

Father
Victor Braun

By FERDINAND FRODL, S.J.

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Mother General, Chigwell, on the occasion of the
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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE FROM THE FRENCH EDITION

This translation might better be called an adaptation and that even in the broad sense, since this volume is considerably larger than the (German) book by Father Frodl upon which it is based.

Our heartfelt thanks are hereby expressed to the Reverend Mother General of the Servants of the Sacred Heart * who obliged us by placing the archives of the motherhouse at our disposal, and to Canon Thevenot, the author of a History of the Congregation, from whom we have borrowed a goodly number of pages.

* Parent institute of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

PREFACE

by HIS EXCELLENCY BISHOP ROLAND-GOSSELIN
of Versailles

On Easter Monday, April 5, 1926, the very morrow of the day whereon His Lordship Bishop Gibier had officially presented his coadjutor to the clergy and faithful in his cathedral, my first visit was paid to the Motherhouse of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The ten years which have since transpired have but confirmed my first impression regarding the splendid spirit of that fine religious family while at the same time they have continued to develop in my heart feelings of the keenest gratitude for the services of every kind which they render in a large number of our parishes, several of our hospitals, and our three diocesan seminaries.

I have therefore read eagerly the life of their pious founder, Father Victor Braun, and consider it a happiness to present it to its readers.

I understood from it and appreciated still more the religious formation of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to such an extent as to be inclined to take literally the very humble statement of Father Braun: "It is the Sacred Heart that is the founder of the Congregation; I am only its servant."

The works of God are not improvisations; they are long in preparation. He fashions and adapts the in-

strument which He is pleased to use in their accomplishment.

By means of what trials, vicissitudes, what a series of attempts, disappointments and gropings did not Father Victor Braun discover his ultimate vocation and attain the end Providence had assigned to him; it is interesting and instructive to be allowed to glimpse them for the sake of one's own orientation and the direction of souls according to the designs of God.

Thrice on the road to the sanctuary, at the ages of fourteen, eighteen and twenty-five years, he was impeded by illness and threatened with not being able to follow his attraction for the priesthood. Once he had been ordained he could affirm that he had reached the altar "by a path strewn with difficulties and obstacles." No doubt, he had thus been led to the conviction that he himself must be a victim as well as a priest, after the example of Jesus Christ.

That which concerns the apostle is to communicate to souls the life of grace; that is accomplished above all by the sacrifice of the Cross which Christ continues to offer at Mass and in the suffering members of His mystical body.

During the twelve years following his ordination, Abbé Braun was tossed about from pillar to post, circumstances beyond his control preventing him from settling down in any position. Nevertheless, each of the stages he passed through provided him with an opportunity of deepening his interior life, of practicing more and more detachment, of acquiring finally the knowledge of children's souls and of the works whose apostle he would later become.

Desirous of tending to perfection, he considered embracing the religious life. He would gladly have entered the Society of Jesus, as his brother had done; but his frail health presented an obstacle. Later he believed himself to be sufficiently robust to seek admission to the novitiate of the Fathers of Mercy; but he was presuming too much on his strength, and was obliged to return to his family and recover his health once more. Having reached the age of thirty-eight, he finally managed to satisfy his aspirations by entering the Institute of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul. Soon he recognized that he had found his element there.

Having been sent to work among the laboring classes of Notre Dame de Grâce at Grenelle, he established a mission for the Alsatians and Germans, whose language he knew. This was the occasion for his participating in a Catholic Day at Wurtzburg in 1864, during which a conference on true devotion to the Sacred Heart enlightened him in a flash, after the manner of a revelation. Some time later, he organized a center for unemployed German servant-girls which he called the "Sacred Heart Asylum." In vain did he look for Religious who would undertake its direction, which he then decided to place in the hands of some of his penitents. On October 17, 1866, the feast of St. Margaret Mary, he consecrated them to the Sacred Heart. It is from that blessed day that the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus love to date their foundation. The tiny mustard seed was to become a great tree. With what turbulent vicissitudes its growth was accompanied the following pages will narrate in

detail. They will show above all how Father Braun succeeded in maintaining an undisturbed confidence toward the Sacred Heart amid every kind of trial; far from ever discouraging him, they rather inspired him lovingly to recognize therein the mark of divine favor.

The spiritual daughters of Father Braun will find delight and profit in reading and re-reading the life of their founder. They will learn in his school that, in the order of grace, purely natural activity can never be more than useless, unproductive agitation. "The gift which must be offered to the poor," he would say, "is not a picture, nor a ticket for bread, meat or coal; it is the very Heart of Jesus that must be brought to them." Hence a thousand practical counsels which he gave in his familiar conferences, so that religious souls might labor to identify themselves with Our Lord by an ever more intimate communion with His will, His sacrifice, His love, His Heart.

May the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus fulfill in their daily lives the ideal outlined by Father Victor Braun and perfectly expressed in the motto he himself gave the Congregation: "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!"

✠ BENJAMIN OCTAVE
Bishop of Versailles

Versailles, August 20, 1936, feast of St. Bernard.

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FATHER VICTOR BRAUN

I

A CHRISTIAN HOME

Saint-Avold is a little town in Lorraine at the entrance to the charming valley formed by the River Rosselle. Its name is derived from a very ancient Benedictine abbey, dating from the sixth century, which assumed the name of St. Nabord or St. Avold when the relics of that martyr were brought thither.

Because of its strategic position, this peaceful spot became on several occasions the scene of important military operations. During the Thirty Years War, Duke Charles IV of Lorraine established his headquarters there. In 1870, the first and second corps of the French army camped at Saint-Avold.

It was in 1634 that a physician from the Tyrol, Bernhard Braun by name, had accompanied the army of Duke Charles into Lorraine. When the Imperial troops departed, Bernhard Braun remained at Saint-Avold to attend the wounded of which there were a great number. The local population, too, stricken by contagious diseases, offered him an opportunity of exercising his profession. Pillaged and exhausted by famine, the whole countryside had succumbed to the greatest destitution. The monks of the abbey were happy to find in Dr. Braun an ever attentive and devoted savior and the inhabitants manifested their gratitude toward the kindly physician. Soon the latter

began to feel at home among them and gave up the idea of returning to his faraway homeland, so that he settled down in the locality. At the wish of the Duke of Lorraine and the order to the government, he was nominated to the Senate in 1652 and appointed sheriff for the town and its environs.

Thus it was that Bernhard Braun established at Saint-Avold a family whence the subject of our biography would eventually spring. He transmitted to his children a deep spirit of faith which was to be characteristic of all subsequent generations; scarcely a family among his descendants but was blessed with one or several priestly or religious vocations. Such, among others, was that of Anthony Nicholas Braun, the father of two priests, one of whom was to become the founder of the Congregation of Servants of the Sacred Heart, and the other a Jesuit, who died in Canada in 1885.

Anthony Nicholas Braun was an estimable merchant of the Rue de Hambourg, known today as Rue Poincaré. He kept a store of wines, woolens and spices. It was in the days of Napoleon, and the whole country suffered from the depredations of the troops passing that way. Nicholas Braun, on his part, met with serious reverses of fortune and found himself hard pressed to support and provide for his large family. But he did not on that account lose his cheerful disposition based, as it was, upon an unshakable confidence in God. His wife, Marie Gabrielle Richard, came of a family which was well worthy of her partner; four of her paternal uncles had embraced the ecclesiastical state, two in the secular clergy and two among the Franciscans. Because of having refused to take the

civil oath, they had died in exile. One of her aunts was a Canoness at Augsburg.

It was into this profoundly Christian environment that God caused the child of predilection who was Victor Braun to see the light of day.

Victor was born on June 5, 1825, and was baptized the same day. He was the ninth in a family destined to number eleven children. Surrounded by brothers and sisters who were full of fun and by the tender care of a pious mother, he lived through a delightfully happy childhood.

What sentiments formed the mental atmosphere of little Victor and the joyous group of his brothers and sisters may well be guessed from the tales with which their grandmother Braun regaled them. The Revolution had left her with many stirring memories. Several times holy Mass had been celebrated under their roof; priests had been hidden away in the house. Such deeds could not fail to leave a deep impression upon the hearts of the children. One of these stories must, doubtless, have struck them more especially since it had to do with a landmark which they had right at hand.

Nearby Saint-Avold was a little sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Good Help where the inhabitants had long venerated a very ancient statue of the most holy Virgin. A large number of ex-votos testified to the abundant favors granted to pilgrims at this spot.

Then came the French Revolution; churches were pillaged, priests hunted and put to death. Saint-Avold was not spared by the scourge. An unleashed mob marched upon the chapel and sacked the sanctuary. The statue was torn from its pedestal, a rope tied

about its neck and it was dragged in the mud amid mocking cries. Grandmother Braun had witnessed this outrage; cowering within doors, she had sent her little boy, Nicholas, the father of our Victor, to follow behind the howling mob and observe what would become of the statue. The youngster returned to tell her that they had dragged the statue as far as the bridge of Moulin-Neuf, one kilometer beyond the town, and had there cast it into the stream. When night had fallen, Mme. Braun and two neighbors, Mme. Simonin and the police constable, Becker, had gone out to rescue the statue which was then concealed in the house of Mme. Simonin. When the revolutionists perceived that the statue was no longer lying in the stream, their suspicions were immediately aroused and they appeared, accompanied by the police, to search the premises of both the Braun and Simonin households. Becker was with them; so well did the gallant constable act the part of an irate officer of the law that he succeeded in keeping the mob far from the hiding-place. Mme. Braun had been betrayed to the revolutionary tribunal. But here again Becker had come to her help. He had shouted at her: "What brings you here? Haven't you anything better to do than wander about the streets? Get home as fast as you can and look after those brats of yours!" The good grandmother didn't have to be told twice. After a time she had been obliged, in spite of all, to leave town, and had betaken herself to her brothers and sisters at Grosstaucher. She had found it necessary to hide for a whole month in the woods. Finally, peace and order

having been reestablished, she was able to return to her family. The statue was soon drawn from its hiding-place, replaced in its chapel and, to the greatest joy of the Catholic population of Saint-Avold, the sanctuary was restored. About 1800, a more imposing structure had been built on the site of the former small chapel; it is today the parish church of Valmont. "That is why," she would say as she wound up her story, "when you go again with your parents to Valmont you must give thanks to the Blessed Virgin."

The children never wearied of listening to her. They were not strangers in Valmont and they had often seen and admired the statue; now the shrine took on a new splendor in their eyes: they had personal associations with it.

Little Victor drank in these tales with all his soul. The interior action of grace escapes our observation. But by means of the exterior graces God grants to a man something may be surmised of what transpires in the depths of his soul, especially when this is to some extent apparent. As a matter of fact, Victor manifested, even as a small child, a tender love for the Blessed Virgin which he was to preserve throughout his life. Are we not justified in thinking that this devotion may well have originated in those first childhood impressions which we have just recounted?

In the Braun household the liturgical feasts were observed as family celebrations; they truly lived with the Church. Every evening some pious reading was made and the rosary was recited in common. After the lives of the saints, they never failed to read a

chapter from the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*. At that time, these *Annals* were eagerly awaited by their subscribers. They contained accounts of missionary experiences which breathed freshness and life. Therein were recounted the successes and the obstacles encountered by the missionaries in their apostolic labors. We know that Anthony, who was ten years older than Victor, owed to these readings his earliest attraction to the vocation of a religious and a missionary. Victor, too, had his mind filled with these accounts and felt but one desire: that of becoming a missionary himself. The seriousness and energy with which, in his boyish simplicity, he strove to realize his ambition is quite characteristic. He and a playmate of his own age, who was later to become pastor of Brettnach, Abbé Kremer, undertook to live in a solitary cave on the slope of a hill in the neighborhood of the town, so as to train themselves, as they said, for the life of a missionary.

Victor was a lively, wide-awake, light-hearted youngster. The atmosphere of his home cultivated in him a simple piety devoid of affectation. Whatever was far-fetched or strained instinctively repelled him throughout his life. What distinguished him as a child was not any singular or extraordinary characteristic, but a kind of abhorrence for anything slipshod. He evinced an intrepid spirit of faith and did all that he did wholeheartedly. His catechism lessons were especially dear to him; when he was preparing for his first Communion, he redoubled his application to

them in such wise that he received the first prize in the competitive examination.

He grew up thus in the peaceful, wholesome environment of a family who lived on intimate terms with God, preparing himself to become one day a good laborer in the service of divine Providence.

II

VOCATION

Amid such pious surroundings, it is not surprising that Victor should have his attention drawn toward the priesthood. As children often do, he played at saying Mass and preaching sermons. This is not always a sign of a priestly vocation, any more than a desire to imitate the hard, self-sacrificing life of a missionary should be immediately interpreted as a vocation to the missions; healthy, vigorous youngsters are naturally attracted to an adventurous life demanding courage and endurance. But the motive which had inclined Victor and his little friend to retire into their cave was quite different. Their wills were seriously determined to embrace such a life and to make use of every means of achieving the end they had set for themselves. It was the call of grace.

