would have been a saint.' The fact is it is not our Order or our work, but our self-love and self-will that prevents us growing holy.

"Turn your work into prayer. Prayer is raising mind and heart to God: do that in work, and you will 'pray without ceasing.'"

"*Sept.* 15.

"When St Francis de Sales was very busy, St Jane Frances de Chantal asked him if he had made his meditation; he answered, 'No: I have had no time, but I have done better: I have made all my work a prayer.'

"Every grace be with you.

"Ever in SS. Corde,

"B. W., O.P."

<sup>1</sup> *Ideals in Practice, with some Account of Women's Work in Poland*, translated from the French of the Countess Lamoyka, by Lady Margaret Domville. (Art and Book Co.) Father Wilberforce had been asked to revise the proof sheets of this book.

In the October of this year, Father Wilberforce gave a retreat to the Benedictines of Ampleforth Abbey. Writing to a friend he says:—

“It is a fine place, and situated in very nice country, on the side of a hill, but not seen to advantage in 1903 weather. One stretch of cloister is 520 feet in length, and that is very convenient in rain. All are most kind; and humble, to listen to me.”

From Ampleforth, he writes to \* in answer to the question:—

“What should Catholics think of the belief of those Protestants who say that they are eternally saved, and can never fall away finally and be lost?”

“Oct. 4, 1903.

“Such Protestants do not distinguish between grace, which is the germ of everlasting life, and salvation, which we do not come to till we see God in heaven. I suppose they would allow that St Paul was ‘converted’ and had faith, yet he tells us in 1 Cor. ix. 27, ‘I chastise my body lest . . . I should become a castaway.’ That is, I mortify my flesh and practise self-denial, lest I may fall into sin and be lost. Also 1 Cor. x. 12, ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth (because he believes) take heed lest he fall’: that is, into sin; fall away from charity. In St Matthew x. 22, we see that some who begin well and are in God’s grace, do not ‘persevere to the end,’ that is, they fall away by sin. And the same warning is in St Matthew xxiv. 13. In Hebrews vi. 4 to 6, we read: ‘For it is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery.’ (When St Paul says ‘impossible’ he means very difficult.) The text shows people can fall away.

“The texts these Protestants use to justify their belief, do not prove that a soul once regenerated and in God’s grace, cannot fall away. For instance, they quote Romans viii. 1, ‘There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.’ This means as long as the soul perseveres in Christ Jesus; in a state of grace there is no condemnation—no damnation. St John says, 1 John iii. 14, ‘We know that we have passed from death (sin) to life (grace) because

we love the brethren’; but he does not say that we cannot lose grace. ‘Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not’ (1 St John v. 18). ‘Born of God’ means being in grace, and a man cannot be in grace and in mortal sin at the same time. But he can ‘sin unto death’ (1 St John v. 16, 17). See also 1 St John i. 8, 9, 10. Again, they quote 1 St John iii. 9. Here the words ‘cannot sin’ mean as long as he goes on in God’s grace. But he may fall, as we see in the following texts: ‘Fear, lest perhaps God also spare not thee. See then the goodness and the severity of God: towards them indeed that are fallen, the severity; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off’ (Romans xi. 21, 22). ‘With fear and trembling work out your salvation’ (Philippians ii. 12). ‘Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Apocalypse iii. 11).

“Find out clearly what these Protestants mean: whether they mean they cannot do a wrong thing, *e.g.*, steal or lie, or wish evil to others. Or whether they mean that even if they did steal or lie, or otherwise commit sin, it would not be sinful in them, because they believe in Christ. This last was Luther’s teaching.”

Father Wilberforce began his retreat on the 18th of October, and a note of advice to a Religious, whose retreat he was at the same time directing, is dated:—

“Oct. 19.

“My retreat began last night. We must pray for each other for perfect charity and union. Certainly go to Communion on Wednesday. Why stay away from our Lord because you are praying more than usual, and turning your eyes more to Him and less to yourself? Rather go at least one extra time. . . .

“You had better not read books or those parts of books that treat of death, judgment, and hell, because, thank God, you are fully resolved to live in a Christian way, and do not need to be impelled to it by motives of fear or terror. Begin with the Illuminative way, and take for the meditation on Death the verses of St John xiv. I gave you the other day; verses 1 to 4.

“Do not dread the retreat, but look on it as a delightful time of conversation with our Lord. Your one object to conform your will in all things lovingly to Him. If you want to kindle in your heart the love of God, ponder on the words of St John—Gospel and Epistles.”

The notes for meditation on Death here referred to were the following:—

*Death.*—St John xiv. 3.

“I shall go, and prepare a place for you.”

He has gone. Whither? To the Father. To God. Not by any bodily movement but by disappearing from this world. He was always with the Father. “He that seeth the Father, seeth Me.” He has gone from this visible world to prepare a place for us. He has prepared a mansion for us, for me. A building of God, not made with stones or by hands.

“I will come again.”

Our loving, merciful Lord and our tender Father does that at death; that *is* death, the coming of Jesus Christ. How much we ought to love that thought: to look forward to it as the most desirable thing. We should “love His coming,” as St Paul says, “not only to me, but to all who love His coming” (2 Tim. iv. 8). “Come, Lord Jesus.” At the hour of my death call me, and bid me *come* to Thee.

“I will take you to Myself.”

That is union; the end and object of life. What we were created for accomplished. What a joyful day when our Lord coming, will take me out of this “body of death” to Himself; out of the battle to rest and peace; out of darkness into light; out of exile into my own country.

“That where I am you also may be.”

This is what we must desire, and desire earnestly.

In one of Father Wilberforce’s later and unfinished manuscript books there occur the following notes, which certainly belong to this year, and may very probably have been written during his October retreat. They show how completely the thought of and longing for God had now taken possession of his soul.

*To be filled with God.*—Ephesians iii. 14-19.

“That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God”—verse 19.

To be filled with God in memory, intellect, and will. This is what we desire. It is the object we had in view in becoming Religious.

How far has it yet been accomplished? Am I filled with God? With all the fulness of God?

According to St Paul, in order to be filled with God, we must “Know Jesus Christ and His Charity”: His love for man. And this knowledge “surpasseth knowledge,” so that, however much we may have studied it, we cannot have exhausted it, but an infinite height remains. But though this knowledge is inexhaustible, it is possible, by prayer “to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” to arrive at a point at which we shall be “filled with God”: yea, filled with the fulness of God.

This fulness of God—so desirable—implies that our souls must first be emptied. The love of the world and disorderly self-love fill our hearts. No room is left for God, His grace, His love. A vessel full of mire cannot receive gold or a precious balm until it has been emptied.

Jesus Christ, coming into the world to fill it with God, had first to chase away “the armed man” that kept the house.

He chased away sin. When God drew the earth out of nothing, “the earth was empty” (Genesis i. 2). God filled it with new beings. But when Jesus Christ came to renew the world, it was full, and He had first to empty it and then fill it with God.

By the sword of His word He destroyed the monster of sin.

By emptying Himself and dying, He purified the world and filled it by the Spirit of Love.

How clearly this shows the way to be “filled with God.”

Jesus Christ instructed the world, and has made the darkness of error and ignorance give way to His Light.

Jesus Christ satisfied for the world, and made expiation: sent His Holy Spirit. This Substantial Love of the Father and the Son hath filled the world.

This which has been done for the world on a grand scale must also be done in my soul (a microcosm), if my soul is to be filled with all the fulness of God.

So, O my God, it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the love of Jesus Christ, that is to fill me with Thee. But the necessary condition is that I should be empty of myself, that my heart should be freed from wicked inclinations, and that passions should be quieted and regulated. No half-measures, no mixture; the emptiness should be absolute and entire. This state is a precious one, not known by the world; not even by many who think themselves virtuous. They want to join the doctrine of Jesus Christ to that of the world.

This proves that they know not Him. They know not

that He came to bring fire to consume and a sword to destroy ; that after having destroyed the wall of separation between God and us, He has established another between the world and the Gospel.

*St Paul was a man*

1. Filled with all the fulness of God ; since "he lived no more, but Jesus Christ lived in him."—Gal. ii. 20.

2. Unable to taste anything, that is, having a taste for nothing except Jesus Christ ; since he looked on all things as dung compared to our Lord.—Phil. iii. 8.

3. With hunger and thirst for God ; since Jesus Christ was his life.—Phil. i. 21.

4. Abandoned entirely, without reserve and for ever, to Jesus Christ ; since, with Him, he was nailed to the Cross.—Gal. ii. 19.

5. Lost, absorbed in the depths of God ; since he was dead and buried with Jesus Christ.—Rom. vi. 4.

6. Annihilated in God ; since life and death were nothing to him, if only Jesus Christ was glorified.—Phil. i. 20.

7. Transformed into Jesus Christ ; since he carried in his body the mortification of Jesus Christ, in order that His life might be represented in himself.—2 Cor. iv. 10.

8. Willing nothing except what God willed ; since at the moment of his conversion his cry was : "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" The whole of his apostolate was simply to do the will of God.

9. Looking on created things only as Jesus Christ looked on them ; since he knew nothing but Jesus Christ.—I Cor. ii. 2.

10. Acting in all things as Jesus Christ would have acted. "Be ye followers of me, as I am," etc.—I Cor. xi. 1.

*To one of his Penitents.*

"THE FRIARY,  
"CLEVEDON, Nov. 20.