Victor consequently entered the minor seminary of Metz, where his older brother Anthony had preceded him. Anthony had already completed his rhetoric and philosophy and was about to enter the Society of Jesus. While awaiting to be admitted to the novitiate, he remained at the junior seminary as an instructor. Victor was received into the first class.

In August, 1839, Anthony said farewell to his beloved parents, brothers and sisters. He was entering the novitiate which was then at Tronchienne in Belgium. His departure made a painful, profound im-

pression on Victor. From that time on he felt quite alone and found the separation from his brother all the more difficult to bear inasmuch as his own health had been wavering for some little time. A kind of nervous depression soon made all study an impossibility and obliged him to leave his classes and return to his family. There he had to content himself with a limited application to his books, interspersed with long walks in the picturesque countryside about Saint-Avold. The wooded hills, the brooks, the solitary pathways became once more his familiar friends. He often went on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Help at Valmont to confide to her his sorrow; was his life not entirely dedicated to his ideal which seemed now impossible of fulfillment? Providence, no doubt, deemed him strong enough to endure this severe trial. At the age of fourteen he had been set by God at the school of suffering for his sanctification and better apprenticeship in the great mission which awaited him.

After some months, however, his health improved sufficiently to enable him to resume his studies at the seminary in Metz. But the trial had worked a change in him. His sister, Jeanne, writes on April 15, 1840, to her brother Alexis, who was six years Victor's senior: "This morning we received Victor's report card; it is very satisfactory in every respect, from the point of view of deportment as well as studies. He has grown a great deal; you would hardly recognize him. He is expecting to meet you here at Easter; I had given him that hope in my last letter; but now that pleasure is deferred until later. I hope, just the same, that you will be able to get together for a few weeks during the

long vacation. His personality has changed at least as much as his appearance; he is so sensible, so poised, so kindly that he seems like a little man already. I think you would be envious if you saw him." And his father writes in the same letter: ". . . Today we received Victor's report card; we are very pleased. In his studies he has mostly the grade of "Excellent" or "Good." You will be amazed when you see him, he has changed so much for the better."

As we have said, Victor never did anything by halves, especially where religion was concerned. Ripened by suffering, he had become to a still greater degree an interior soul.

Now he had reached adolescence. It was not an awkward age for him. Quite the contrary, he was working diligently and preparing himself with more earnestness than ever for his great ideal. An ardent temperament was at the service of a high calling. Sometimes indeed his zeal manifested itself in a youthful over-enthusiasm which made it apparent that his interior life had not yet attained its full maturity. He was too concerned about himself and lacked a complete confidence in the grace that comes from God. In a letter to his brother Anthony he speaks at length of his studies and shows himself somewhat depressed because his weak health prevents him from devoting himself to them fully. Anthony replies to him:

My dear Victor,

I read with great interest all the details you give me regarding your studies, and I find that, in spite of poor health, you have nevertheless made quite some progress Cheer up, my dear Victor! With a little patience

you will reach your goal. But if your health should not permit you to make the effort you would like to make, well then, as long as you are weak you can gain in another direction what you lose with respect to learning. A priest needs something else besides knowledge; he needs virtue above all. If the good God visits us with illness, He does so that we may profit thereby to advance in virtue. Let us ask God for good health, but let us thank Him, too, when He sends us sickness, for sickness accepted with gratitude is a great good and draws down upon us new graces. Since you want to consecrate yourself to the good God in the priesthood, you also must discover what one endures when called by God to that holy state. The devil would like to dissuade you from it by representing to you your incapacity. When he tries to discourage you by such ideas, answer him that he is not telling you anything new, that you are well aware of your unworthiness, but that you place all your confidence in Jesus Christ and hope to do, by His grace, what you could not do by your own power. Entrust yourself to Jesus and Mary and then take courage and go ahead! Shut the mouth of the evil one and say to him: "Be off with you, wretch, I have no business with you." Treat him with contempt, say a *Memorare* to the Blessed Virgin, and all will be well.

At the age of eighteen, Victor was able to enter the major seminary and begin his theology course. But he was soon prevented from continuing by further trials of ill health. He was obliged to return to his family and go on with his theological studies under the direction of the curates at Saint-Avoid. Once more he saw the goal he so ardently desired receding from his grasp. His brother Anthony consoles him in a letter written from Laval:

My dear Victor:

I firmly trust that the good God is not going to leave you midway on the road. He will give you the strength necessary to complete your studies. However, there is no need to be in such a hurry. If your health demands some rest, take a full year of relaxation so as to recover completely. You are not twenty yet; it is not absolutely necessary for you to reach the priesthood just at the age of twenty-five. I think your philosophy course is a little weak, your studies have been interrupted so often; but with a little courage and patience you will come out all right.

This good counsel fell upon fertile soil. Victor took courage once more. He learned to depend upon God alone, not to desire the priesthood with the thought of giving something to God. Now he was fully persuaded that he must be a victim himself as well as a priest, like Jesus Christ, so that through him the sacrifice of the cross and the work of the Redemption might be accomplished. He said to his mother who was worried about his health: "Dear mama, if only I become a priest, no matter when it may be, I shall be happy." He understood that what matters in the priesthood is to communicate the life of grace, and that this is done primarily by the sacrifice of the cross which Christ continues to offer in the Mass and in the suffering members of His mystical body.

On February 23, 1850, he received Minor Orders. Full of joy, he could see the sanctuary opening before him.

But shortly afterwards the doors seemed to be once more shut against him. It was a hard blow for him

to learn he could not receive Holy Orders because of his state of health. With his illness he ran the risk of becoming a burden to the diocese and his theological studies, too often interrupted, were deemed insufficient. So then, Victor had heard Our Lord's call ever more clearly and distinctly; he had responded to it so far with unwavering fidelity, and now it had become impossible for his ardent desire to be realized. He prayed with all his soul: "Lord, I have put my trust in Thee, let me not be confounded."

This straightforward prayer was heard. Bishop Dupont des Loges finally agreed to ordain him on two conditions: the family of the future priest were to give their assurance of never leaving him in want. Moreover he was to present himself on certain dates for further examinations in theology. After so many trials, Victor accepted the second condition joyfully and without the slightest hesitation. As for the first condition, his father who had rejoined him at Metz, gave his Lordship the promise required. On May 18, 1850, then, Victor could write to his mother:

Dear Mama,

I hasten to announce to you the good news you are awaiting. A week from today, at the very time that I am writing to you, I shall be a Sub-Deacon. Yesterday at noon I passed my examination before Mgr. Beauvallet, the Vicar General. Monsignor seemed very satisfied with my answers. Under God, I owe this success to the good souls who have obtained this grace for me by their prayers. I thank them and I shall pay them back one day, especially on the day of my ordination. So now the day is approaching which you desire so ardently and which you

feared you would never see, the day when the Lord will be my inheritance and I shall solemnly swear to devote my heart to Him and to love Him alone. I hope, my dearest mama, that you will come with my sisters. Papa bids me invite you

On May 25, he received the sub-diaconate and, on December 22 of the same year, the diaconate. Christmas of that year of 1850 was a beautiful one; after years of longing and of darkness, a radiant day was at last dawning for him, just as that long ago day had shone brilliantly upon the plains of Bethlehem when the heavenly messengers announced the new-born Saviour. At midnight Mass in his beloved church of Saint-Avold, Victor had the joy of announcing from the altar the glad tidings of the Gospel.

Some months later, at the seminary of Metz, the theologians were hard at work on the final preparations for their ordination. Victor was among them! There was no perturbation or nervous haste to be observed in him, but a smiling, tranquil joy. He wrote to his parents:

My dear Parents,

The great day is approaching when I shall hear addressed to me: "Thou art a priest for eternity. The Lord is thy inheritance forever." Yes, in a few days, some words which I, Victor, shall pronounce over a little bread and wine, will open Heaven and cause the King of the universe to descend therefrom. It seems a dream to me; and yet it is an unfathomable reality which makes me tremble and, at the same time, overwhelms me with joy. Here I am arrived at the point to which the adorable paternal Providence of God has willed to conduct me by a path

which was strewn with difficulties and obstacles. I should be most guilty if I were one day to forget so many benefits, if I were to become lukewarm in his service instead of responding to the graces I have received so abundantly and which I still hope for in the future from His bounty. I ask my dear little sister Mary [who was then seven years of age] to bring a candle to the sanctuary of Valmont and to pray for me very much there before the Blessed Virgin.

On June 14, 1851, the Saturday before the feast of the Holy Trinity, Victor was ordained priest. On the following day, at Saint-Avoid, he celebrated his first Mass. The whole Braun family was present, with the exception of his dear Anthony, whose superiors had sent him to Canada and who had been obliged to depart a few days before, on June 9. Victor's joy was overflowing; he was a priest for eternity.

III

PROVIDENTIAL PREPARATIONS

After the beautiful days of his ordination and first Mass, Victor was able to remain two months longer with his family. Plenty of rest and solitary walks through the smiling vales and shady paths completed the work of restoring his health. Grateful and loyal, he often went to visit the sanctuary of Valmont, Our Lady of Good Help. In the course of these hours of recollection and contemplation, during which he looked back over the way he had come, he saw more and more manifest in his life the fatherly hand of God, and his heart overflowed with gratitude. Bravely, he awaited his appointment, firmly resolved to abandon himself completely to the guidance of Providence.

At the beginning of the academic year, his Bishop, apprised of the improvement in his health, summoned him to Metz, where his cousin, Eugene Braun was principal of a school, St. Augustine's Academy. Victor found himself in charge of the youngsters under twelve years of age, and shortly afterwards became vice-principal. At the same time, his boyhood friend, Father Kremer, who had been ordained on the same day as himself, began work there as instructor in catechism. They were united by the bond of a holy friendship. Although Victor felt a strong attraction for a ministry more directly concerned with souls, he nevertheless accepted with joyful devotedness this

simple, unobtrusive task of watching over the little ones; he appreciated in a great spirit of faith its high supernatural value. Assuredly, for a zealous priest such as he was there would have been a greater happiness in being able to observe the fruit of his labors in souls. However, Victor had not become a priest for his own sake but for the service of God. Now God had His designs upon him. The experience he stored up during this ministry to the young was destined, in the plan of Providence, to be useful to him later when he would give to the Sisters of the Congregation he was to found excellent counsel in the field of education.

It was not long before Father Braun had gained, by his paternal kindness and devotedness, both the affection of the youngsters and the confidence of their parents. He drew his inspiration from the divine Friend of children and became penetrated with His spirit. His faith showed him in the very work of guiding the young a truly angelic ministry; he recognized in the child the most precious treasure of creation.

A child [he would say later in a conference to the Sisters of his Congregation] is a man with the seed of his whole future in his first years. He is a renewal of humanity in blossom. The child is for the family, for the State, and for the Church, what springtime is to the year, what the flower is to the fruit, what hope is to the human heart. "That child is my joy and my life," they say at home. He is the bond of love between his parents; father and mother unite in him their tenderest care; they devote to him all the weary toil of their lives . . .

Let us see now what the Church thinks of him. She

considers the child her own property, the most precious of treasures. She considers that portion of humanity as a kind of training school whose members are destined, one day, to populate the kingdom of heaven. Read the ritual of Baptism; you would think you were attending the triumph of a conqueror. The priest receives the child from the hands of his parents. He receives him to make of him a child of God. Then he shows him to us as a young prince of the eternal kingdom. He sets upon his brow a crown in the midst of which a cross shines. He clothes him in a royal mantle, white as innocence itself. He invokes all the princes of the heavenly hosts that they may watch over his cradle, according to the promises of Jesus Christ Himself.

A joyous peal of bells invites the Christian people to celebrate the coming of the young monarch. The child is, to the eyes of faith, still the living sanctuary of innocence, the spotless temple of the Holy Spirit The heart of a child appears to us as a golden censer whose pure, innocent fragrance attracts the glance of God. Observe that our Redeemer chose the form of a child wherein to appear among us. Hear Him as He tells us that the kingdom of Heaven is for such and that one must become as one of them to enter there Listen to those terrible words which fell from His kindly lips (I for one have never read them without fear): "Woe to him who scandalizes one of these little ones, for their angels ever stand before the face of the heavenly Father" Tell me, whether, after such testimony, anyone can still doubt the dignity of a child

If such is the dignity of the child, let us ask ourselves what our function ought to be in their regard. You are the guardians of childhood; that is to say, the Church raises you to the dignity of guardian angels. God has entrusted them to you as to His angels, to care for their eternal salvation, that their feet may not waver The

Church has confided to you a treasure a thousand times more precious than all the perishable goods of earth, a treasure which Jesus purchased by His blood

It is not surprising that Christian parents should have had no misgivings about entrusting their children to an educator inspired by such maxims. From all parts of Lorraine children flocked to St. Augustine's Academy in Metz. The entirely paternal devotedness of Father Victor Braun was known far and wide. He gave of his time unstintingly. From five in the morning until ten at night and even, as he himself admitted, throughout the night, he remained in spirit among his children.