"That feeling towards God, in time of pain or sorrow, is the spirit of pride ; and our Lord's spirit, as shown in the Beatitudes, is just the opposite. This is the great lesson of the Passion : 'The Chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?' You must pray and strive for complete submission. See the will of God in all.

"When things not according to fact are said, it is better to consider them rather mistakes than lies. It is decidedly more parliamentary, not to say more religious."

*To the Reverend Father H. Castle, C.S.S.R.*

“Novbr. 28th, 1903.

“MY DEAR FATHER,

“From your account of this work of Boudon, I should think it would do much good. As to matter of prayer, I quite agree with you. It helps souls, to explain to them how to pray, more than anything else. The very fact of the exercise being called meditation instead of the old name mental prayer helps the (mistaken) idea that the main thing is thought and not prayer.

“A professed nun said to me, ‘If I might only be allowed to pray during that time, I could do very well!’

“I remember at Ushaw as a boy, after hearing instructions on meditation, wondering whether it would be right to pray; common-sense came to my aid, but nothing was said to show that prayer was the end, and meditation a means.

“I have never read any of *Molina*. From the first day I opened a theological book I was always a Thomist, because that system seemed to give more to God. The difference between the old way of prayer and the modern seems to me to be this: the old way makes the soul look at God: *Oculi mei semper ad Dominum*; and the modern way fixes the eyes on self. This brings depression and discouragement, as it is not cheerful constantly to contemplate a dunghill. The one main thing in the spiritual life is to induce people to leave themselves alone and look at our Lord. Wishing you a harvest of souls by the apostleship of the pen,

“I remain most sincerely in J.M.D.,

“BERT. A. WILBERFORCE, O.P.”

## CHAPTER XVII

1904

FATHER WILBERFORCE'S correspondence was carried on almost to the day of his death. The letters of 1904, however, are few in number compared with those of previous years, and bear unmistakable evidence of difficulty and effort on the part of the writer. Many consist only of a few lines, and are not worth inserting; there are several allusions to the approach of death and the shortness of life, and in all the letters of this last year the uneven blotted writing tells its own tale. The hand that once was famous for its beautiful caligraphy is now but too evidently trembling with pain, and hardly able to guide the pen.

After giving a short retreat at Princethorpe at the end of 1903, Father Bertrand went to see his cousin at Tamworth, from which place he writes to one of his penitents:—

“CLIFTON HALL, *Jan. 5, 1904.*

“The best way to do with past times is to allow them to be all chaff, and leave them. Of course they are, of themselves, and as regards us; but God has been good all those years, is now, and ever will be. So attend to Him, and not to the chaff.

“Criticism is a very important thing to check.

“‘Mind your own business and leave others alone,’ is an excellent maxim to follow. It was what our Lord told St Peter to do in the last chapter of St John.

“*Lex Orandi* I have not seen as yet. Father Tyrrell is an original thinker.”

To a lady who had been ill, he writes:—

“HAWKESYARD, *Jan. 11.*

“I am sorry to hear you have been ill again, but all these trials are part of the salutary discipline which fits us

for Heaven. 'If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him.'

"The other day I called on an old couple about two miles from here. The wife has a dreadful cancer. The old man—eighty-four—is her nurse, though very bad himself with rheumatism, and it takes him three-quarters of an hour every night to dress the wound. They are both very poor, and models of patience, without a murmur of any kind. I felt so humiliated. They are *doing* what I often talk about, though myself impatient in the least things. What lessons the poor give us! Pray that they may continue patient to the end. They are both converts, but far from a church, in a little hamlet, so they have none of the outward comforts of religion."

A letter to one of his correspondents—a convert—on Cardinal Newman as a writer, testifies to Father Wilberforce's well-known admiration for the Cardinal, whom he had learnt to appreciate and reverence from his earliest childhood:—

"HAWKESYARD, *January 27th*, 1904.

"How many drop down on all sides of us, seeming to cry aloud: 'Be ye also ready, for at what time you know not, the Son of Man will come!' What is the good at my age, or yours, of doing anything but prepare as well as we can for going into the next world, the spiritual world. St Paul tells us 'It is a terrible thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God.' A thing of wonder and awe, because it is so mysterious, and a thing of which we have no experience. So we must prepare for it daily. That is why our Lord gives us time.

"I would advise you to make a special study of Cardinal Newman's works. Can you get his sermons, not only the ones he wrote after his reception, but those he wrote before (*Parochial and Plain*), which are thoroughly Catholic too? If you read all the eight vols. carefully, it would be a long study. They combine the intellectual and spiritual thoughts of a master-mind with the delight of the purest and clearest style of English that has ever been written. Every page of Newman does good, and I am sure will do *you* good. I presume you have read his sermons written after his reception. Have you ever read his *Development of Christian Doctrine*? If not, you have a treat before you, though it is a book that wants reading many times, not because it is not clear, for it is as clear as running water, but because it is so solid and deep.

"To-day I read his sermon, *Mysteries in Religion*; short

but most suggestive, and tending to promote faith and confidence, which are the strength of the soul.

“We are in a world of mystery, with one bright light before us sufficient for our proceeding forward through all difficulties. Take away this Light and we are utterly wretched ; we know not where we are, how we are sustained, what will become of us and of all that is dear to us, what we are to believe, or why we are in being. But with it we have all, and abound.

“What is nobler, what is more elevating and transporting, than the generosity of heart which risks everything on God’s word, dares the powers of evil to their worst efforts, and repels the illusions of sense and the artifices of reason, by confidence in the truth of Him who has ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high.’ The whole sermon is well worth not only reading, but careful study.

“Take away that Light and we are utterly wretched.’ How true. That Light is the Light of the world ; now if this be true, how far worse than foolish is it to read, merely from curiosity, useless things that have the tendency to lessen that salutary and life-giving Light, or even to extinguish it altogether : and this in the evening of life.

“So only read what will foster and strengthen that Light.

“Cardinal Newman does this, while at the same time, it is the most delightful intellectual treat to read him. Be determined to read all his books that you can get hold of in any way.

“To choose the works of one genius, one of those few giants of the intellectual and spiritual world, and to stick to him instead of wandering about, reading a bit here and another there, is true wisdom.

“Cardinal Newman was a man of stupendous intellectual power, and combined with this, he was a most saintly man, entirely devoted to God.

“St Paul, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, Cardinal Newman, come in a line : given by our Lord to His Church. Newman will, I consider, be read more, and valued more than he is even now. His spirit, too, is so essentially Christian.

“Now Almighty God having raised up a man of this order, it does seem a pity that educated Catholics do not read him more. To go to other writers instead, and especially to those who will be likely to lessen that Light, seems idiotic.

“Newman is so clear that it would be difficult to misunderstand him. St Thomas and Newman are the two who

excel in the gift of clarity. They are like the sun. It is surely more unreasonable to read what might injure Faith, than to eat unwholesome food, from pleasure, that would injure the health. To feed the mind with a number of ideas that you have at once to cast out, is worse than eating a number of things and having to take an emetic and vomit them up just after. As much worse as the soul is superior to the body."

On the 7th of March, writing to Stone, he says:—

"I am so thankful that the Holy Father has turned his attention to the Office. Let us pray that we may be included, so that we may know and use all the Psalms, and may have less of *Beatus Vir* and *Sint Iumbi*.

"On February 2, I preached at Atherstone: stayed to let the priest visit his dying brother. Earache in both ears. Returned home on Feb. 6. On Sunday, Feb 7, taken ill. On Monday, Feb. 28, had to go to London on bothering business. Returned last Saturday.

"I am so delighted to be *at home*. No place like home when ill. No one could have been taken better care of anywhere. The infirmarian was a doctor before joining the Order.

"I suppose the whole thing is really diabetes. I hope to get better and stronger soon. I could not hear Mass to-day. The journey to London, and bother there, threw me back very much. But I hope soon to gather strength, if God wills.

" *Volo quod vis:*  
*Volo quia vis:*  
*Volo quamdiu vis:*  
*Volo quomodo vis.*

"I will write again about other things.

"Ever your not very strong brother in J.M.D.,

"BERT. WILBERFORCE, O.P."

Writing to a friend on the 16th of March, he says:—

"It was most kind of you to write on my birthday, and I thank you much for your prayers. The sixty-fifth birthday makes one look to the end."

After a day or two spent at Stone, Father Bertrand wrote to one of the community:—

“April 2.

“Every Easter grace and joy to you and all. You will be glad to know I got to Rugeley safely, walked to a sick lady in the town, then drove home in state.

“Services went off well, and I preached on Good Friday afternoon. I was not allowed to fast, but did manage to abstain from all Holy Church forbids to non-fasters. Next year, very likely, I may require no dispensation or food, lying by Father Foster<sup>1</sup> in the garden.

“Have you lately read Cardinal Newman’s discourse on the *Mental Sufferings of our Lord*? I read it again to-day, and it is wonderful. What a profound and overwhelming mystery the sacred Passion and glorious Resurrection is. We may call them one mystery.

“I am to go on April 11 to Downside, to celebrate the Centenary of St Gregory, on the 12th and 13th. They have also asked me again to give the monks their retreat,—the fifth or sixth time, I think. It is very kind of them. I give far more Benedictine than Dominican retreats.

“Have you read the *Apostolate of Suffering*? If not, do. *St Lewis Bertrand* has been translated into French. *Deo Gratias.*”

From Downside he writes to his sister, on the anniversary of her profession:—

“April 15.