Two years thus went by, two years of a life that was rich in fruitful labors.

When the Falloux law was enacted, granting to Catholics freedom of instruction, Eugene Braun, the principal of the school, urged the Bishop to entrust its direction to the Jesuit Fathers. For a long time now Eugene had been desirous of entering the Society of Jesus, but could not obtain his Bishop's permission to leave the diocese; he hoped that the transferring of the entire school into the hands of the Jesuits would obtain for him his freedom. Several families supported his request. The Bishop approved the suggestion and offered the institution to the Fathers of the Society who accepted it. Eventually it grew to such proportions that it became necessary to annex the ancient abbey of St. Clement which adjoined it. From that time it became the great College of St. Clement and glories in numbering Marshal Foch among its former students.

At first, however, the Jesuits discontinued the lower school. This was a great sacrifice for Victor. He was so attached to his little ones that he did not see how he could ever separate himself from them. He was delighted to have the school pass into the hands of the Jesuits. But this meant, for him personally, the renunciation of his first priestly work, to which he had given himself with all his soul.

At the end of the academic year he returned to his home for the summer of 1853.

Within the family, he felt somewhat isolated; his mother was no longer there. God had called her to Himself on May first of the preceding year. The tender affection which attached Victor to his mother caused him to feel more than ever that Heaven was his true country. It was therefore easy for him, in his meditative solitude, to take counsel with God. By autumn, light had come to him. On the advice of the Bishop, he would establish at Metz the Academy of Our Lady for children under twelve years of age. He was its principal for two years, from September 15, 1853, until September 10, 1855. We may associate with this period of his life the characteristically pointed anecdote which he recounted later in a lecture on pedagogy.

I was head of an institution and in charge of some teachers. One day, a teacher carried on the following conversation with a child:

"Bread and water for one day for you."

"But, sir . . ."

"Two days on bread and water."

"But, after all, sir . . ."

"Three days on bread and water."

"But, sir, I didn't do it."

"A week on bread and water."

When I learned of the matter, I summoned the teacher to my room and said to him: "I admit that the child might have deserved punishment, but shouldn't you have been a little calmer? You understand that I am responsible to the parents for whatever is done. I cannot give that punishment to a child, if only on account of his health. His parents would be justified in addressing me a well-merited reproach. I am quite willing to support your authority, but I cannot impose that punishment in full. Now then, let us arrange matters amicably. I shall come into the classroom; you will point out the culprit to me. I shall reprimand him severely: I shall even threaten to double the punishment. Then you will say to me: 'But, Mr. Principal, he did it without thinking.' And you will ask me to pardon him. I shall say, 'No; I won't pardon him.' But you will go on to say, 'He has been behaving better these last few days; I think we might well grant him pardon.' And I shall end up by pardoning him, saying: 'Well, since you, Professor, ask me to excuse him, I shall do so.' "

The teacher appeared in the better light, and the punishment was not administered. These are the tricks of the trade. It is a poor teacher who doubles or triples the chastisement in proportion to the obstinacy and terror of the pupil. Balthasar Alvarez has written a book on this subject.

I conclude with a word of advice. Father Balthasar Alvarez liked to say that one of the things which foster a smooth management of affairs is that, in regard to reprimands, there should appear neither bitterness nor anger nor dismay, but rather a paternal gravity, a tender compassion, a kind of gentleness accompanied by firmness. I

leave this thought with you as a spiritual bouquet, a practical resolution to take when any of you happens to be charged with the government of souls.

It was evident that Victor had the vocation of an educator. At the Academy of Our Lady he thought he had found his way of life. But Providence had other designs upon him. It was not upon children that he was finally to exercise his gifts.

In spite of the zeal expended, in spite of the gratitude and approval the school enjoyed on the part of the parents, it was unable, because of a lack of material resources, to continue in existence. At the end of two years, it was found necessary to close the house. Once more Father Braun saw the field of his apostolate vanish before his eyes; this time it was his own undertaking which had failed and the blow struck him all the heavier.

Meanwhile, the pastor of Flavigny offered him the directorship of the Providence boarding-school which he had founded in his parish. Father Braun accepted; shortly afterward, in 1857, he was appointed curate of Flavigny and became the cooperator with the pastor in his undertakings on behalf of youth.

In this less specialized ministry his desire for the missions reawoke. He therefore believed he was answering the call of God by entering the Fathers of Mercy (*de la Miséricorde*). But his delicate health could not stand the religious life and he was soon obliged to leave.

A sojourn at Nancy, however, devoted to the apostolate among the poor working class, enlarged his horizons. He sought out a wider field of labor and re-

solved to go to Paris there to engage in the same kind of work. He was welcomed with open arms and put in charge of the spiritual direction of a house of correction for young girls. He was thus enabled to appreciate the utility of his six years' ministry to the young as a means for his own formation.

An inexhaustible kindness was the characteristic note of his apostolic labors. This is how he later recounted to his Sisters the beginnings of his work among these delinquent girls.

(We preserve in this and the subsequent citations we shall make the familiar cast of the original.)

On my arrival in Paris I was sent to direct the delinquent girls in a house maintained by the Sisters of Mary and Joseph, 86 Vaugirard St. There were among them thieves and poisoners. They were convicts ranging in age from ten to twenty-one years; but people were careful not to tell me what kind of children they were. I gave them an instruction every morning. The first time, I stood up to preach in a large hall. It had formerly been a Carmelite convent, and they were behind the grilles. I said these words to the children quite simply: "Children, they tell me that you are unruly but that you are good at heart; we can do something with people like that." They looked at one another. At first, I did not understand the glances that passed between those minxes in their prison garb. I even went on to say: "When I learn that you have not behaving properly, I shall not tell you any story before or after the instruction." That was the only penance I gave them, for I was in the habit of telling them a story. As you see, it was all very innocent, for convict women. Well, it worked very well. When I had omitted telling a story, the next time I would see tears in the eyes of a

great number. They were cross with the Sister and said to her: "It is your fault that Father didn't tell us a story; you were the one who told him what we did this week." However, they promised themselves that they would be deserving of a story next time. The Religious, seeing that I was succeeding, asked me: "But how did you manage it? Here is what happened before you came (That was when I learned what sort of girls they were): there have been three chaplains who were never able to do anything with them. They were constantly reminding them what they were and forever reproaching them." Those young girls were embittered and when the priest stood up to speak, they turned their back on him and began to talk out loud, or else they sang in the chapel—something other than hymns. The poor Religious were in despair. They resorted to the strait-jacket and solitary confinement as punishments, but there were not enough of these to go around, so that some got off without being punished. When I saw that I was succeeding, I realized why. It was no use reminding those girls what they were. The experience taught me a lesson for later on.

I admit that the most satisfying moments of my life have not been those I have spent in the midst of you, good little novices; rather it was there, with those poor girls, that I experienced the greatest spiritual consolations. There were a large number who, without being urged to do so, approached the Holy Table every month, even every Sunday and on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin that fell on week-days. In short, I had great consolations. Why? Because I didn't say harsh, offensive things to them calculated to irritate them. That kind of people, as I was saying to you, do not like to be told what they are

In addition to his work in this house of correction,

Father Braun exerted an extensive ministry. But he had over-estimated his strength and, in the Spring of 1859, he fell seriously ill. He had to relinquish all his work and return to his family. This time he did not find his father there, for he had been called by God on August 3, 1858. In the family home there now remained only his three sisters, Theresa, Jeanne and Christina, who carried on the traditions of charity and the good works of their parents. They welcomed the dear patient with tender affection and, thanks to their care, Victor recovered fairly soon. His zeal would not permit him to remain idle. While awaiting his return to Paris, he obtained leave of Bishop Dupont des Loges to attend the little parish of Durchtal, situated three kilometers from Saint-Avoid, which gave his sisters an occasional opportunity to moderate the excessive ardor of the young priest. As soon as he felt strong enough, he returned to Paris and resumed an apostolate for which he felt a particular attraction.

Formerly he had been obliged, much to his regret, to give up the life of a Religious. Now, believing his strength to be equal to the prospect, he entered into communication with the pious Father Le Prevost, who had just founded the Institute of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul. The latter assigned to him a type of work which completely suited his zealous ambitions. He was placed in charge of the Work of Our Lady of Grace at Grenelle. It was an apostolate to the working-class, with a social center for boy apprentices. It included evening classes for adults, a circulating library and a savings bank. It was the kind of work

Victor had always longed to do; moreover, he still found time to hear confessions every day in the chapel of Our Lady of Nazareth and three times a week in the church of Our Lady of Victories.

On the occasion of a pastoral meeting one of the priests present remarked to him that he was too quick in hearing confessions, that he dispatched his penitents too speedily, and recommended to the young Father the motto: "Few, but well." Victor replied: "Still better: many, but well." He represented to this priest the difficulties of the mother of a family, a laboring-man or a servant-girl who cannot waste any time standing in line before a confessional. "They go away," he said, "and perhaps do not have another time or opportunity in the course of a whole year."

To what degree Father Braun aimed only at the glory of God and the salvation of souls in his ministry, and how far removed he was from all vanity and self-complacency, is apparent from what he later observed in a conference. He was explaining to the Sisters on this occasion why he spoke to them quite plainly and simply.

Yes, I remember that I changed my method. In my youth, when I was a teacher and then principal of St. Augustine's Academy, I preached beautiful sermons, with all the trimmings. Every noun was qualified by its adjective; if necessary, I looked one up in the dictionary. Then the sermon was carefully learned by heart and delivered in the same way. Ah, yes, those were very fine sermons!

But I retraced my steps the day that I read the life of the Curé of Ars. I learned there that it is not beautiful

sermons which convert souls and that simple words make much more of an impression. What struck me in the Curé of Ars' life I cannot now recall word for word, but it was something like this: One day, the Curé of Ars had a little altercation with the devil. The devil tried to win him by flattery: "Why do you give such simple sermons? Couldn't you give scholarly ones like the great preachers in the big cities? You give the impression that you haven't much intelligence and yet you could produce something a little heavier?" But as the devil is often forced, in spite of himself, to speak the truth, he added: "It's true that those scholarly sermons don't do me much harm, whereas your simple instructions are a great hindrance to me and prevent souls from falling into my hands."

There is a Bishop, a successor to St. Francis de Sales, at present exiled from his diocese—all the cathedrals of France and almost all the pulpits of Paris have heard him. He is a great apostle and carries on in France the mission of St. Francis de Sales; he is possessed of all the qualities of the latter. Well, Bishop Mermillod, in a retreat to priests which I attended, urged them always to speak simply. He said to them: "The day you wear a chasuble of cloth of gold, you must speak golden words; they will go over the heads of your listeners, but that doesn't matter. When they are asked, on coming away from the sermon, what it was you said, they will reply: 'Oh, how learned that preacher is!' 'But what did he say?' Their answer will be: 'I don't really know, but he said some very beautiful things; that pastor of ours is very learned!' Thus, Bishop Mermillod let it be understood that these academic discourses are good three times a year. The rest of the time, one must always preach simply.

From the day when Father Braun realized that a simple style of preaching without striving after effect

is most conducive to the good of the faithful, he avoided all that smacked of artificiality. From all the notes taken at his conferences, as the reader may judge subsequently, one gathers an impression of naturalness and spontaneity. He presented himself for just what he was and preached the word of God in graphic terms which sprang from the heart.

His labors at Grenelle were amply blessed. In particular, he had the happiness of bringing many Protestants back to the Church, for which he expressed his joy in a letter to his niece, Marie: "My ministry at Our Lady of Victory church is blessed by God. If only I had more physical strength for this rich harvest of souls! But my health doesn't improve. If only I had, at least, more holiness!"

IV

FOUNDER OF AN ORDER

At that time (1863), there were among the laboring population of Grenelle a good number of Germans and Alsatians who had come to Paris in search of employment. The majority of them were Catholics, but they were unacquainted with French and the parish priests were unable to reach them. Father Braun, who knew German, resolved to concern himself with their welfare and established the German Mission of Our Lady. A chapel was fitted up in the Rue Fondary where Mass could be celebrated and a sermon preached on Sundays and holy days. The German families were not long in gathering about their pastor in a small community, thus finding, as it were, a new homeland on foreign soil. The workers organized an association which included its social center for apprentices and a savings bank. A large hall was rented adjoining the chapel and christened St. Joseph's Hall, where the young priest organized evening classes both for apprentices and for fullfledged workers. Several times a year it served as a gathering place for joyous celebrations. Moreover, he established a lending library into which, by dint of great efforts, he collected some books from here and there and thus provided good reading matter for his flock.

Thus the German Mission of Our Lady became gradually a little community who revered and loved

their pastor as a father.*

On his part, Father Victor lived entirely for his little flock and strove, in imitation of the Good Shepherd, to guide them on the way to God. He experienced many joys but suffered many heartbreaks, too, on account of certain souls who went astray and succumbed to the temptations of a big city. Such vicissitudes made him conscious of the need he had of God's grace that his labors might not remain sterile.

Then it was that Providence placed in his path a means of apostolate which was to become, at the same time, a most important source of sanctification for his own soul.

In order to keep his congregation in touch with the religious movement in Germany, he took part, in 1864, in a Catholic Convention at Wurtzburg. A conference by Baron Herkampf on devotion to the Sacred Heart, which he heard there, made a very deep impression on him; all of a sudden the significance of this devotion was made clear to him. He affirmed this himself:

* This undertaking was necessarily discontinued, for the time being, in 1870. Some years later it was revived and prospered admirably. On May 4, 1913, the director then in charge, Father Helmig, had the happy idea of celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. A ten-day mission was very well attended in preparation. Festivities were organized, with solemn liturgical functions which were attended by the members of the committee, numerous benefactors and friends of the mission. The Superior General of the Servants of the Sacred Heart at Versailles, who was invited to participate in the celebration, deputed six of the Sisters to represent the Congregation. Father Helmig presented a very interesting summary of the institution during its fifty years of existence and rendered a well-merited tribute to Reverend Father Braun, its founder.

I admit to my shame that I spent many years of priestly life before grasping this beautiful, consoling devotion. It was at Wurtzburg that I was struck for the first time by the discourse of a holy priest, Baron Herkampf.

At the close of the session, small pictures were distributed on which were printed the promises of the Sacred Heart. Father Braun could read for himself:

I will give them all the graces necessary for their state.

I will console them in all their griefs.

I will shed abundant blessings on all their undertakings.

Sinners will find in My heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

Tepid souls will become fervent.

Fervent souls will rise to great perfection.

I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.

It was a revelation. Full of courage and joy, he returned to Paris, and set to work once more, fully resolved to make up for lost time and become a perfect votary of the Sacred Heart. Shortly afterwards, a letter from his cousin the Jesuit, Father Eugene Braun, brought him another little picture of the Sacred Heart, on the reverse side of which were written the same promises. This coincidence confirmed him in his resolve.

In Paris they were eagerly awaiting the report he was to give on the Catholic Convention at Wurtzburg. Father Braun related what he had seen, the conferences he had attended, especially the one dealing with devotion to the Sacred Heart. He urged everyone to embrace this devotion and began himself to spread it

with all the strength at his command, as he had promised himself to do. From that day onward, in every circumstance, he had recourse to the Sacred Heart.

At that period of his life, there was one intention which he must have recommended to the Sacred Heart with particular urgency. Later on, at a ceremony of reception of the habit, he was to say:

Some years ago, there was in Paris a poor priest who spent his days in a small room or in the confessional, receiving unfortunate sinners there; but that did not suffice this poor priest. He saw to his great sorrow, in this city of Paris, so many young girls who were hard pressed to remain pious; he saw others, innocent and unaware of evil, who after some weeks or at the end of two or three months, began to forget God, their most essential obligations, and ended up by taking the broad path to a disorderly life. He saw all these souls being lost and his heart was grieved to have the Heart of Jesus thus offended, also.

This poor priest, imprisoned in that cell known as a confessional, wanted to find some charitable souls who would have compassion on the wretched state of all these wandering sheep and would establish a sheltering home against the day when these poor little working girls would no longer have a sou in their pockets and would find themselves out in the street

Shuch was his great preoccupation. The idea occurred to him, therefore, of establishing for German servant girls who were unemployed a center which he called the "Sacred Heart Shelter." Finding it impossible to carry on this new enterprise by himself, he looked about for auxiliaries. Encouraged by Father

Le Prevost, the founder of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, and by Father Lantiez, who later became Superior of the same society, he applied everywhere to various congregations, earnestly begging them to take in hand this charitable work. Some made promises; others asked time to consider the matter; all his efforts remained fruitless. Finally, some of his women penitents came to his assistance and devoted themselves to the cause of the unemployed servant-girls.

Father Braun rented an apartment in rue d'Ulm and furnished it for his three helpers. It consisted of two rooms opening on to the courtyard. Some time later they were joined by a few others. Their quarters becoming cramped, they were obliged to find others, which they did at number 25, rue Humboldt. Father Braun consecrated the little community of his co-workers to the Sacred Heart, on October 17, 1866, the Feast of St. Margaret Mary. That day has always been considered the date of the founding of his Congregation.

It was decided to adopt a uniform dress; the title of Sister was henceforth used among the members of the pious little band, while they retained their baptismal names; and Father Braun became their "Reverend Father." He, the founder, thereupon gave to his daughters a rule of the spiritual life: prayer in common, meditation, spiritual reading, the recitation of the rosary and of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. He gave them spiritual conferences almost daily. Thus the first outlines of a religious life were formed; a Superioress was named to whom all were to render obedience. The undertaking soon became known

and its success was more than had been hoped for. Mistresses of houses applied to them for serving-maids. Young German girls found lodging, board, and a motherly interest in their placement. They evinced a lively gratitude toward the Father and his auxiliaries. Among them were some Protestant girls of whom several, touched by such practical charity, made their abjuration before Father Braun, who was authorized to receive it, and later joined the community.

A fortuitous incident led to its official recognition. Father Braun had learned that suspicious persons were on the look-out at the railway station, the Gare de L'Est, for foreign young girls, so as to conduct them on arrival to houses of ill-fame. He resolved immediately to do something about it. "Why should we not do in a good cause what the wicked do in an evil one?" From that time on, every day one of the Sisters was to go to the station and watch, like an angel guardian, for the young girls who might alight from the trains. Rarely did she come home alone.

But these daily comings and goings aroused the attention of the police. One day a Sister, on being questioned by a policeman, was obliged to give her address. A police officer appeared at the door to inform himself. Since the small payment which the girls made for board and lodging (when indeed they were able to pay anything at all) was inadequate to cover expenses, the house was exempted from taxation; moreover, it had been officially recognized.

Father Braun had devoted all his patrimony to his work; most of the Sisters had generously offered all that they had at their disposal. In spite of this, their

poverty was very great. Once when the need became extreme, a Sister who possessed a magnificent head of hair went to the Superioress with a pair of scissors and said: "Dear Mother, please cut off my hair; I don't need it any more and I feel some attachment to it." This spirit of sacrifice and self-renunciation did violence to Heaven. Moreover, Father Braun strove to maintain these dispositions in the souls of his daughters. Every day he visited them, encouraged and formed them to the spiritual life. Their quarters hardly lent themselves to such a life. A corner of the living-room had been sent apart and was termed "the oratory." The Father would seat himself on a chair or stool and the Sisters ranged themselves about him, seated on the floor, their hearts opened to his paternal teachings.

After one of his visits he said to them on leaving: "Do you know, my dear daughters, what your name will be some day?" They all answered in the negative and begged him to tell them. He had already opened the door when he turned around with a smile to say: "Servants of the Sacred Heart."

At first he had only wished to provide for unemployed servant girls; but he was to be drawn into charitable works of a different kind.

One day, a Sister had been summoned to the bedside of a poor woman who was seriously ill, all alone, abandoned, knowing no French, and consequently unable to make herself understood to her neighbors. Father Braun refused at first: "Our Sisters are not nurses." But soon he thought better of the idea. Was not the care of the sick also a work of charity? So he

charged one Sister to visit the poor woman each day, to console and attend to her. A short time later one of his penitents fell sick. She lived alone and without anyone to help her. "Why should we not take care of this poor soul, too?" She, too, was entrusted to a Sister. The next day, two ladies presented themselves and asked for a Sister to attend a poor blind man. Similar requests multiplied to such an extent that, one day, Father Braun finally declared: "My dear daughters, it is God who wills it; you shall attend the sick poor."

Accustomed to consider everything in the light of faith, Father Braun discerned the finger of God in the slightest incidents. The saying of our Lord: "The very hairs of your head are counted" was not mere words to him. With calm assurance he recognized the will of God in such coincidences as would have been passed over thoughtlessly by others. It was thus that there was soon added to the care of the sick a charitable undertaking on behalf of orphan girls.

A workman in the district, engaged on the construction of a house, had been killed by a fall from the scaffolding. The widow, burdened with a large family, came in tears to knock at the door of the Sisters' house and begged them to take in two of the little fatherless girls. They agreed to do so. Other children in similar circumstances were presented and admitted. On this occasion, Father Braun said once more: "God wills it, my Sisters; you shall be as mothers to the orphans."

The number of Sisters had by now grown to fifteen. They gave evidence of such heroic charity that they recalled the Christianity of the early Church. Father

Braun's responsibilities had grown to such an extent in the space of six months that they could no longer be supported except at the price of great sacrifices. Numerous sick people to be cared for and provided with the bare necessities, over two hundred foreign servant-girls to place, some twenty orphan girls to support: such works required ample resources. Their poverty was often extreme. All that the Sisters had brought with them had been sold; nothing remained but to set out on the thorny path of seeking alms. Father Braun did not recoil from the humiliations he must encounter thereby; and he inspired the Sisters with the same courage. Charity is inventive and audacious. The example of their disinterestedness opened the hearts and the purse-strings of the inhabitants of Grenelle. But the works of charity which they must sustain increased daily both in scope and in number.

The quarters on Rue Humboldt became inadequate. They were obliged to separate the orphanage from the placement bureau for domestics. It was decided therefore to transfer the latter to a house at number 93 Rue du Théâtre which was given the name of Sacred Heart Asylum. The orphan girls were taken to Boulevard de Grenelle, where Father Braun had rented a large shed. There was not a great deal of baggage to move, but the distance from Rue Humboldt to Boulevard de Grenelle was long. A small cart was hired to transfer the heaviest furniture; behind the vehicle walked the Sisters and the orphans, each carrying one or more bundles. There could not fail to be something picturesque in such a caravan traversing the streets of Paris. In spite of fatigue, the slightest halt could not

be made lest the passerby gather about to pelt them with indiscreet questions.

In their new shelter, the Sisters encountered the same poverty as before. There was but one single room for everyone, Sisters and children alike. It did service of all the exercises. They prayed, ate, worked and slept there. It was transformed into a festal hall on St. Victor's day, July 21, the feast day of the Father Founder.

With the exception of some benches for the children, there were no seats but trunks and packing boxes; and since even the number of these was insufficient, those who found no other place sat on the floor. Some thirty-eight persons lived in this shed. A workroom had been set up for the orphans. As for furnishings, a single clothes-press contained the linen for Sisters and children; on top of it were set the bread, provisions and household utensils.

During the day, planks were laid on trestles to serve as a table, but at nightfall the scene was shifted: the tables become beds and, as there were not enough for everyone, several slept in hammocks, others on mattresses laid upon the floor, with no other covering than their own clothing.

It was the abode of true poverty, yet no one dreamed of complaining. Their hearts were content and the poor little orphans found ample recompense for their privations in the affection and devotedness of their new mothers. The latter, responsible for meeting all the expenses involved in supporting their flock, found their cash-box forever empty.

Since St. Joseph was known to be the temporal and

spiritual provider for communities, the Sisters' devotion to the Foster-father of Jesus multiplied tenfold. Novena succeeded novena, nor did the good St. Joseph ever remain deaf to their appeals.

At the end of a novena for the intention of finding money to pay the rent, Father Braun entered smiling and deposited his purse on the table; it contained the amount necessary to pay for the next quarter. On another occasion an unknown lady discreetly placed an offering in the hand of one of the Sisters and departed, edified by what she had seen. Charity and necessity are both mothers of invention.

Every day one Sister rose at three in the morning to go off to the Central Market to buy vegetables at bargain prices. The market-gardeners got to know her and, realizing that this was a deserving charity, graciously added to her provisions. The poor Sister would arrive home, heavily laden and worn out, but happy to bring back food for the household.

Twice a week another Sister departed for the slaughterhouse to obtain provisions. Every day there were rejects, spoiled cuts of meat, scraps of all sorts which were not refused to the poor who presented themselves. The good Sister got herself up as a beggar woman, with a blue apron, a well-worn cap, and carried an enormous market basket, the handles of which were replaced by an old piece of rope. She thus presented herself before the butcher boys to whom she sometimes offered two or three sous, that she might have some priority, since clients were not wanting.

Among the Sisters' benefactresses was a pious woman, who was cook in a hotel. She gathered up

carefully the pieces of bread, lumps of sugar and other remnants left by travelers when they checked out of the hotel and in the evening brought all of them to the Sisters for their orphans. But one day the poor woman fell ill and her employers, who valued her services, agreed to keep her position open for her on condition that she found a substitute for the duration of her illness.