“. . . How lovely are St Paul’s words in Romans v. 1-2: ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ These words form a delightful base for many hours of mental prayer.

“Some people have neither hope nor fear about the world to come: they leave it alone, as we do the life in China. Others feel no fear whatever. I cannot sympathise with such; nor would St Paul, who bids us work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

“Others, and among them many excellent Christians and Religious, seem only to fear, and to have very little joy in religion. These are in a more hopeful condition than those who only joy, yet their state is not altogether right. Good

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. C. G. Foster, of Westminster, who died Jan. 24, 1904, and who, as a Dominican Tertiary, had been buried at Hawkesyard.

earnest Religious should both fear and rejoice, as you do on this solemn anniversary. . . .

“Our Lord, whose mercy, power, and love has done so much for us, will surely, in spite of all, do the last for us, and draw us to the mansion He has prepared for us in His Father’s house.”

Father Wilberforce remained at Downside for a month, quietly resting, and employing the time in translating another treatise of Blosius. His visits to the great Benedictine abbey, where he was always welcomed with truly fraternal affection, were times of great happiness. The contemplative side of his character would there have free scope to expand, and when wearied with mission work, the calm silent atmosphere in a house of the Order whose very motto is ‘Peace,’ brought rest and refreshment both to body and soul. Then, too, his beloved Father and model in the spiritual life, Ludovicus Blosius, was a Benedictine, and amongst Benedictines he would doubtless find the spirit of Blosius still living. His dedication of the *Comfort for the Faint-hearted* testifies to his affection for the Downside community.

Writing to a friend from Buckfast Abbey, on the 24th of May, he says:—

“I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed Downside. I spent a month there: April 12 to May 12. They are all so kind and brotherly, and the monastery is so good, and the church so magnificent. Plain but glorious Gothic, with grand pillars and groined roof. When the choir is finished, in a few months, it will indeed be a splendid building.”

On the 30th of May he writes to Mr N——:—

“Whilst I was at Downside I took the opportunity of preparing another book of dear old Blosius for publication. I hope it will be out before long, and if you can review it I shall be very glad.

“After Downside I gave a retreat at Teignmouth, then I paid a visit to Buckfast Abbey. They are building there on the old foundations. Lovely place, by the banks of the Dart, but very soft and relaxing climate. The monks rise 2 A.M., have perpetual abstinence, etc. No Englishman has persevered, though many have tried; nearly all are Germans. I am afraid John Bull, even when head and heart are converted, retains a Protestant stomach.”

*To the Rev. Father Castle, C.S.S.R. :—*

“HAWKESYARD, *June 30.*

“MY DEAR FATHER,

“Do not think my delay arose from indifference, for I enjoyed your letter much, and hope you will repeat the pleasure, but a mission near Preston prevented letters. It was a charming mission at Walton-le-Dale. English people, very little drunkenness and missing Mass, and the great majority of the people living, as far as human eye can see, in God’s grace. *D.G.*

“I quite see what you mean by thinking that the word ‘she,’ applied to the soul, suits the idea of passive prayer, though I do not think that idea is generally in the mind of those who employ the word.

“I thoroughly understand what you mean by the incommunicable nature of deep spiritual things. How deeply must the saints have felt it. St Paul, for instance, having heard things it was not lawful, because not possible, to utter. No words can express deep spiritual things. They are hidden : mystical.

“You are evidently led by the way of affective prayer, and not discursive prayer. St Alphonsus leads the soul by that way, but many cannot follow, but must plough along by meditation.

“It is odd that others [some?] do not feel the trial that it must be to be deprived of the Blessed Sacrament. St Alphonsus was on the same floor, and had himself wheeled into the church. But the Carthusians never visit the Blessed Sacrament. It was not the custom in the early times, I suppose. St Paul, the first hermit, or St Antony did not.

“Souls are led in such different ways to the same end : God. As our Lord wills you to lead the suffering, and not the active life, He gives you the attraction to affective prayer, disposing your soul to contemplation, if you gain enough self-denial and humility.

“You know those exquisite lines of poor dear old Cowper :—

““But oh, Thou bounteous Giver of all good,  
Thou art, of all Thy gifts, Thyself the Crown.  
Give what Thou canst, without *Thee* we are poor,  
And with *Thee*, rich, take what Thou wilt away.’

“Those lines are not bad for a poor old Calvinist, are they? What a religious mind he had, putting many of us to shame. St Alphonsus himself might well have written those lines.

"I met a working man during a mission, who did not know the word 'contemplation,' but I think had the gift. He had to be early at his work, an hour's walk off, so gets up at 3 A.M. every morning, to have an hour's prayer before starting. On the way he prayed. One week in three he had to spend all night as watchman, and he was then able to spend all night in prayer, as he told me with great glee. He must have had a special gift of prayer—happy man! I can talk about it, and he did it. God has many hidden saints.

"How it is, that after so many graces we are what we know ourselves to be, is a mystery."

*To a Religious.*

"July 15.

"You are, I know, bravely striving to unite yourself to God by simply and lovingly doing His will, which is the only way of peace, the only way to overcome self, to be the friend of Christ and to inherit the Kingdom of God. And so the devil tries to disturb you, and tempts you to imagine that your work is a hindrance to union with God; in other words, to look upon *doing* God's will as an impediment to being *united* to His will. And that to give yourself to spiritual exercises, which you enjoy, would unite you more quickly and closely to God, than work which He gives you to do. He is, in fact, tempting you to abandon what you like less, and to do what you like much.

"Against this subtle temptation meditate before God on these elementary truths:—

"1. The life of union with God consists much more in the spirit in which things are done, than in the external things done.

"2. In the circumstance God has placed you in, more than in devotions and prayers.

"3. That the fact that the works given you are less pleasant is a sign that you must more earnestly give yourself to them, as a practice of mortification, as well as of obedience.

"4. Duties of charity to others are more important, when they are duties, than spiritual exercises and private devotions.

"If work *is* a hindrance, why is it? The fault is not in the *work*, but in the soul.

"'No work will be a hindrance to thee, if thou be inwardly free from all inordinate affection' (*Following of Christ*,

Bk. II., ch. iv.). Self-love, seeking what we like, is the inordinate affection.

“The way to overcome it is to ‘aim at nothing, and to seek after nothing else but the will of God and the benefit of thy neighbour: then shalt thou enjoy perfect freedom of soul.’ That is, nothing will prevent union with God. Meditate on every clause of chapter iv., and make it your lamp.

“See how easy it is for me to preach to others, and how difficult to *do!*”

During a retreat which he gave this summer to the Community of St Rose’s Convent, Stroud, Father Bertrand writes to the superior of another Convent:—

“July 27, 1904.

“Most gladly will I try to do as you ask; the only real delight of life is to try and help on souls of good will.

“Fear of the Lord is indeed excellent, but not a fear that discourages.

“Whatever leads to discouragement or trouble of mind, is contrary to charity, which makes us always trust in God and look at Him.

“If your fear is whether a thing may be sinful, I should strongly exhort you to follow the *first* suggestion of your own good common sense. It is when you reflect with *second* thoughts that fear arises.

“The great rule should be to act against fear; to *despise* fears and doubts, and to take no notice of them whatever.

“You will always recognise fear (that is, the passion of fear, not the fear that is a gift of the Holy Ghost) by its bringing agitation, trouble, darkness. Being a passion, that is, a movement of the sensitive appetite—the lower part of the soul—it must be fought against in the same way in which the passion of anger must be struggled with. You must act against it, however strongly it may trouble and darken your mind and soul at the moment. Two books come to my mind: *Consoling Thoughts of St Francis de Sales*, and *Blosius*. There are many others, of course.

“I do not know whether this short letter will in any way meet what you asked, but if not, do ask any further question, for I shall be so glad to be of any help to you.

“A good thing to do is to reflect, ‘what should I say about this to another person, to a sister who consulted me on this subject?’ As you say, it is easier to decide for some one else. Why? Because then the passion of fear is not

moved, and does not darken the intellect or agitate the will. The soul is calm, and can quietly decide and act.

"If you consider what you would decide in the case of another, you can safely act upon that yourself. God is very good to us, and loves peace.

"If you feel in the dark, in a desert, without way and without water, look up to God, and let your soul desire Him. He has you by the right hand, and is leading you by His ways to joy, by confidence and hope.

"Pray for me."

In a letter to a Religious in retreat, Father Wilberforce gives some advice on the danger of indulging in an exaggerated and false kind of humility:—

"HIGHGATE ROAD, *Aug.* 15.

"Make a very simple quiet retreat—neither as very bad nor very good. Go before our Lord as a simple, humble soul; imperfect, but of *good will*.

"Do not imagine or pretend that you have not brought forth any good fruit. This would be untrue, and therefore not humble.

"You are one of those of whom our Lord speaks when he says: 'Everyone that beareth fruit, He will purify it, that it may bear *more* fruit' (St John xv. 2).

"We do ourselves harm by thinking *too* badly of ourselves, because it is not true. Acknowledge what is good in you, but give the glory to God.

"It would be simply absurd to say you never tried to love and serve God, because you have: but not perfectly. 'I love Thee, my God, but not as I ought; help me to love Thee more.'"

To the Superior of St Rose's Convent, Stroud:—

"HAUNTON, *Aug.* 18.

"MY DEAR MOTHER Prioress,

"Long before this, I meant to have written to thank you for all your kindness and hospitality to me during the happy time of the retreat. I enjoyed it much, it being a great pleasure to help our own sisters, and to sow on such good ground, feeling that the increase would be a hundred-fold.

"The air of Highgate is very fresh and bracing: nothing there of trying atmosphere. There were eighty nuns in retreat, and on the Assumption we had five clothings and

from twenty-five to thirty professions—mostly young girls from Ireland—simple, earnest souls.

“I forget whether I spoke of my *Devout Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*. Do get one for the nun's library and one for the noviciate. It was written for nuns, the object being to help those who cannot read Latin commentaries. I am sure you will like it.

“Every message to Mother General, and blessings to all.”

The next two letters are addressed to a correspondent, a convert, who was suffering from temptations against faith:—

“HAUNTON,

“TAMWORTH, August 23, 1904.

“Our first and last thoughts should be for God, and on your death-bed you will be glad they have been. Anti-christian things are far worse than trashy stories.

“Sedatives are very hurtful to the health. Insomnia is most trying, but a less evil *than drugs*.

“You are far from God only because you do not go the way to find Him. He is near to all who seek Him, who seek Him with their whole heart. Every act of self-denial brings you nearer to Him, because finding Him means finding His will; delighting and resting in Him means delighting and resting in His will. Peace can only be found by perfect conformity to His will. As long as you oppose His will in the least thing, how can you have peace? It is like the Russians at Port Arthur—no peace as long as they hold out. You must capitulate if you would have peace.

“Light and truth are close by you if you seek them with your whole heart. How can you have light if you love darkness? truth, if you love to read lies? peace, if you go on fighting?

“You say you want ‘perfection.’ Then seek it, and you will find it in heaven, not on earth. If you seek it with your whole heart, *in toto corde*, you will have a foretaste here on earth.

“As long as you persist in wanting your will to be done, there can be no peace or rest or happiness anywhere. The things that trouble you in holy books are often misunderstandings.

“As to evil. Evil is a defect. It is not a thing existing of itself. For what really *is*, so far must be good and as good, in God. If evil really existed as a substance, it would be in God.

"Truth is real and eternal. Truth is God, and God is truth. Falsehood is not a real existing thing, but a lack of truth. It cannot therefore be in God, because God cannot lack truth, or He would not be God. Ignorance is not a real substantial thing, existing, but a lack of knowledge. God is infinite in knowledge; He *is* knowledge, therefore He cannot have lack of knowledge; if He had, He would not be God.

"God cannot tell a lie. Is this from want of power? No; it is an imperfection to lie. It shows want of power; therefore, God cannot lie because He is Almighty; there can be no lack of power in Him.

"How grand it will be to see God face to face! We must do all we can to be united to Him."

"September.

"As to the punishment of sin in the next world, to us, now knowing so little, it is a *mystery*, that is, a hidden matter we cannot now understand or fathom; we are obliged to exercise faith, which means to have a complete and unshaken conviction that God can never be unjust, that He can never punish any one more than he deserves, and that, as a matter of fact, though He could, yet He never does punish any one as much as he deserves. This requires *faith*, and confidence in God our Father.

"When Jabez Balfour was condemned to penal servitude, we all felt a certain joy and satisfaction, not that he was to suffer, but that justice had been done; and that he who had so heartlessly ruined so many widows, orphans, etc., should not go unpunished, even if he remained in prison for the rest of his life. Now this is a type of what the Blessed, Friends of God, feel in the next life. They do not rejoice because the lost (those who by deliberate choice have given up God) suffer, but because right has triumphed and justice is done.

"If your feeling of rebellion comes from this, that you think God punishes people *more* than they deserve, you must put away that blasphemous thought and *adore*.

"*Justus es Domine et rectum judicium tuum.*"

"Do not run your head against a stone wall, by losing your own soul because you cannot in this world understand the hidden things of God.

"'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'

"We must leave it in the hands of God, and not seek to understand the Infinite. Look at Proverbs xxv. 27, and Ecclesiasticus iii. 22.

"Faith is to believe and trust God, without being able to understand.

"When God explains, all things will be clear.

"To choose God, is the wise and holy resolution.

"Of course self will be too strong, unless you pray much and earnestly. Without abundant grace you cannot win, and no grace without prayer.

"God gives you the grace to pray, and if you pray, grace after grace will follow, till you overcome; and 'to him that overcometh I will give to sit with Me on My throne,' etc.

"I am so glad you make the Way of the Cross; continue in that holy exercise.

"You say, 'If I only knew that I should persevere.'

"Well, what would you then do? Do that now and you will persevere. Persevere each day till night, and then you will persevere to the end, for your life is made up of a certain number of days. Take it day by day, every morning saying 'I will persevere till night.'"

Father Wilberforce's last retreat was made at Hawkesyard in the September of this year. By the wish of his superiors he joined the general retreat. In his note-book he has carefully written down the heads of each meditation and conference, evidently desiring to profit by the spoken word. But he acknowledged afterwards to a friend that he found it difficult to follow the instructions, and that the last two days, when (having been obliged to begin later than the rest) he was left to finish by himself, were the only days that he enjoyed. He was of course then at liberty to pour out his soul in that intimate converse with God which had now become almost as habitual to him as breathing is to us all.

An evidently unfinished note shows the direction of his thoughts during those two days of silent prayer. It is headed:—

"SUPPLEMENTARY.

"Two days alone, having joined the retreat on Saturday.

"*On the true Vine.*

"1. 'I am the *true* Vine.'

"2. 'My Father the Husbandman.'

"3. If the branch bears no fruit—not poisonous, but none: idle, fruitless; then, taken away, cast out. Unprofitable servant.

"4. If it does bear some, the Husbandman will *purify* it: by active and passive purification, that it may bear more fruit.

“It is a privilege, an honour, to be purified by suffering. Do not resist, murmur : be not impatient.

“Here I am, Eternal Father ; do with me what Thou wilt ; only purify me by Thy gentle, wise, yet firm and sometimes severe hand, that I may bring forth more and better fruit.

“5. *3rd verse.* Am I clean? purified by the Eternal Father? If so, it is ‘by the Word that I have spoken to you.’ Christ’s words cleanse the mind.

“The sacramental word, *Ego absolvo te*, cleanses. Every word of Christ purifies.”

In the beginning of October Father Wilberforce went for two or three weeks to Malvern Wells, to supply for the priest there. Malvern, it will be remembered, had for a time been his home as a child, and the place had ever retained a strong hold on his affections. This last visit was a happy and cheering one. In spite of the state of weakness to which he was now reduced, he went about a great deal among the people, and an old friend remarked how wonderful was the way in which, even in that short time, he attracted and influenced souls for good.

In a letter to a Religious at Stone, he says :—

“This is an ideal place for health ; air and water of the best. Near the holy well, one old woman eighty-seven, another ninety-seven, and a man dead a few years ago, was one hundred and three !

“Ask me about the parable when I next visit Stone. He had not nailed his garnishment to the wall. I will look what C. à Lapidè says.

“Many hearty thanks for your greetings on my feast, and still more for your prayers.”

On his way home from Malvern, Father Wilberforce spent a couple of nights at St Dominic’s, Stone. His weakness and suffering condition were very apparent ; but though unable wholly to disguise his state of nervous restlessness and depression, he would not allow that he was worse than usual, and spoke of his regret at leaving Malvern, where, he said, “he had been able to work a little for souls.” He talked of the retreats he was going to give, and of the probability of being at Stone again by Christmas, but he was very evidently going rapidly downhill, and that was, in fact, his last visit.

A day or two after leaving the convent he wrote a note

touching in its tone of humble self-accusation, to one of the Community :—

“HAWKESYARD, *All Hallows Eve*, 1904.

“May we both be one day in the great multitude that no man can number, before the Throne. May you have a special grace to-morrow.

“For the last few days I have felt disgracefully cross, and absurdly irritable about nothing. Greatly the nerves, no doubt. The least noise is very trying. We are poor creatures at best, but when the nerves of the brain get out of order, very poor indeed.

“Our Lord knows all, but I fear He is not pleased when I allow the nerves to get control. Nervous irritability is a feature of diabetes, I know.

“Thank Mother Prioress for her kind hospitality. I was sorry to leave Malvern. It is a pleasure to do something, however little, for souls!”

A letter addressed to a lady living abroad, gives evidence of some revival of spirits, if not of health :—

“HAWKESYARD PRIORY,  
“RUGELEY, *Nov. 7*, 1904.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“When your most welcome letter came I was away from home, and ever since my return I have been intending to write, and reproaching myself for neglecting it; so to-day I determined to do so at once.

“I see no prospect of my coming to — again, as far as I can at present see, though things turn up unexpectedly. Yet I do not see why it should be so very difficult to indicate in writing what you feel, and desire to describe. I think, in fact I understand pretty well what you experience. The grand point is to persevere, whatever happens, and whatever you may feel, in your daily duties; prayer, Holy Mass, spiritual reading, works of mercy; leaving the result to God. Do it from love of our Lord, to please Him. Your life is very quiet and regular, and this, though in some respects it may be trying, is after all a true help. Quiet enables you to avoid dissipation, and think more of God, and regularity is a matter of great consequence in the spiritual life. Be careful not to read matters that will suggest doubts, and meet them by prompt and quiet turning to God, that He may enlighten the darkness of your mind.

“ ‘The wicked have told me fables, but not as Thy law’ (Ps. cxviii. and 85).