This trial dried up one of the sources of the community's food supply. A Sister proposed to the Reverend Father, who allowed it, that she should go and replace the cook. She generously made the temporary sacrifice of her religious garb and decked herself out as cook; then she went to the hotel and was accepted. She was given as assistants a serving maid and a dishwasher. According to the demands of her occupation, she went out every morning to do the marketing; and she took advantage of this opportunity to attend Mass and receive communion.

One day the woman in charge of the hotel summoned her and asked point-blank: "Is it true that you want to become a Religious?" The only reply the Sister made was to laugh heartily; whereupon the woman, reassured, added with a sigh of relief: "It would certainly be too bad for a fine-looking young woman like you to become a Religious! Don't do anything so foolish as that!" A few days later, the cook, restored to health, resumed her situation while the good Sister perpetrated the blessed foolishness of resuming religious life in her community.

However favorably Father Braun and the Sisters

were accepted by the poor, the optimistic zeal of the Founder was often looked upon with disapproval and his undertaking harshly judged even by good Catholics. The methods employed by this priest, without resources and in precarious health, seemed imprudent, indeed unreasonable. Opposition was becoming more and more lively, and the Father found himself abandoned by his best friends. Even his family took alarm at these foundations undertaken without any secure material guarantees. They feared that the trying fatigues to which he was subjecting himself might break down completely his health which was always delicate, and that the considerable material losses might reflect upon the entire family. These were justified, moreover, for Father Braun made constant appeals for funds to his relatives.

But the spirit of faith regained the ascendancy; these hostile dispositions soon altered and made way for a benevolence which became ever more marked. The Sisters subsequently found a new home in the family of their Founder. Several had the opportunity of staying for a few days at Saint-Avoid and were there welcomed and treated as members of the family.

Such then, were the difficulties which besieged Father Braun from without. But a still more terrible storm was about to break in the very midst of his little flock. The works of charity had extended their scope so rapidly that he had not been able to impart an adequate spiritual formation to his Sisters. Finally, it became necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff by dismissing some of them. Since he could not take

charge of the direction of the community himself it will be remembered that he had appointed a Superioress. His choice had fallen upon a person who seemed to him to have already gained some experience of religious life: Mother Odile. She had been a Franciscan and had left her Order for reasons of health. But Father Braun was not long in discovering that the cause which had led to her departure had not been that of health alone, but also a lack of the interior life. She soon manifested a proud, domineering spirit. Father Braun discovered to his dismay that his repeated admonitions, however kindly they always were expressed, not only were of no avail, but even increased the evil and brought down upon him the rancor of a spiteful woman. Mother Odile attempted to set the Sisters against the Founder and to incite them to insubordination and disobedience.

Father Braun has himself painted the picture of these internal quarrels in somber colors. Eventually he sent away Mother Odile, whose hatred became aggravated to the point of a veritable passion for revenge. Lies, calumnies, public threats, every expedient came to hand in her efforts to ruin him and his undertakings. She went so far as to vent her spite before the Archbishop himself.

This was a bitter trial for Father Braun. Revolt and discord within his community seemed to warrant the opposition he had to endure from without, to justify the desertion by his friends. After such fair beginnings a lamentable failure was now to be feared.

It was in these circumstances that the young priest

revealed his true greatness of soul. What grieved him most was not the destruction threatening his work nor the humiliation that would thereby fall to him, but the pain that would wound the Sacred Heart on account of the behavior of some who would have been Its servants.

This is how he alludes to these events four years later, in a circular letter addressed to the Superiors:

When I cast a glance in retrospect over the beginnings of our undertakings, I find from the very first days such an abundance of blessings that I cannot doubt for an instant the action of the divine will in their formation.

This blessing came upon us because, leaning upon the promises of our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary, we have built upon the heart of the divine Master who said: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart."

But soon these successes and all sorts of compliments dazzled the first superioresses and turned their heads. Pride took the place of humility and the blessing of God was temporarily withdrawn. That was a moment of great trials by which the good God warned us mercifully to return to the humility and simplicity of our foundation.

The superioresses wanted to play the part of ladies; soon they required the services of a Sister to act as maid; a pleasantly furnished little parlor, more delicate viands served apart, a carriage for their errands, more expensive clothing, etc., etc. . . . They encountered some flatterers within the community who urged them on so as to curry favor. During this period, caprice and ambition dictated the law to the Sisters, and the yoke imposed upon them was no longer that of the gentle, kindly St. Francis de Sales, but a tyrannical one.

Persecution was the lot of those who wished to remain faithful to their rules and to their superior and founder, who protested without being heeded. A plot was very cleverly hatched. But the good God, who loved the work, permitted those who had dug the pit to fall into it with a great commotion.

Alas, my God, how many offenses against Thy loving Heart were heaped up on account of the pride of two or three women, and how many humiliations, generously accepted, we must undergo to expiate them! O my God, ever protect this little flock which is dear to Thee from similar demons of pride; be merciful to them, out of consideration for their good will and the good, disinterested intentions of their early days!

Father Braun then treats at length of the humility and charity requisite in a superioress. We can cite only a few paragraphs here:

Let the superioress realize well that authority does not belong to her personally; the authority attached to her office is only loaned to her; authority in its source pertains to God alone, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

Hear what our Lord tells you with reference to Himself: "The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; . . . It shall not be so among you: but . . . he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many."

Have you observed, on Good Friday, after having made your yearly act of humility, that the Sisters have respected you any the less, after you knelt before them and washed their feet, in imitation of the divine Master?

And if you beg pardon of them, after having reprimanded

manded them and given them a penance, when you learn later that they had not been guilty, do you think they esteem and love you less? Indeed not; try it sometimes and see.

The Son of God washes the feet of His apostles; St. Paul works with his hands to gain a livelihood; St. Frances of Rome washes the habits of her sisters, serves them at table, sweeps the church, washes the altar steps; St. Ignatius was hardly elected General of his Order when he went to fulfill the most menial tasks in the kitchen. St. Clare takes it as a maxim and rule of conduct to undertake herself the humblest and most trying work rather than to command it to be done.

Never let yourself be persuaded then, you the humble, little Servants of the Sacred Heart, in spite of your title of superioress, that reputation and authority are to be found where Jesus Christ and the saints did not look for them; do not flatter yourself that you can arrive at the same end by a road diametrically opposed to the one they followed

What else is demanded of a good superioress? Ah, my daughters, charity and still more charity and always charity.

Before entrusting to St. Peter the direction of the apostles, Jesus Christ asked him only one thing: "Lovest thou Me?" He required love from him.

It is through love that the superioress will win the hearts and, with the hearts, the confidence of her subjects. In order to be loved one must love; love can be acquired and requited by love alone; but scarcely has it made itself felt when it produces the most heroic acts and sacrifices.

A Sister who is convinced that her Mother acts not from self-interest, caprice or any other passion, but solely

from love, receives gratefully whatever comes from her, even correction.

How I pity a community governed by a heartless Mother! Poor victims! How well your patience will be rewarded by God! How is it that you, who are called Mother, do not recall your childhood memories and what the heart of a mother is? Or didn't yours have a heart?

Meditate often, then, on all the power and unction contained in that word: mother. Did not our Lord say that He would be our mother if ours dared to thrust us from her bosom? Does he not go so far as to compare Himself to a mother hen urging her chicks to take refuge under her wings? Oh, fix your gaze intently upon the Heart of Jesus and then see if you dare close your heart to those whom you call your daughters.

Will not the Heart of Jesus close to you, if you shut yours to those who call you their mother? Why, these poor children have left all things for the Heart of Jesus; the superioress holds the place of father and mother, of brothers and sisters to them. In her should be summed up the thoughtfulness, the affection, the delicate attentions of a family. But understand clearly what our good Father, St. Francis de Sales, tells us: it is not only those who are agreeable because of the attractiveness of their appearance, their manners, their temperament, who should receive these attentions exclusively. There must be no preferences. All have a right to the same charity, the same affection. No jealousy must be aroused. Let no one be able to point out the one you love most.

Struck by these considerations, no doubt, Father Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, wrote to the superiors of his Order: "The government under which the Religious live ought to be such that they may serve the Lord with charity unfeigned, with large-heartedness and a soul full of charity. They are children of God. Hence,

it is easy to understand how one should look upon them, with what a love they should be loved, with what consideration they should be surrounded. Look on them, treat them, love them as children; be to them father, mother, nurse, doctor, in a word, all things to all of them; leave nothing undone to convince them that such are your constant and sincere sentiments. Thereby you will lead them where and how you will by means of the heart."

The calumnies of Mother Odile had ultimately a good effect; the attention of the public was drawn to Father Braun and his work. The Archbishop withdrew none of his confidence from the Founder, and the little community was gradually restored to peace and the spirit of generosity.

However, Father Braun was obliged to leave Paris. Considerations of a different order impelled him to do so, namely the high cost of living and of rents. He turned in the direction of Sèvres, then a small industrial town of six thousand inhabitants, where there was a sizeable Alsatian colony. A lady offered him a large furnished house on Bellevue avenue free of rent for three months.

Meanwhile Father Braun began searching for a permanent abode. At number twenty rue de Troyon he found a dilapidated house which might shelter twenty Sisters and as many orphans. During the day the main room served as workshop, refectory and oratory; at night, they began the transformation which had already become a routine at Grenelle: the tables became beds for the little ones, while mattresses on the floor were reserved for the Sisters and older orphan girls. The household was visited by enormous

rats whose habit of making themselves at home produced terror and insomnia among the inmates.

But these were only minor inconveniences compared to the real hunger which was keenly experienced. The baker, fearing that he should not be paid at the end of the month, demanded a cash payment every day. The work of the Sisters was not very remunerative. How many novenas did they not make to St. Joseph, patron of desperate cases!

Another location was found in a former printing-shop known as Caderoussel, to which a few of the Sisters and orphans were transferred. This house, or rather shed, was provided with a goodly number of windows devoid of glass. The Sisters supplied for it with paper panes as protection against wind, cold and rain. The doors no longer closed or locked. But the good God willed that poverty and privations should accompany them everywhere. When Father Braun saw one of his daughters succumbing to discouragement, he soon cheered her up by saying: "Brace up! The good God is with us. He knows we have nothing and that we are working only for his greater glory."

This move to new quarters was to be of great importance for the future of the community. For some time Father Braun had been acquainted with the Superior of the Dominicans at Sèvres, Canon Codant. He had often discussed his work with him and had received good advice and frequent alms from this source. Canon Codant was a tall, imposing personage; he was renowned throughout France; his oratorical talent was remarkable and inimitable. He was generous and willing to be of assistance. It was therefore a stroke of

good fortune for Father Braun to meet on his way so influential a protector.

It was the beginning of February, 1868. Canon Codant, an enthusiastic observer of Father Braun's undertakings, spoke of them to his Lordship the Bishop of Versailles, and gave him a glimpse of all the good that might be drawn from them, if official recognition were conferred upon this pious association.

The venerable prelate was immediately won over by the account of Father Braun's works which had been given to him: the work of caring for the sick, of providing for orphaned children and of sheltering unemployed servant girls. Not only did Bishop Mabile agree to authorize Father Braun's community to form a religious congregation under the title of Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but he even urged them to do so with dispatch. "Act quickly," he said to Canon Codant, "hurry on with it; all must be completed before the feast of St. Joseph."

Great was the joy of the Founder and his Sisters when they heard this news. The Sacred Heart had smoothed away all difficulties. The warmest gratitude rose to heaven from every heart and the rejoicing of these good Religious was still further heightened when Canon Codant announced that the ceremony of the first reception to the habit would take place in the chapel of the Dominican Sisters on Friday, February 28, the feast of the Holy Crown of Thorns. To this effect, he proceeded with the canonical examination of postulants and admitted fifteen to clothing.

This day of penance, the first Friday in Lent, recalling the sorrowful passion of the divine Crucified,

was providentially chosen. Our Lord had His designs upon His new spouses. He willed to mark them with the seal of the Victim, to set them on the way of reparation to His Heart so outraged and misunderstood.

Only a fortnight separated them from the proposed date. They must decide upon and make the religious habits in which the new Sisters would be clothed. It was agreed to adopt the form of the habit worn by the Dominicans; only the color would be changed; instead of being white, the garb of the Servants of the Sacred Heart would be black. The girdle would be violet, in honor of the episcopal dignity of St. Francis de Sales, secondary patron of the budding congregation.

The daughters of St. Dominic rendered the most gracious services on this occasion. They asked to be allowed to make with their own hands the tunics, veils and scapulars for their new sisters in Jesus Christ. They even worked at night so that all might be ready on the appointed day.

Nor were the spiritual preparations forgotten. The Sisters made a fervent retreat in anticipation of the clothing ceremony. On the eve of the reception chapter of faults was held. Each of the fifteen postulants humbly accused herself of her faults before the Superioress General of the Dominicans and all the Sisters assembled. On the day of the ceremony they entered the chapel processionally, singing the Magnificat and ranged themselves before the sanctuary; they wore white dresses and veils wreathed with roses. Canon Codant, delegated by the Bishop of Versailles presided, assisted by Father Braun and the convent chaplain.