“ The closing of doors has not altogether been on one side. I, at least, am very willing to keep mine open.

“ I am delighted that your promise to me has had a steadying influence. Now renew it, and make a fresh offering of your whole being to God. Say to Him: ‘*Tuus sum ego; salvum me fac; quoniam justificationes Tuas non sum oblitus*’ (Ps. cxviii.).

“ France is certainly in a deplorable condition, and it is very sad. If you are sickened by the tone of the Press, why read it? Stick to what you can get hold of in the English Press. Try and get the *Tablet*, which has a very good and sensible tone. The fewer newspapers we read the better, I think. Time is short, and the night cometh when no man can work.

“ The Japanese are truly wonderful; the war is very awful, of course, but the Japanese have been marvellous, and Japan is now one of the great powers.

“ I am sorry your health has been poor, but God allows this suffering that you may have opportunity of penance. My health has been fair, considering all things; diabetes, etc. God is very good. The great thing is to look at Him. He knows all and has a loving reason for all.

“ Tyke<sup>1</sup> and I would soon be fast friends—salute him for me. A lay-brother of our Order, blessed Martin Porres, had a hospital for sick dogs in Lima in the seventeenth century.

“ As to the Christian scientists, I do not know much. They boast of cures by prayers. There is no reason to question the power of prayer, but a cure requires proof. Nervous maladies are often cured by mental suggestion, no doubt.

“ Have there been clear, sudden, and permanent cures of bones, lupus, cancer, etc.? The one great principle of the Christian scientists seems to be that there is no such thing as pain—that I should call ‘tommy-rot.’

“ Another Blossius will be out before Christmas, called *The Sanctuary of the Faithful Soul*.

“ I remain, yours devotedly in Christ,

“ FATHER B. WILBERFORCE, O.P.

“ How thankful I am to God that my lot is cast in England, not in France; in a free country, not where the first principles of freedom are unknown.”

<sup>1</sup> His friend's dog.

On the 15th of November, Father Wilberforce wrote to a Religious superior, explaining the necessity of making converts grasp the fact that they have to be taught by, and not to teach the Church. He says:—

“ Though Miss ——’s mind has never been satisfactory (never seemed quite converted or happy in the Faith), she has always been very reserved with me. Some years ago she came to me here as a Protestant, but I did not think her in a state of mind to be received. The reason was because I did not feel certain that she had grasped the truth that the Church was to guide and teach her, and not she the Church.

“ High Church folk have always had the idea that they are to teach the Church, that they have a mission to raise up the Church to their standard, and therefore they have great difficulty in grasping the opposite side: that the Church has to teach them, and not they the Church. They imagine High Churchism and God’s one Church are the same, and do not realise that they are *essentially* different; and that, by becoming Catholics, they absolutely and radically change the first principle of religion, and must give up the idea of teaching, guiding, and raising the Church, and must themselves be taught, guided, and raised by the Church.

“ To test Miss ——, I told her I could not receive her unless she submitted to Pope Leo XIII.’s condemnation of Protestant Orders. To say: ‘ The Pope says they are invalid and utterly null and void, but I know them to be valid,’ shows the old Protestant mind—proves that the mind is to teach and guide the Church, not to be taught and guided.

“ Because she would not say this, I would not receive her; nor would I any one.

“ Next time I met her, she was a Catholic: so I asked no questions, though I felt uneasy as to whether she had really grasped the fundamental principle. No one who has not, can be happy in the Church. If they want to teach and guide, and not to be taught and be guided, it is having a Protestant mind in the Catholic Church.

About the Bible. If it is only that she thinks our version translated from the Latin not so musical and attractive as the ordinary English one, that is unimportant and only natural. But if she rejected, for instance, Wisdom or Ecclesiasticus as apocryphal, that would be contrary to the Faith.”

Towards the end of November, Father Wilberforce gave a short retreat to the Carmelite Community at Darlington,

where he saw his old friend, Canon Greene, of Walker, Northumberland. In the course of conversation, Father Bertrand told the Canon of his intention of bringing out "a little book that might be useful in helping Religious to make their retreats"; but spoke also of the uncertainty of his life lasting long enough to enable him to carry out his purpose. This visit, in fact, seems to have prepared his friend to some extent for the news, a few weeks later, of Father Wilberforce's happy death. The projected *Retreat* remains, of course, unfinished.

Father Wilberforce had promised to preach a *Triduo* to the Benedictine nuns at Teignmouth, in preparation for the Jubilee of the definition of the Immaculate Conception, and, with the consent of his superiors—who, however, felt uneasy about him, and would gladly have sent another Father in his place—he left Hawkesyard on the 3rd of December; starting in cheerful spirits, declaring that the change would do him good.<sup>1</sup>

Two days before leaving Hawkesyard, he had written a note to a Religious at Stone:—

"HAWKESYARD PRIORY, Dec. 1, 1904.

"Last Friday I returned from Darlington.

"The Carmelites were very good and very kind. . . . Clare Abbey is next door; the two gardens touch each other.

"Next Saturday I am to 'proceed,' as the newspapers say, to Teignmouth, S. Devon, for *Triduo*; then to Chiswick, to preach; then to Kensington Square; then home.

"Shall I be wanted at Stone before Christmas? If so, when?

"I have just read Fouard's *St Peter*, and first vol. of *Life of our Lord*. Excellent. Worth reading many times. I never before realised that Saint Mary Magdalene came to our Lord at Naim, on the same day that He raised the dead man at the gate. I had a vague idea it was at Jerusalem!

"Thank Father O'Gorman for his letter. I am so glad he is better.

"Ever devotedly in J.M.D.,

"BERT. WILBERFORCE, O.P."

<sup>1</sup> His Prior afterwards related how greatly he was struck on this occasion by Father Bertrand's absolute childlike obedience, and by the anxiety he showed to do nothing that might be in the slightest degree against the wish of his superior.

From Teignmouth he wrote what seems to have been his last letter of spiritual direction:<sup>1</sup> some kind lines to a lady, showing how, even in the midst of his own great sufferings, he could not be unmindful of others; and, with singular appropriateness, closing his correspondence with words that certainly formed the dominant note of his spiritual direction:—

“ST SCHOLASTICA,  
“TEIGNMOUTH, Dec. 7, 1904.

“MY DEAR CHILD IN CHRIST,

“If it annoys your mother, it would please our Lord far better to give up [daily] Mass, and hear it in spirit. Trouble would aggravate her heart complaint.

“The contradiction, etc., bear as a penance: a much harder one than fasting on bread and water.

I am giving a *Triduo*, of three sermons a day, to the nuns of the Perpetual Adoration, for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. On Sunday I am to preach at Chiswick.

“I wish you every grace for to-morrow.

“‘Ever in our Lord,’ etc.

“‘Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart: Wait, I say, on the Lord’ (Ps. xxvi.)”

<sup>1</sup> This is the last letter that has reached us. The Prior of Hawkesyard received a note dated 8th December, which shows incidentally how little Father Wilberforce realised the critical state of his health, for in it he asked leave to buy a new pair of spectacles when in London.

## CHAPTER XVIII

DECEMBER 3RD—14TH, 1904

“And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Now the sting of death is sin. . . . But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 Cor. xv. 54-56.

FATHER WILBERFORCE arrived at St Scholastica's Abbey, Teignmouth, on the 3rd of December, and began his course of instructions to the community the next day.

The Rev. Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B., paid a visit to the abbey whilst Father Bertrand was there, and gives the following account of those last days:—

“I spent the winter of 1904-5 in South Devon, mainly at the Convent of the Assumption at Sidmouth. The doctors had sent me south with the hope that, by wintering in a mild climate, I might avoid a serious operation with which I was threatened. It was thus that I had the privilege of spending a few days at St Scholastica's Abbey, Teignmouth, in company with dear Father Bertrand, days which proved to be among the last he spent on earth. I came to Teignmouth to keep the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and found to my surprise and pleasure, that Father Bertrand was there, preaching a *Triduum* to the nuns to prepare them for the great solemnity. For it was the year of the jubilee of the promulgation of the dogma by Pius IX. Father Bertrand looked much as usual, thin, attenuated, and suffering, but he was cheerful as ever, and full of that dry, quaint humour which distinguished him. When I asked him how he was, he replied: ‘Pretty well, for a diabetic old buffer.’ But it soon became clear that he was far from well. The effort of saying Holy Mass was evidently a very great one, and the instructions he was giving taxed his feeble strength to the utmost. I remember remonstrating with him one morning, as he was about to drag himself to the altar. But he said, ‘If I were once to

give in, I might never be able to say Mass again,' and one felt that it was sheer force of will that kept him up. He would sit in the secular chapel during the divine office, and his groans were really distressing to hear. He used to pray aloud for patience and strength to bear his pains, though he was quite unconscious that he could be overheard. I remember saying to him, 'Dear Father, why do you not stay at home and rest? You really are not fit to go about the country as you do.' He said: 'Why, what should I do at home? I must work or I should die.' I said: 'Could you not teach the young Religious, or give yourself up to writing?' But he evidently felt he must go on, and he desired nothing better than to die in harness. He gained his wish.