After the ceremony, the Dominican Sisters, who had opened the doors of their chapel to the new Sisters, also opened those of their monastery to them; and the joyous festal repast took place in their own refectory.

The first Servants of the Sacred Heart wore their holy habit with inexpressible sentiments. They wondered if it was all a dream. The rush of events, the unforeseen circumstances were marked with the seal of that Providence which was visibly guiding all things to a happy issue. The Sisters were full of joy and Father Braun saw with emotions of tenderness and exultation the fulfillment of his hopes. Divine grace had fructified his labors, had crowned his efforts.

He would have preferred to have his spiritual daughters known as "Poor Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus." This name did not appeal to Canon Codant who had suggested several others. particularly that of Visitandines of the Sacred Heart. An hour before the clothing ceremony, they were still discussing the matter. Father Braun held his ground, but reluctantly agreed, as a sheer concession to the insistence of his friend and benefactor, to the suppression of the word "Poor."

V

“ . . . QUIA MITIS SUM ET HUMILIS CORDE ”

The year 1868 marked a turning point in the life of Father Braun. The little community which he had gathered about him, to which he had once casually referred as “Servants of the Sacred Heart,” had just received the approval of the Bishop of Versailles. This event reversed the relations between him and his collaborators. Up to now, it was they who aided him in his ministry; henceforth, it would be he who was at their service.

Following upon this ecclesiastical approbation, there was a work to be done, namely to define the spirit of his Congregation by means of precise rules to be observed in the future. Father Braun recalled the idea which St. Francis de Sales had cherished, that of restoring the love of God to the world through an order of women whose foundress had been St. Jane Frances de Chantal. But he considered that this idea of the saint's had never been realized, in fact, by the Visitation, which had devoted itself primarily to the contemplative life. The Servants of the Sacred Heart would take up again and accomplish the plan of St. Francis de Sales.

When our saint [wrote Father Braun] conceived the idea of the Visitation, he did not at first visualize this institute such as it exists today. The pious congregation

of which he dreamed was to be neither cloistered nor separated from the world as we find them nowadays. He desired to form, under a simple, ordinary exterior, truly interior souls detached from creatures and from themselves. But he did not isolate them on that account. He gave them as an exercise of charity the visiting of the poor and the sick, intending no doubt to edify people and incline them toward holiness by the attraction of their virtues. Things turned out otherwise than he had planned and there is certainly no room for regretting the fact. However, it would seem that the idea of the holy founder has not been fully realized and that the Christian world awaits its fulfillment. The Daughters of the Visitation are angels, but who is aware of it? Who witnesses their admirable perfection? Who has an opportunity of being edified thereby? Very few persons, indeed.

That is why we have attempted, in spite of our unworthiness and incapacity, to take up the under-portion of the plan of the Holy Bishop of Geneva, to go back to the origin of his idea and transplant the Visitation into the world itself, beyond its cloisters and grilles. It is that spirit of St. Francis de Sales, which is the spirit of the Visitation, that the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must strive to acquire. It is meditation on his virtues, his great love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, his profound humility, his great gentleness, his lovable simplicity combined with his tender zeal for the salvation of souls, for the poor especially and for great sinners in particular, which will initiate the Sisters into the heart of this great saint and make them sharers in his spirit.

It was therefore quite natural that Father Braun should have been largely inspired, in drawing up his Rules, by St. Francis de Sales. However, he applied himself to devising an original formula to express his

own ideal. For six years he worked, aided by grace, at the development of his idea, transmitting to his Daughters, at intervals, by way of circular letters, rules for the interior life and life in common. Let us quote from some of these pages wherein he seems to have expressed with greater felicity than elsewhere the spirit he strove to instill into them.

My dear Daughters,

The more I proceed, the more I congratulate myself on having given you as Father and Patron the kind, lovable St. Francis de Sales. You are not a contemplative Order, although obliged to contemplate daily above all the sorrows of the Heart of Jesus, occasioned by the sins of men; nor are you a penitential Order, although obliged each day to do penance for your own sins and those of others; you are a legion of devoted virgins who, after having sanctified yourselves, ought to go into the world among the sick, young girls exposed to danger or already fallen, to shed abroad everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ and bring souls back to Him by way of kindness and gentleness, making them love the good God and piety in your own persons. That is the only sermon which most of the people in the world understand.

Now it was the gentleness which our good Father St. Francis de Sales had learned in the school of the Heart of Jesus which was his distinctive trait, from his childhood until his last breath. It was by the unction of his sweetness that he converted so many sinners, consoled so many afflicted hearts. You know that he was naturally quick tempered, impatient, choleric and, as he himself says, it was only by dint of examinations of conscience—note well: examinations of conscience—continued over twenty-two years, by dint of watchfulness, struggles, victories

over himself; by dint, as he was wont to say, of seizing his anger by the scruff of the neck, brow-beating it and trampling it under foot, that he succeeded in dominating his disposition to the point of becoming the very type, the perfect model of that virtue among men. I understand that cry from the heart of his friend, St. Vincent de Paul: “O my God, if his Lordship of Geneva is so good, how good must Thou be!”

“Ah,” St. Francis de Sales would say, “it is better to have to render an account for being too gentle than for being too severe. Is God not all love? God the Father is the Father of mercies. God the Son is called a lamb, and God the Holy Spirit manifests Himself under the form of a dove, which is gentleness itself. If there were something better than benignity, Jesus Christ would have told us so, and yet He shows us only two lessons to be learned from Him: meekness and humility of heart. Would you then prevent me from learning the lesson that God has given me, and are you more learned than God?”

“But Father, the things they have said against us! Such and such a woman, such and such a girl! You don’t know what life is like!”

Shall I answer you in the words of your Father whose adopted daughters you are: “Alas, then, only God and I are left to love these poor sinners; doesn’t that make them all the more deserving of compassion and affection? They want me to forget that they are my sheep, to refuse my tears to those for whom Jesus Christ gave all His blood; but to whom shall I show mercy if not to sinners? No, my heart is not hard enough to treat my children harshly. The day will perhaps come when they shall be transformed into lambs and become holier than the whole lot of us. Had Saul been rebuffed, we should not have had a St. Paul. God sends them to me to be cured. Do you want

me to refuse that to God? I am well aware that I am their Bishop, but I prefer to show them that I am their father."

How far from these sentiments is not your miserable father of Grenelle! Pray earnestly to the Heart of Jesus and our Patron to give them to him so that he may penetrate you with them. Let that be the distinctive mark of the poor Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Only on this condition shall we be enabled to bear that beautiful name; otherwise people will say some day: "A poor fool wanted to found a Congregation; he succeeded only in producing women full of themselves and uncivil to all, without charity and without gentleness."

Feast of the Holy Innocents, 1868

Should not this day be the feast of our little orphan girls, of our poor abandoned children? Poor innocent creatures, what would become of most of them if you did not gather them in? Love them well! Be good mothers to them and Jesus will love you, He who blessed them with His divine hands, saying: "Let the little ones come unto Me."

But all are not called to care for them. Most of you are destined to care for the sick, to go and edify the world so as to bring it back to Jesus Christ. Into that world which we must frequent without imbibing either its tastes or its maxims, we must strive to bring what our good Father used to call the good odor of piety. Truly pious souls, those who have grasped the meaning of devotion to the Heart of Jesus, resemble flowers exhaling a pleasing fragrance. In their company one senses, without detecting it, a sweet something, as in the springtime when one passes by a meadow sown with violets. These souls are quite naturally so kind, so simple, so modest, so forgetful of self, so eager to give pleasure, so devoted to every

good work, that one falls involuntarily under their spell. They win people over to virtue, in spite of themselves. That is why St. Francis de Sales declares those happy who, by their example, shed abroad in the world the good odor of piety, not of course for their own glory, but for the glory of the heavenly Father, the only object which real piety ever proposes to itself.

May that good odor of Jesus Christ remain behind, after you have finished your mission of charity in the houses where you have attended the sick and infirm.

Although my hands are weary from giving so many absolutions during these days, they still have enough strength to bless you all, the Mother and her daughters and their little ones, little children all!

My Daughters,

Every time I pronounce that word I feel ashamed; I pity you for having such a miserable Father; nevertheless, I console myself on having given you another one whom you can and ought to imitate in every respect, as I have often told you; he is your real Father and it is he, the good, holy Francis de Sales who must instruct you.

I shall therefore continue my exposition of his spirit for you, quoting frequently from his own words. It is he, our holy Patron, then, who comes to guide and encourage you; so give him a hearty welcome.

In reading his biography, you have seen that he had his share of griefs, trials and disappointments of all sorts. He was relatively poor, often in poor health, frequently misunderstood and insulted. Yet he sometimes trembled for fear lest God might not have given him his paradise in this world. All these tribulations had been scarcely felt by him, so great had been his consolations among all these reverses and sorrows. What an example for us, my children, who set up a hue and cry when we are scarcely

hurt at all, barely contradicted, and who imagine that God owes us an eternity of happiness in return for the mere nothings over which we make such a fuss. Ah, you see, we ought to kiss every letter of this remarkable lament which our good saint often repeated: "Strictly speaking, I don't know the meaning of adversity, I have never experienced poverty, I have barely suffered at all Please, help me to thank God!" A truly Christian plaint on which we can never meditate enough nor sufficiently recall it so as ever to thank God, in sickness as in health, in ill-fortune as in good, in trial as in consolation, reminding ourselves moreover that it is not suffering which opens heaven but our manner of accepting suffering. This very much tried man, who never thought he had anything to complain about, wanted people to be kind, gentle, affectionate toward their neighbors, especially when they found them a burden and an object of natural aversion; in this he showed himself the faithful disciple of Him who commanded us to love even our enemies and to pray for those who hate us. There is little merit in loving whatever is lovable; even the pagans do that. But to love one's poor neighbor when he is importunate, burdensome, boring, exhausting, and a nuisance; when he is an object of repugnance and disgust; to treat him with kindness and gentleness, with affection, in spite of so many reasons for repelling him and running away from him: that is the real Christian spirit, the spirit which ought to animate in the highest degree the Servants of the Sacred Heart, these new daughters of St. Francis de Sales, for then it is Jesus alone whom they love with a pure and holy love

I stopped to oversee the preparation of the room where our good Sister Caroline is going to receive Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction. Oh, how good it is to die when one has loved the Heart of Jesus! Death is for our Sister

a feast day, the most beautiful of her life. She was worried yesterday because she experienced nothing but joy and was disturbed by no temptation whatever. “I am in the Heart of Jesus,” she said, “so I do not fear Satan.” . . .

May Mary obtain for you the grace to understand the sublimity of your mission among the poor whom St. Vincent de Paul called our lords and masters. Being poor yourselves, living only by the alms of which you go in quest from door to door, you have been able up to now to do very little, too little, for the needs of so many thousands of poor folk whom you visit each day. But, you see, material indigence is often for them the least of their miseries. That old man without a son, this child bereft of a father, no doubt they suffer from cold, from hunger; and yet these misfortunes are the ones they fear the least since public sympathy can most easily remedy them. What makes them really heartsick is the lack of a friendly hand to clasp their own, of a heart expanding toward theirs; hence the intolerable void.

It is you, Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, visitors of the poor, sisters, nurses of the sick poor, who strive to fill this void. You do not go to the poor merely with a pot of broth or bread or a meat order or a garment you have made with your own hands; you go most of all with a heart united to the Heart of Jesus, with a soul keenly alive to the sorrows of others, whence come forth, thanks to the grace drawn from the Heart of Jesus, those effortless words of comfort; these, too, are benefactions and hold the first place among them. You allow the conviction to take hold of the poor man that he is more than the object of pity, more than the object of aid; that he is the object of love. You do not restrict yourselves to a hurried

call at his house. You sit down, you take possession of the only chair, or of his little bench, and there you listen to the tale of woes of this poor unfortunate. You urge him to relieve himself of certain secrets which weigh him down; you mingle your tears with his and, by dint of patience, of affectionate treatment and of time, you cause to well up in that calloused heart some return of the affection you have shown him. Only too often the poor fellow is an unbeliever or uninstructed in the faith. He does not know, that, after this life of expiation and sorrow, there is an eternity; that in heaven a God reigns who is merciful and clement, who chastises His children only to try them and make them better, and who promises them, in exchange for the sufferings they have borne patiently here below, rewards which shall be without end or measure. Instead of uniting his sufferings to those of a God Saviour, instead of deriving from it, after the example of so many fervent Christians, a source of hope and an opportunity for meriting, he blasphemes divine Providence, curses and abandons himself to despair. When he is in such a state of soul, how useful can you not be to him! By revealing to him his immortal destiny, showing him infinite bliss as the immense compensation for passing evils, you open that heart once more to hope; you prepare for this modern world which has become so skeptical and naturalistic, the admirable spectacle of poverty accepted meekly, even joyfully, and borne with dignity, as being a precious title to brotherhood with our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is thus that the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus should look upon the visiting of the poor. What, in fact, can you do for the material needs of the indigent? Little enough, very little; you are necessarily restricted by the limitations of your resources. But when it is a question of carrying spiritual alms to the poor, your treasure is in-

exhaustible, for it is the very graces of God, drawn forth from the overflowing Heart of Jesus, that you dispense; never will you experience the regret of having to restrain yourself and stop giving.