"On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception he said Holy Mass at a side altar, with some difficulty. Then during the High Mass he came in and preached a sermon to the nuns at the grille. I little thought it would be the last sermon he would ever preach. The text was Genesis iii. 8: 'And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of the garden.' It was a very beautiful sermon on the sinlessness of the second Eve. The thoughts expressed in it were familiar to him, and I had heard him preach on the same lines before. After the High Mass we went out for a walk together, and decided to go to see the Notre Dame sisters at St Joseph's, the old home of the Redemptorist Fathers. We reached it with some difficulty, for the walk and the hills were almost too much for Father Bertrand's strength. Rather to our dismay, the superioress sent down to say that they were just going to have Benediction, and the consecration of some Children of Mary, and could we come up to the chapel. It was then 12 o'clock. Father Bertrand evidently found it trying to have to face another service, after our own long functions were but just ended; however, we had no choice but to go up. There was a long cantata in honour of the Immaculate Conception sung by the nuns and pupils, and during its execution poor Father Bertrand sat in the front bench, groaning and praying for patience! At last the superior had to take him out. The expedition had been a little too much for him. That evening he went down into Teignmouth to see a lady who wanted to consult him. He was not fit for it, but he insisted on walking down the very steep hill that leads from the abbey to the town.

"Next day was Friday, and he went to see his relation, Mr Froude, at Newton Abbot. He was very ill during this

visit, and he came back accompanied by one of the Miss Froudes, for he was perfectly unable to travel by himself. He stumbled into the house, more dead than alive. I was seriously alarmed, and insisted on his going to bed at once. He said, 'I have never felt so ill in my life.' I undressed him myself, for he could do nothing, and the sight of his poor wasted body gave one some idea as to the martyrdom he had been undergoing for years past. I put him to bed, and made him promise that he would not get up until he had seen the doctor. Next morning, however, he said that he felt better, and that he must go to London to keep the appointment he had made to preach at Chiswick on Sunday. I did my best to dissuade him, and at least to induce him to see the doctor, but all in vain. He said that he knew his own constitution better than any strange doctor could, that he had arranged to see several people that afternoon in London, whom he could not disappoint, and that, in short, go he must. I was only thankful that he did not insist on saying Mass, but agreed to take a cup of tea in bed. Before he got up, he asked me to hear his confession. He said, 'It is the day for my weekly confession, and I may not have opportunity in London'; and he made his confession as only saints know how to do. He was most touchingly grateful for anything one had been able to do for him. I went down with him in a cab to the station, and put him in the train. I say 'put him in,' for he was quite incapable of getting in without assistance. He went off cheerfully, but I felt that he ought not to have been allowed to go alone. But what could one do? That was his last railway journey, and he was soon to enter into rest."

The retreat at Teignmouth was Father Wilberforce's last work upon earth. He went to Chiswick—not, as he thought, to preach—but to be gathered to the embrace of the Lord whom he had loved and served, faithfully and whole-heartedly, for so many years.

It had been arranged for him to stay with his old friend, Mrs Latter, and when he crossed the threshold of her house in Barrowgate Road, he might have said with the Apostle whom he had taken for his model: "I am even now ready to be sacrificed, and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith. And there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy iv. 6, 7.

He did not, however, realise that the end was so near.

The journey from Devonshire had been made on one of the coldest days of an unusually cold December, and when Father Bertrand reached his destination, he was chilled through, and in a state of extreme exhaustion. He seemed, however, to rally after a time, and during dinner talked in his usual cheerful way; but his hostess noticed that his mind seemed to be running a good deal upon the subject of death, and he told her of several persons of his acquaintance who had died, with very little warning, of diabetic coma.

Mrs Latter felt a little anxious about him, seeing his great weakness, and persuaded him, though with difficulty, not to say Mass the next day. "When Sunday morning came," she writes, in her account of Father Wilberforce's last illness, "he seemed more ill and oppressed. He insisted, however, on going to hear Mass, though he could scarcely sit out the service. On his return he broke down altogether, and was fain to go to bed. Even then, he did not at once give up the hope of preaching in the evening, and wanted to see the doctor, chiefly that he might be assured that he really *could not* do so—anxious, up to the last, to act under obedience. He made light of his illness, and said he was sure the doctor would think him 'an old humbug!'

"During the next two days, Dr Bishop, though finding him very seriously ill, thought it quite possible that he might pull through, as there were then no dangerous symptoms, though he warned us that coma might intervene, in which case it must inevitably end fatally. This was exactly what happened."

Seeing the turn things had taken, at Father Wilberforce's own request Mrs Latter wrote and begged Father Henry Bartlett to come over from Haverstock Hill; he arrived on Monday, and remained a long time with the sick man. Father Bartlett had not only been Father Bertrand's novice-master, but had acted as his spiritual director through all the forty years of his religious life, and the two were very closely united in the bonds of holy friendship.<sup>1</sup>

A last sacrifice was being demanded of Father Wilber-

<sup>1</sup> Father Henry Bartlett never fully recovered from the effects of Father Bertrand's death. "It is as if a light had gone out in the Order and in the Catholic Church of England," he wrote a few days afterwards; and a light in his own life had also been quenched. His health and strength seemed gradually to fade away, and after a lingering illness, borne with the utmost patience and sweetness, he was called to his reward on 6th November 1905, and now lies in the churchyard at Woodchester, by the side of his old friend and disciple.

force, in that it was not to be given him to die, as he had always hoped to do, in the midst of his religious brethren; and so the presence, at this time, of his old spiritual Father must have been felt as a grace and consolation.

During this interview—though, from Father Bartlett's own account, they neither of them anticipated that it was to be their last on earth—Father Bertrand made his confession. As we have seen, he had asked Dom Bede Camm to hear him on the previous Saturday, and it is not therefore surprising that when Father Moss, before administering the Last Sacraments, asked him "if he would like to go to confession," he very simply remarked that "he had nothing to say." We may safely conjecture that the weekly confessions of such a soul would be of a kind to make an extraordinary one at the hour of death absolutely superfluous.

On the Monday evening Father Bertrand asked Mrs Latter to read "night prayers" for him: "the good old-fashioned ones," he said, "out of the *Garden of the Soul*." This she did, and was struck by the simplicity and fervour with which he followed and responded. It appears that, however hard had been the day's work, whatever office he had just been saying, or Church services he had officiated in, he never lay down to rest without repeating those simple English prayers, learnt, probably, in childhood.

A nursing sister had been sent for, who sat up with him, but Father Bertrand's kind hostess was too anxious to rest, and spent a great part of Sunday, and the whole of Monday night by his side. Between the fits of restlessness and oppression, which were very painful, he talked to her a good deal, and, as may be supposed, she has treasured those last words. He spoke again and again of our Lord's sufferings: how He would not allow Himself any one solace or relief, or give His Blessed Mother the consolation of administering to Him anything that might alleviate the intolerable anguish.

During the first night, when he was feeling slightly better, they touched upon many subjects: sermons, education, religion, etc.; Father Wilberforce speaking with his usual freedom and simplicity, and sometimes making characteristic little jokes and quaint remarks.

"We spoke of some of the saints," writes Mrs Latter, "and I said I was so much interested in those who attained heroic sanctity in our own times. The conditions of life seemed so different in former ages, that I could hardly believe the saints of old were of the same flesh and blood as myself. The austerities they practised would kill off most of us at starting. Father Bertrand assented with a little sigh, and

then said: 'The saints of former days aimed more at the height of sanctity than at the perfection of their offering. We, who cannot aim so high, must be careful to polish and perfect everything we do.'

"He told me of the many holy men and women of our own times whose names had been sent in for canonisation, and we agreed that the details of their lives would be of supreme interest.

"He spoke also much of our Lady, saying he had thought a great deal of the long intercourse between her and her Son, during the years of the Hidden Life, and of how He would have explained to her every allusion to Himself in the Psalms, so that she would be prepared for each detail of the Passion as it came. He promised to tell me later on what he had meant to say in his sermon about her. But that was not to be."

On the morning of Tuesday the 13th, there was a decided change for the worse. The restlessness increased to a painful extent, and he begged to be allowed to sit up. However, by the time the bed had been rearranged, he was glad to lie down again, and being more composed, he asked Mrs Latter to read him some of the *Following of Christ*. He then slept a little, and the watchers hoped the rest might bring relief; but he soon awoke to nausea, faintness, and nervous trembling, and though, following the doctor's directions, every effort was made to assuage the suffering, little could be done. His agony had in fact begun. Through it all, his docility and childlike obedience made a great impression on his nurses and the priests of the parish who came to visit him. He constantly referred to our Lord's far greater sufferings in His Passion, and compared the care that was being bestowed on him with the desolation of Christ on the Cross. In death as in life there was the same absence of self-consciousness, and the habit of looking at God and not at himself, acquired by long years of self-discipline, was now made manifest in every word and action.

Towards midday a change in the breathing became apparent, and when, a little later, Dr Bishop arrived, he at once noticed this symptom, and pronounced it to be the precursor of the fatal coma.

It must surely have been Father Wilberforce's guardian angel who inspired Father Raphael Moss that Tuesday morning, with the great desire to go over to Chiswick and see his Religious brother. Curiously enough, no alarm had been given by Father Henry, on his return home. Probably they had all by this time become more or less accustomed

to hear of Father Bertrand's serious attacks of illness, from which he seemed to have an almost miraculous power of recovery, and may have supposed him to be then, as he often put it himself, "no worse than usual" at such times. But Father Moss was on the point of leaving London, and as, up to within the last two months, he had been Father Wilberforce's prior at Hawkesyard, he must have known something of his physical condition. He therefore started off, determined not to miss the opportunity of saying good-bye, but without the slightest idea of what God in His merciful Providence was sending him to do.<sup>1</sup>

He found the patient as has just been described, unable to speak much, but very glad to see him, and brotherly and affectionate as ever. He read and prayed with him, and his presence seemed to calm the invalid's restlessness.

The doctor was of opinion that the last sacraments should be administered as soon as possible, so Father Raphael went up to announce to Father Bertrand that he was dying. He received the news with perfect tranquillity, and when asked if he felt afraid: "Afraid!" he answered with a calm smile; "afraid to die! Do you think I could be such a 'tom-fool' as to be afraid to do what I have been preparing for all my life?"

It was true. Life had been to him simply the road that leads to God, and death but the gate at the end that would be opened to let him through. Therefore when the time came, he was ready, and could die with as much simplicity as he had lived.

When Father Moss returned from the Church with the Blessed Sacrament and Holy Oils he found that drowsiness was already beginning, and speech had become more difficult. Father Bertrand, however, asked for absolution, and was able to follow all the prayers, making the responses himself. At the conclusion of the rite he folded his arms on his breast, and lay perfectly still. All uneasiness was over.

For a while he resisted the coma which was rapidly overpowering him, and asked one of his attendants if he *ought* not to try and rouse himself to say his office. He was told, "Certainly not"; and accepting the assurance as a child might have done, with a sigh of relief he turned on his side to sleep. Consciousness remained, however, a little longer, and the nurse tried to give him some milk; he could take but a drop,

<sup>1</sup> Father Bertrand, it seems, had told Father Moss many months before, that it was he who would give him the last sacraments; but the latter had at this time entirely forgotten the remark, which had probably been made casually.

and the Holy Viaticum was practically his last food. As she took away the glass, Father Bertrand thanked her, and murmured: "Our Lady could not give her Son milk when He hung upon the Cross."

They were his last words. He fell asleep, to wake in the presence of God.

Father Henry Bartlett returned to Chiswick on Tuesday evening; Mrs Henry Wilberforce was also there, and through the night they prayed and watched, with the members of the household, round the dying friar's bed. During the last twelve hours he appeared to be free from suffering: once, when the rosary was begun he tried to raise his hand to make the sign of the cross. The prayers for the dying were said more than once, as well as many others. He lay with eyes closed and head a little bent, and as the hours wore on, the watchers saw the furrows of suffering gradually smoothed away, and the countenance assumed an expression of calm majesty, reminding them, as one said, of some old pictures of the dying Christ.

The summons came about 5 A.M. on the morning of Wednesday, the 14th of December. The last prayers were again read, the last blessing given, and then that brave soul entered into eternal rest, passing from its frail earthly tenement so quietly, that those kneeling round knew not the exact moment of its departure.

The body was conveyed to Woodchester, and on Saturday the 17th day of December, the funeral took place with all the solemn and majestic ceremony that belongs to the Dominican rite of burial. The service was performed by the Provincial the Very Rev. Lawrence Shapcote; the Prior of Woodchester preaching the sermon.

The lid of the coffin had been removed, and the appearance of the dead Religious struck the beholders with a sort of awe. Those who had known Father Wilberforce, shrunk and almost burnt up with suffering, could now scarcely gaze their fill on the smooth, marble-white countenance shining with a radiant beauty, and smiling at them with the expression of one who had indeed "entered into the joy of his Lord." The members of the congregation gathered round the coffin, touching with their medals and rosaries the clasped hands, and praying to, rather than for him.

We can scarcely find better words with which to bring this history to a close, than those of Dom Bede Camm, who, at the conclusion of his account of the stay at Teignmouth, thus sums up his own impressions of Father Wilberforce's character:—

“What struck me most during those days was what has always struck me in Father Bertrand: first, his intense absorption in his work for God. He seemed to have little thought for anything else. He was essentially a man of God. The books you would find him reading were always spiritual books, and especially Holy Scripture. He loved Holy Scripture passionately, and studied it continually. He could truly have said with the Psalmist: ‘How have I loved Thy law, O Lord! it is my meditation all the day.’ ‘How sweet are Thy words unto my palate! more than honey to my mouth.’ ‘Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore my soul has sought them. The declaration of Thy words giveth light: and giveth understanding to little ones. I opened my mouth and panted: because I longed for Thy commandments.’ And, indeed, he might have added, though his humility would have never suffered him to do so: ‘I have understood more than all my teachers, because Thy testimonies are my understanding.’

“Although he was constantly engaged in the laborious work of giving retreats and missions, he never seemed to content himself with drawing on his old stores, but was continually making new meditations, drawing out new lessons from the inexhaustible treasure-house of Holy Scripture, and using every moment of time in order to increase his spiritual arsenal. He was, in fact, a man whose whole heart and soul was in his work; a Religious whose whole life was a better sermon than even his most moving discourses; one who had given himself entirely to the service of God, and lived for that alone. At least, this is how he always impressed me, and I feel sure that those who had opportunities of knowing him more intimately than I did, will give the same testimony.

“And what also impressed me so much in him was his absolute naturalness and simplicity. His sense of humour was delightful, and it was a joy to hear him tell an amusing story. He was very direct, almost blunt in his speech, and was apt to use quaint expressions, such as ‘tom-fool,’ of which he seemed specially fond. But he never lost sight of charity, and his strongest speeches were free from offence. You saw a twinkle in his eye, and did not take them more seriously than they were meant.

“But above all, he was a man of faith. It did one good

to talk to him, for he uplifted the whole question into the regions of faith, those regions in which he habitually lived and moved. Thus, to hear him speak of Holy Scripture was a revelation of his profound faith. He told me many stories of modern miracles, things which had come under his own knowledge, and it was evident that to him they were nothing extraordinary. He lived in the presence of God, and his sense of God's power and goodness filled his whole being. In a word, he was, as I have already said, a man of God.

"I must apologise for writing on what others are so far more capable of witnessing to. For I only saw Father Bertrand from time to time. He once gave us a retreat at Erdington, and then I first got to know him well. And to know him was to love and reverence him. May he rest in peace."

MEDITATION  
ON  
PREPARATION FOR DEATH<sup>1</sup>

I.

I AM now, O most loving Lord, fifty-seven years old. I have lived in the world far longer a time than Thou, my Lord, didst live, but how quickly it has passed, and how little has been done, and how much time has been wasted in the dust of useless things.

Many younger and stronger men die every day. This very day I heard of the death of Mr Henry Stourton, one whom I have known very well, having given two missions in his village in Yorkshire Holme, on Spalding Moor. He was only fifty-two, and appeared last April, when I was in his house for the mission, in robust health. Yet he died while out shooting. He was suddenly called before God. All the world would have imagined that I was far more likely to die than he, yet he has been called first. But how long remains for me? "You know not the day nor the hour."

I hope God will allow me to make my retreat next month—November—at Hawkesyard, as a direct preparation for death. My hope is, dear Lord, to make a general confession then, as if upon my death-bed, for it is most probable that my death, whenever it comes, will be sudden; very sudden. My dearest mother died very suddenly, by failure of heart, and it is very probable that I may die in the same way. I have diabetes, thank God, and that often ends very unexpectedly by suffusion of the brain.

This thought, thank God, does not make me feel the least nervous; but it does make me feel that I ought to do all I can to get ready, so as to go more quickly to God.

Do Thy own will, O dearest Lord, in me, as to life or death, because it is Thy will, in the way Thou dost will.

Do not, O my soul, trouble yourself as to whether the

<sup>1</sup> The above *Meditation* was written by Father Wilberforce in October 1896.

thought of death inspires you with fear. Death in itself does not frighten or trouble me. I very often feel how little I have ever done for God, and how many, beyond all power of calculation, are my sins, and how slight my virtues; but living longer will not cure that, and may increase my sins and diminish my virtues.

I fear the Judgment, though I do not fear it as much as I ought, or as much as I should if I were humble, that is, if I saw myself in the light of Truth.

But God leads souls by different paths, according to His will. Some in thinking of death feel intense fear, others are filled with a sweet confidence that honours the Mercy of God.

Formerly I felt more of the fear, and sometimes do now, but more often a feeling of peace in knowing that I am in God's hands. "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O God of Truth."

Both those who experience extreme fear, and those who live in peace, may, at the actual time of death, be tried by an agony of terror that will be part of their purgatory, and will purify them in this world; or, on the other hand, they may die in the most unruffled spiritual peace and joy.

I accept now beforehand, O most loving Father, the death Thou hast prepared and destined for me. Send me that which will be most for Thy glory, and most pleasing to Thy will. Whatever it may be, I wish now to thank Thee for it.

However painful in soul or body my last agony may be, it cannot be more painful than Thine, O Lord Jesus Christ, my God. My fear, my sorrow, cannot be greater than Thine. "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." Is it so great an evil, rather is it not a most desirable thing, to drink with Thee, O Lord, out of that chalice, of which Thou didst say: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!"

But there is one bitter ingredient that was not and could not be in Thy chalice, O Lord, that is abundant in mine, and that is personal sin. The bitterest thing in Thine was sin; but the sins of others, not Thine own. The bitterest thing in mine is the multitude of my own iniquity, the numberless wilful sins I have committed, in thought, word, deed, and omission; in boyhood, youth, and manhood; as a layman, a Priest, a Religious.

Take away this poison out of the chalice of my death, O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, and then do with me what Thou wilt.