From Paris Father Braun came to Sèvres frequently during the week to visit his daughters for their encouragement and instruction. He always found there in the Superior of the Dominicans judicious counsel regarding the direction of his undertakings. As the Dominican nuns wore white and the Servants of the Sacred Heart black, Canon Codant would say to him good-naturedly: “Don’t worry, I have one eye on the whites and one on the blacks.”

Since subjects were presenting themselves in ever increasing numbers, it was decided that another reception of the habit should be held. Canon Codant, delegated by Bishop Mabile to carry out the canonical examination, admitted nine postulants to the clothing. The ceremony of this second reception of the habit of the Servants of the Sacred Heart was set for October 2, 1868. As on the first occasion, the Dominicans graciously offered their chapel. The number of Servants of the Sacred Heart had now grown to twenty-four.

Very soon the separation of the community into two different localities so distant from one another presented many disadvantages, especially in the early days of a congregation whose first religious formation was in process of development. Father Braun began to look about for a more spacious house where all the Sisters could be reunited.

He accepted the offer which Canon Codant made

to him of a house adjoining that of the Dominicans who had recently purchased it. This house was occupied by a laundry and an inn whose advertisement read: "At the sign of the Pioneer" whence the name of "Pioneer" given to the new house. A promise was made to the Sisters that the laundry and inn would move away. But as a matter of fact only the laundry was vacated; the innkeeper refused to cancel his lease which would not expire for six years. The Sisters could therefore occupy only that part of the house which had become vacant and found themselves in very close quarters.

The hasty repairs and damp plaster produced an unhealthful humidity. Seven Sisters fell ill, stricken with typhoid fever. This was a terrible trial at that critical time when everything was lacking to them. They redoubled their confidence in God and their ministrations to the sick all of whom recovered their health, except one young girl of fifteen.

The vicinity of a wine shop was most unpleasant. They shared the same courtyard and garden; the Sisters and children could scarcely ever go out without being the butt of raillery and insults on the part of the clientele.

To all these inconveniences there was soon to be added a misunderstanding with the Dominicans so that Father Braun was obliged to seek a shelter elsewhere. With ingenuous confidence he had imagined that the Dominicans were offering hospitality to his community in the "Pioneer" house gratuitously. What was his surprise when, at the end of six months, he re-

ceived a bill for 2500 francs due as rent. How was he to face this new problem? The Sisters had barely enough for their daily bread; and he himself had sunk all of his small patrimony in the work he had undertaken. Nevertheless, with the help of Providence, he must find this sum to reimburse the Dominican nuns for the alterations made in the house. Furthermore, a lease was proposed to Father Braun stipulating for the future a rental of 5500 francs. This time Father Braun believed himself empowered and obliged to resist his old friend, Canon Codant, by a formal refusal:

Reverend Superior and dear Confrere,

Permit me to reply to your esteemed letter with entire simplicity and candor.

It was on our account, you say, that the house was bought. I cannot deny your statement but, as a matter of fact, it is not for us. These Dominican Religious have kept a considerable portion for themselves, the wine merchant another part, and we have the rest. All the tenants were not sent away, as was agreed, for our Sisters are obliged to live in close proximity to the innkeeper. You say nothing about this contact which no ecclesiastical or civil power would allow. You draw back from this objection; in my opinion, it is definitely insoluble.

We cannot sign a lease of which some clauses are out of the question. The most attractive part of the garden is taken from us, the only portion where our Sisters and children were sheltered from the public gaze, and they are demanding the use of the wash-house and drying-room. What is the use of taking upon ourselves a rent of 5500 francs (6500 including taxes) which we could not pay? It would not be honest.

Then, we are dismissed from the chapel and sent to the parish church, where we are no more welcome. What conclusion can we come to except to withdraw?

Throughout this affair, my daughters and I have always had but one concern, to avoid being troublesome to you, to you who have been so extraordinarily kind to us. It is to your powerful protection that the Servants of the Sacred Heart owe the happiness of being a community blessed by God in the number of its subjects and in the excellent spirit which animates them, as you are pleased to declare openly both in public and in private.

It is impossible for us to believe that, since we cannot accept the too burdensome conditions laid down by the Dominican nuns, you will close the door of your heart to us and withdraw that fatherly protection of which we have so much need

We do not know where we shall go; never has our situation been more precarious, but if we remain faithful to God, we do not think He will forsake us. If He wants us, He will help us out of this difficulty; if not, we would rather cease to exist without injuring anyone than to be burdened with debts and obligations that we shall not be able to pay. Our first experience has cost us too dearly to be repeated.

Respectfully, etc.

Victor Braun

As soon as he had given notice of leaving the "Pioneer" house, Father Braun began to look for a shelter for his community. Not without much difficulty, he finally found a small country house at Saint-Cloud, about which he was informed by some well-disposed persons. He announced this discovery in the following letter:

June 22, 1869

My dear Daughters,

If the life of a Christian here below is a pilgrimage, that is especially true for the Servants of the Heart of Jesus. There you are once more forced to move and this time from Sèvres to Saint-Cloud. We may well say this time that the good God willed it so. During his month St. Joseph seemed to turn a deaf ear. The Blessed Virgin, likewise invoked for a whole month under the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, had found nothing for us; and Our Lord Himself waited until the month consecrated to His Heart had been half spent; but then He enabled us to find something better than we could have expected. It was on Wednesday, the day consecrated to St. Joseph, that the business was settled; and it was on Friday, the day of our happiness, that the lease was signed, after a vow made by all of us to the Sacred Heart and a special vow made by our Mother to Our Lady of la Salette.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, in company with the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph, has taken possession of the new house, and tomorrow the first Sisters will go to live in it. This latest benefit requires a special act of gratitude. Thus you will become to an ever increasing extent, in your quality of Servants of the Sacred Heart, repairers of the outrages He receives each day from sinners throughout the world. We shall try to console Him and make amends to Him for the utter ingratitude of men. Every day after Vespers one Sister will come in turn, with a rope about her neck and a torch in hand, to recite an act of reparation, and she will offer, beginning with that hour when the Heart of Jesus was pierced through on the Cross, until the next day at the same time, not only her holy Communion, but all her thoughts, words, actions and sufferings in reparation for these outrages. The act of reparation will be the one composed by Blessed Margaret Mary, the

patroness of the novitiate and of all our Sisters. We shall therefore have each day in our midst a victim of reparation who, while holding back the divine thunder from sinners, will draw down upon us great blessings. We shall have taken thereby a new step in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is the object of our little society. I know you well enough to be assured that you will rejoice at this new homage rendered to the Heart of the divine Master, which you already love in so special a manner. In making reparation, think above all of your poor Father who often grieves by his cowardice this Heart which he ought to be teaching you to love and which he loves so little. You will help me, my children, won't you, to make reparation for my own faults?

I greet you and bless you all in this same Heart which you want to love and to make others love.

Your poor Father Braun.

P.S. Let us just say with our good Father St. Francis de Sales: "Sweet Jesus, draw me ever deeper into Thy Heart so that Thy love may overwhelm me and that I may be wholly immersed in its sorrow."

Our good little Sister Margaret Mary will tell us who will become the privileged souls of this divine Heart:

"Would you know which soul will enter deepest into the Heart of Jesus? It will be the humblest and most despised; and the most silent will be the best instructed; the most charitable will be the most tenderly loved; the most perfectly submissive will have the greatest credit and power." Let us all say with her: "I want to undertake and to endure all things to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus known, loved and glorified."

In the month of June, 1868, the Sisters and their orphans definitely removed from Sèvres to go and live in Saint-Cloud, on the rue de Montretout. This time

they were better housed but still in quarters that were too cramped for so many. They were without sufficient chairs to sit down to their meals, so they sat in the garden; if the rain surprised them, each one made a quick dash for the house, plate in hand. The police interfered, requiring them to curtail the number of residents so as to satisfy the hygienic regulations. Two Sisters were therefore obliged to leave Saint-Cloud, taking with them about twenty of the older girls. Father Braun sent them to the house in rue du Théâtre, Sacred Heart Shelter, where the center for servant girls had been established and where some of the Sisters had remained upon the departure from Paris. They made the journey on foot. Each girls carried her little bundle containing a petticoat, a few underclothes and a scrap of blanket.

They arrived exhausted at the rue du Théâtre where they were not expected. The Sisters were living from hand to mouth; the prospect of twenty children more to feed and house threw them into consternation at first; there was no room and food was likewise lacking.

When the first excitement had subsided, they brought the children into the courtyard of the house and each one sat down upon her small bundle. The Superioress and the Sisters, having been informed of their predicament, did their best to come to the aid of the poor little ones. But with all their good will, it was physically impossible to house them permanently and feed them; they inconvenienced themselves to an unheard of extent to give them a few days of hospitality.

Father Braun and the Sisters set to work once more

to find a house. But one day a curate from Argenteuil and a lady who was benefactress of the parish charities came to ask Father Braun to let them have some nursing Sisters for the poor of Argenteuil. Father Braun eagerly accepted and a few days later, several Sisters were installed in rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu at Argenteuil, in an old property with a courtyard and garden.

Somewhat later, all the orphan girls were gathered together there, both those from Saint-Cloud and those who returned from Paris, numbering forty in all. Twelve Sisters under the direction of Mother Gertrude also left Saint-Cloud to follow the orphans to Argenteuil.

The house at Saint-Cloud was to become for the Sisters a beloved home. Through the mediation of one of the pastors of the parish, Father Braun obtained permission to build a chapel and reserve the most Blessed Sacrament. He rented for his own use a room in a nearby cottage so as to be able to say Mass for the Sisters and be entirely at their disposition. Several times a week he gave them conferences and concerned himself with the organizing of the novitiate. It was there that he completed the composition of the Rules in their essential lines so as to explain them in his conferences.

On December 8, 1869, a ceremony of clothing took place in the chapel of rue Montretout for twenty-one postulants. It was the fourth reception to be held.

Father Braun had such a lofty conception of the religious vows and their obligations that he did not wish to allow the Sisters to pronounce them before they, too, had been imbued with a like esteem. He still

hesitated at this time to apply to the Bishop for the necessary authorization. He thereby evinced his modesty and self-effacement before the action of grace. He was so afraid of imposing his own action inopportunistly that it required providential events to constrain him, so to speak, to undertake this final step.

VI

THE WAR OF 1870

In January, 1870, the Congregation numbered more than fifty Sisters distributed among three houses: first, that of Grenelle on the rue du Théâtre, the headquarters for the work among servant girls; second, the house at Saint-Cloud composed of nursing Sisters and postulants; third and last, that of Argenteuil where forty orphans resided under the care of twelve or fifteen Sisters.

Father Braun accepted soon after a fourth foundation at Vaugirard where the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul appealed to the Servants of the Sacred Heart to staff the linen-room of an orphanage.

A pleasant sense of stability had begun to be felt. The ecclesiastical authorities assured Father Braun of the good spirit and devotedness of his daughters, and the community, confident about the future, was already making plans for more complete accommodations.

But the Father Founder raised a cry of alarm: "Beware," he told them, "lest you depart from the poverty which has been up to now your strength and your merit before God. Recall your indigence when you were at Grenelle and especially at Sèvres, in that famous castle of Caderoussel whose windows had no

glass, the doors no locks, and you were lacking in everything. You were more fervent then than in your charming villa at Saint-Cloud or your house at Argenteuil. Fear to hold off the divine blessing from your community by seeking after a little comfort."

It was when everything seemed to be prospering in the recruiting of subjects and the expansion of their undertakings that the Franco-Prussian war broke out.

From the very beginning of mobilization, Father Braun left for Saint-Avoid, in the very midst of military operations, so as to exercise his ministry among our soldiers and with the intention of summoning up his Sisters to work in the ambulance division.