"The chalice which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" Yea, Lord, with Thy grace and help I will joyfully drink it; but the chalice I have mixed myself, and filled to

the brim with the disgusting filth of sin, take that draught from me. Give me grace to drink Thy chalice, not my own.

Here I am, O Lord, do with me whatever Thou wilt ; in life or in death : only give me Thy Holy Love.

## II.

Do not fear death, O my soul. Why should you? Surely for a Christian it is not so much a punishment, though I deserve it to be one, as an act of self-sacrifice, the last and greatest that God demands in this life. To give up all for Him. Why, surely, I have done that at my Profession. I am, or ought to be, dead to the world now. I belong utterly to God, or ought so to belong.

If, at this instant, God sent St Raphael (it is his Feast to-day) to ask me to do a very painful thing, costing self-love much, should I not be willing, with God's grace, to undergo it at once joyfully, to please Him and do His gracious will? I hope so. I hope I should say, without a moment's hesitation, Here I am, O Lord, do with me what Thou wilt ; only give me Thy holy love!

What then, if St Raphael were to add, on the part of God, that the moment I had done this act of self-sacrifice I should enter into the joy of my Lord, or at least be absolutely certain of entering it after a time, should I not be rejoiced? Should I not try to embrace it with fervour, to give it all possible perfection, to meet it with love, peace, and joy?

God in His goodness asks of me the cheerful sacrifice of my life, and does not will that I should have no consolation, but even joy, in making it, in His honour and to please Him.

“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.”

These are comforting words that come direct from heaven, for St John says: “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying to me: Write!”

What was he to write? A ninth beatitude, that comes from the same adorable lips that uttered the other eight!

“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. From henceforth, now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them” (Apoc. xiv. 13).

Work then, O my soul ; work, dearly beloved, till you die in the Lord ; then rest ; but no rest till then. Do works now that will follow you then, and thus prepare for death.

Fear not too much this grand sacrifice, so solemn, so august, that will be the last on earth. The Church calls the death of the saints their birthday. The true birthday of their true and never-ending life.

If it be His will, our loving Lord, whose will be ever praised, can make the moment of death one of surpassing sweetness and joy.

He did so for His Mother ; He has done so for countless others, who were not, like Her Majesty, without sin. St Dominic rejoiced, and also St Lewis Bertrand, at the last hour.

Of Suarez it is related that he smiled when departing, and said : " I never knew it was so sweet to die ! " What made it sweet ? Love. Love God's will, and death will lose all bitterness, and will be sweet indeed.

True devotion to our tender Mother Mary will give sweetness and joy to our death. St Pius V. knew this, and to secure it for us all, added to the Hail Mary the words, " Now, and at the hour of our death, " so that, if said well, every Hail Mary—and how many we say—is a petition to our Lady to come and help us with the soothing unction of her presence at the hour of our death. Will she not hear ! Come, dear Queen and Mother, to help me at the moment of my death.

Suarez has left it recorded that every time he recited the *Ave Maria*, he dwelt particularly on those words : " Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death, " abandoning his last moments to the loving care of the blessed Virgin. She did not fail him, but surrounded him with the legions of the angels of whom she is the Queen, and inundated his happy soul with such spiritual joy that his last hour was a foretaste of heaven.

Recite this prayer in preparation for death, day by day, and when nature fears, cry out aloud, " Pray for us now, and at the hour of our death ! "

### III.

Sometimes it happens that, as advancing years make death certain, terror fills the soul, especially if there is reason to look forward to the probability of being much alone and isolated at the hour of death. We may have to meet our

enemy at that supreme moment, alone, and to fight single-handed.

Here we must have recourse to confidence in God, perfect trust in Him, abandonment into His gracious, loving arms. Some saints (for instance, Father Spencer) have carried their confidence so far as to ask God, as a favour, that at death they may be alone with Him. Perhaps the best is to abandon all into the hands of our loving Saviour, putting our interests, which are His own, into His hands, and begging Him to help us as He pleases, at our last hour. With Him we are safe: "Even if He were to kill me, still will I hope in Him" (Job xiii. 15).

This petition to our Lord to take upon Himself your preparation for death, with all its circumstances, exterior and interior, is one of those certainly suggested by the Holy Ghost asking for you, "with unutterable groanings." It is implied in the act of entire abandonment into God's hands.

I am safe in the hands of God, those hands that made me, that have guided me through life, that have fed me, that were pierced for me on the Cross, that have so often been raised to bless me. No hair of my head can fall without His knowledge and will, and His wisdom knows what will be best for me at death, His power can provide what is best, His goodness will do so, if I love Him.

If I seem to be left, even by Him, I become more conformed to His own image, who cried out in desolation on the Cross, which was His death-bed: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

#### IV.

##### *How to prepare for Death.*

Death is for the Christian soul the first meeting with God, the meeting Him at the end of the mystery of this life. Up to then we only see Him typified in His creatures, hidden in them, or annihilated under the veil of the most holy Eucharist. With this thought, there is no difficulty in seeing how to prepare for death.

I have only to do fervently every day what I ought to do in order to be ready for Holy Communion, for both Holy Communion and death lead me to Jesus Christ, the one to Him veiled, the other to Him visible.

The very dispositions that a good soul strives to have for Holy Communion are the very ones to prepare for death. The practice of the Christian life which makes souls more and more perfect, is the best preparation for a holy death.

By the Christian and Religious life you constantly tend towards Jesus Christ; by a holy death you are united to Him once and for ever, with no fear of losing Him again.

At the moment when, holding the Sacred Host in my unworthy hands, I prepare to receive Him who is there hidden and to unite myself to Him, if death came I should be united to Him for ever, all between us being broken down and removed. Death would only break down the wall between me and Him, sever the chains of flesh that keep me from Him.

It is not my angel-guardian who has the charge of guiding me into eternity, though he is my companion, my friend, my protector. It is the King of Angels Himself who comes to direct me: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall want for nothing." He comes to enlighten me: "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation." His own hands guide me: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

Do not be troubled, O my soul, as to when death will come; it will come when God wills; and be sure, if you love Him, it will come *at the hour of mercy*. It is one of those things, and the most important of all, that will work together unto good, if only you love God. Who can doubt it?

Let your heart, therefore, be full of joy and confidence, then, when death draws near, as the heart of a son returning to his father's house after a prolonged absence. Each thing reminds him of his home, and speaks of his father's love and welcome.

He waits with His arms extended to greet you, His hands ready to enfold you to His heart, and His lips ready to give you the kiss of eternal peace, and to say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

## V.

### *Habitual Preparation.*

The best preparation for death must be to do everything possible to make the union of my soul with Christ, and through Him with God, more and more close and intimate.

The ties that unite me to Him will not be broken by death, but will prevent me from falling into the abyss, so that I must bind them faster and closer: "Let me not be separated from Thee."

One of the best means of binding my soul securely to Him is confidence and utter abandonment into His hands. "Join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end" (Ecclesiasticus ii.). When death has come to take away carnal, natural life, confidence in God, union with Him will increase and perfect your true life, spiritual life, life that will be everlasting. His love is the motive of this confidence. Love gives it.

Another motive is the truth that if we love Him, all things work together for our good. Whatever circumstances, therefore, surround you as death approaches, be certain that they will work together for your good, if only you love God. Delight, then, in Him and His will, give yourself to Him and abandon all to Him, and all will be well, and you will "praise the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."

Cut away, O Lord, burn and tear away all that Thou seest in me contrary to Thee and Thy holy will, that I may be Thine, and Thine alone, for ever!

Live in such a way that death may bring joy, not sorrow; hope, not fear; peace, not trouble.

After foretelling the signs that will come before the last day, our Lord says to His own, to those that love Him: "See that ye be not troubled" (St Matt. xxiv. 6). "Lift up your heads, know that your deliverance hath come."

The same is true when death comes. This moment, so important for all, so terrible for the sinner, who delights in this world only, whose treasure is here below and therefore his heart with it, is for those who love God and love His coming, who delight in Him, whose treasure is in heaven, a time of deliverance, that will bring joy. Deliverance from sin and the danger of sin, from temptations, from the manifold miseries of this mortal life. But to enjoy this confidence, we must love Jesus Christ, carry our cross daily, and follow Him perseveringly.

"When all these are fulfilled, rejoice, be full of hope, for your salvation draweth nigh."

Rejoice, then, when death approacheth, if only you love God.

At the hour of death, the sufferings of life will console me, if only I am now patient and bear them for God.

We are on earth to prepare ourselves for heaven. Death

is the only gate by which we can pass into Eternal Life, and be united with God, our first beginning and our last end.

“May my soul die the death of the just, and may my last end be like unto his” (Num. xxiii.)

Every Priest and Religious should strive to merit the following epitaph. Blessed is he who could truly have it written on his tombstone by the Hand of Truth.

HIC REQUIESCIT

REVERENDUS PATER FRATER — — —,  
ORDINIS PRÆDICATORUM,

Qui vixit ut dixit :  
Obiit ut vixit :  
Vivit, ut obiit,  
id est in et cum Domino.

How blessed should I be, if my Guardian Angel could inscribe this on the wooden cross that will soon mark the place where my body will lie, and on which will appear :—

REV. P. F. BERTRANDUS WILBERFORCE, O.P.

Obiit anno (?)

Requiescat in Pace !

• DOMINE •

HIC • URE • HIC • SECA

HIC • NON • PARCAS

UT • IN • ÆTERNUM • PARCAS

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