Scarcely had he arrived when he began to be concerned about the welfare of his daughters and he wrote to them: "If Father Le Prevost has not assumed general direction of the four houses, ask Father Baumert to take charge of the house at Grenelle and Father Planchat of the one at Vaugirard. The houses of Saint-Cloud and Argenteuil will put themselves under the direction of their respective parish priests. It is impossible to describe to you what is happening at this very moment before my eyes. Across the breadth of our streets soldiers have been passing by since eleven o'clock without interruption. It is the second and third army corps massing on the frontier. The victory of Saarbrücken has roused the enthusiasm of our soldiers. General Frossard, to whom I addressed my request for the establishment of an ambulance, received a sudden order to depart yesterday with sixty thousand men; the same evening Marshall Bazaine replaced him with sixty thousand other soldiers. They expect

a great battle and also many dead and wounded, a few leagues from here within three days. In that case, hold yourselves in readiness; a message will reach you, saying: 'Come at once with so many Sisters.' Bring medals, scapulars, linen for dressing wounds; I am enclosing the dimensions of compresses and bandages used in the military surgery."

The next day he wrote: "At this very moment Marshall Bazaine is mounting his horse with his escort and riding toward the Prussian frontier. These last two days I have been helping our two military chaplains at the camp and, in the evening, at the church packed with soldiers. The thought of the death they are about to face makes them pious; we have them sing, pray and hear their confessions in rapid succession by the hundreds. We give them each a scapular and medal; we have yet to meet with a single one who refuses them."

Father Braun wrote daily to his daughters to keep them informed of events. Suddenly the announcement of the defeat of the French army fell like a thunderbolt upon the population. The Prussian canons were roaring at the frontier; the enemy was pushing before it our vanquished armies, threatening to invade France. Grief and terror succeeded enthusiasm. Men still clung to the illusion of a quick revenge and the conviction that this war would not last long.

Disasters followed one upon another with such precipitation that Father Braun found himself encircled by the belligerent forces. There was no use in his having written to his daughters; most of his letters went astray; and the others reached their destination

only after the event had occurred. France was invaded by the enemy which was making forced marches in the direction of Paris, sowing terror in its wake.

Desolation prevailed in the four houses of the Congregation. The Sisters, who no longer received any word from their Reverend Father, were panic-stricken. Was he alive or dead or imprisoned? What would become of them without direction or guidance?

Immediately after the declaration of war, the order had been given for all persons of German nationality to leave France; this was a further cause of anxiety to the Sisters. Automatically, the house at Grenelle, specifically destined for work among the German women, was closed. Moreover, those among the Sisters who were of German origin were obliged to leave French territory. They went to Cologne by way of Namur and Aix la Chapelle.

The enemy was drawing nearer and nearer to the capital. The inhabitants of the suburbs were fleeing before the invasion, some taking refuge in Paris, others withdrawing to the provinces. The poor Sisters of Argenteuil and Saint-Cloud were in a quandary. Should they leave along with everyone else? And if so, where should they go? Where could they find a refuge for the orphans? After praying fervently and abandoning themselves to the Sacred Heart, they resolved to remain in their houses.

But as Saint-Cloud and Argenteuil were within the zone of Mont Valerien and the small defense forts which had been hastily constructed, the residents were warned of the danger threatening them. At Argenteuil, the Sisters were on the boat along the shore of

the Seine busy with their laundry when they received word that they must leave at once. The engineer corps were just about to blast the bridge, and the Sisters had just time enough to catch the last train for Paris, so as to take refuge with their charges at Grenelle, in the house vacated by the center for German domestics.

They hastily packed their bundles, each Sister and child carrying her own. They abandoned the furnishings, the chapel, and all the rest. Quickly one Sister lighted a candle in the chapel before the statue of the Sacred Heart, asking Him to safeguard the house; then all left that home with profound sorrow yet with entire trust in providence.

On reaching Grenelle, the Sisters were subjected to a most painful sacrifice—the laying aside of their religious habit. Bravely they reassumed their former postulants' garb.

The Sisters of Saint-Cloud found refuge at Versailles where Bishop Mabile soon invited them to care for the wounded in the ambulance established at the Palace. When the German army entered Versailles on September 19, the ambulance passed into the hands of the Prussians and, fortunately, the Sisters were retained as nurses. These events were later to give to the Congregation an entirely new scope for its activity.

At that period, the care of the wounded was not as yet guaranteed by the State, but left almost entirely to private welfare organizations. The international Red Cross, then under English direction, took charge of the Versailles ambulance.

Thanks to them, Sister Josephine, who was Irish, obtained permission to make a trip to England. She

had conceived the daring plan of going to London in search of help and a shelter, and then of getting into Lorraine so as to locate the Father Founder, if possible. Supplied with a proper passport and a Red Cross arm-badge, she left Paris on August 26 in the company of three other Sisters. On the very next day, having arrived in London, she sought an interview with Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster. She spoke to him of her Congregation and of the hard blow which had fallen upon it; timidly, she besought his paternal protection and permission for some of the Sisters to take refuge in London. The Cardinal was the soul of kindness and compassion; he granted the permission requested and, over and above, he entrusted them with the gift of a crucifix for Father Braun, charging them to say to the Founder that he would welcome him and his Congregation with open arms.

Exuberant with joy, Sister Josephine returned to France. In Paris, she recounted to Father Le Prevost, Superior of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, the success of her undertaking and indicated to him certain convents to which he might send some Sisters; thereupon she left immediately for London with five Sisters, arriving on the third of September. She received an affectionate welcome from the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of Nazareth.

Having thus remedied the material distress of the Congregation, Sister Josephine then went, with one Sister companion, in search of Father Braun. To reach Lorraine, they were obliged to journey through Belgium and Luxemburg. After unheard of trials and adventures, they finally arrived at Saint-Avoid on

September 9, exhausted with fatigue. It was eight o'clock in the evening and the town was full of troops. Two charitably disposed soldiers took charge of their baggage and conducted them to Father Braun.

At that very moment, the Father had just ended a long letter which he was addressing to them on the subject of the beautiful name they bore. He had added:

"It will soon be two months that I have been separated from you. O my children, how long the time has been! And for more than a month there has been no more news

"St. Delphine wrote to her husband, St. Eleazar, complaining that he left her without news during a long absence. The saint replied to her: 'If you seek me, if you sigh after my return, you shall find me in the wound of the Heart of Jesus. It is there that I dwell and that you can meet me.' May I say the same to you! Meanwhile, I bless you."

But someone was knocking at the door. He went to open it. Could it be possible? Yes, it was indeed they. How much they had to tell him! Father Braun pelted them with questions. As a finishing touch, the Sisters presented him with the gift from Cardinal Manning.

On the following day, after rewarding Sister Josephine by clothing her in the habit of the Servants of the Sacred Heart, which she had not as yet received, Father Braun set out for England with two Sisters. All three wore the arm-badge of the International English Red Cross.

At Saarbrücken, what was not their astonishment on

recognizing in the street a Religious wearing the garb of the Servants of the Sacred Heart. It was a Sister on her way to Cologne, also in search of Father Braun. This unexpected meeting, in which they all discerned a providential coincidence, gave them the assurance that God willed to reunite them again. The journey to England was interrupted and it was decided to go to Cologne. There they found some twenty German Sisters who had been evicted from France at the beginning of hostilities; they were caring for the wounded French prisoners in the barracks and camps. Father Braun thereupon gave his instructions to the Sisters, exhorted them to remain faithful to their vocation, and left them a little money.

After traversing Belgium, the Father Founder and the two Sisters arrived in London on September 20. The following day he was received by Cardinal Manning who welcomed him with great kindness. He was not forgetting, he said, the good that had been effected in Protestant England by the exiled clergy and Religious during the great Revolution. He was hoping that the presence of French religious communities now would accomplish the same good and be conducive to a return to the Catholic faith. And pouring into the hands of his grateful visitor an alms sufficient to take care of the immediate needs, he gave him free rein to establish foundations wherever he would. Then he sent him away with his blessing, saying: "Go, and work like a good soldier of Christ."

Prospects were becoming brighter. Full of courage and confidence, Father Braun set to work immediately to reassemble his scattered flock. He rented a

house at Stratford, one of the poorest districts in the capital, and christened it: "The House of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart." It was absolutely empty, devoid of the barest furnishings, even a kitchen utensil. Sister Josephine went on a begging tour and, some days later, they were able to procure the most necessary equipment, including a bed for each.

Thus was fulfilled a prediction made at Sèvres on the occasion of a clothing ceremony on March 5, 1869. The Founder had greatly rejoiced that two English girls were to be found among the postulants:

"Has not Providence sent them to us so that some day we may do in London what we are already doing in Paris? It is especially in the large cities that we shall have the opportunity of doing good. Let us harbor in our hearts this consoling hope, that some day we shall go into England, into that country which once gave so many saints to the Church."

After a little while, conditions began to improve. Now Father Braun regretted not having the Sisters in France at his disposal. He sent letters everywhere, to Paris, to Versailles, to Germany. He would have liked to have the Paris Sisters come to London and he asked the Superioress at Versailles to send into England those who were not being used in the ambulance at the Palace.

The good Father was not aware that communication with Paris was already difficult and was to become impossible as a result of the beleaguering of the city. The Sisters who had taken refuge in Paris were destined to endure the horrors of the siege and the Commune. Sister Mary of Jesus, who was still called

Sister Josephine, her first name as a postulant, was given the mission by Father Braun of returning to Versailles with Sister Augusta to bring aid to the Red Cross and return with some Sisters. This was the third time she was making the trip between France and England since the beginning of the war. With tireless devotion, this good Sister eventually made eight such errands of mercy during the hostilities.

Armed with British passports and their Red Cross arm-badges, the two Sisters left London on September 28, taking with them several thousand francs and six enormous packages of linen and supplies. They reached Calais at noon; but, on account of the disorganization of railway lines caused by invasion, they were obliged to take a roundabout way of reaching Versailles. They were sent to Amiens and thence to Rouen, where they arrived in the evening and were obliged to spend the night. The next day was even more adventurous; they had to pass through the lines of both the French and German armies. After being interrogated several times and enduring every sort of difficulty, in spite of their perfectly valid passports, they reached Versailles at nine o'clock at night.

They went directly to the Hôtel des Reservoirs where the representative of the London Women's Organization resided, and accomplished the mission entrusted to them by turning over to her the material aids of all kinds brought from England.

The following day they hastened to visit their Sisters at the ambulance in the Palace. Great was the joy of all on seeing the exiles once more, hearing the account of the kindly welcome which the Father

Founder had received in London, and learning of the providential expansion of the Congregation. Supported by the President of the International Red Cross, they applied for passports for five Sisters from the Prince Royal of Prussia.

Leaving Versailles on October 2, they encountered obstacles in crossing the enemy lines. Before reaching Vernon, they were arrested several times, questioned and taken for spies. One of them, Mother Francis de Sales, was imprisoned for two hours.

At the same time, several Sisters who had received the urgent appeal of Father Braun in Germany had set out for London. Instead of passing through Luxemburg and Belgium, they made an ill-advised attempt to pass through France and cross both the Prussian and French army lines. They, too, underwent all manner of affronts: arrest, threats—nothing was spared them, until they reached Belgium.

They arrived in London on October 4, at the same time as the Sisters from Versailles, and were warmly received. Workers were lacking for so vast a field; the good to be done was unlimited. The Servants of the Sacred Heart watched over sick-beds, lavishly pouring out their attentions and their devotion. They were much in demand and appreciated, even among Protestants. The work of the nursing Sisters was henceforth well established in London.

Soon a second foundation became necessary in Germany. The Princess Alice asked for Sisters at Darmstadt to nurse the wounded in the hospital she founded there. This Princess, although a Protestant, had no misgivings about asking for Catholic Religious, since

she had learned from the Queen of Denmark, her own sister, of the devotedness manifested by the Servants of the Sacred Heart. Father Braun himself brought three of his Sisters there and took advantage of his presence in Germany to make a brief visit to Cologne.

On the return journey, he decided to pass through Versailles. The joyous surprise and emotion of the Sisters can easily be guessed, when they saw their beloved Father among them at that critical hour, in the midst of the invasion, Versailles being filled with Prussians. A cry of gratitude went up from all those hearts whose prayer had been heard by heaven. Their most ardent desires had been fulfilled!

Nor was the presence of the Father Founder among them without its salutary effect. The Bishop of Versailles had, of course, taken them under his guardianship and protection, but these good Sisters, whose religious formation was still very sketchy and who did not enjoy the support and security of the vows, found themselves necessarily somewhat at sea.

The scourge of war and the absence of the Father Founder had thrown them into confusion; the independence which resulted from being left to themselves had wrought havoc with not a few. It was time to take steps and recall them to regular observance. On the advice of the Bishop, Father Braun proceeded with unyielding firmness and sent away all those who, in one way or another, had failed to obey.

His observations caused him to fear for the Sisters in Paris. He would have wished to go to them at once; but he was prevented by the siege. It was not until March 18, 1871, that he was able to reach the

Paris communities, the two houses of Grenelle and Vaugirard. They had gallantly borne the terrors of war and the misery of the siege. At the battle of Champigny, Mother Gertrude and some of her Sisters had traversed the combat zone, sometimes through a shower of bullets, to rescue and care for the wounded.

The joy of their meeting was to be short-lived; that very day, civil war broke out. So as not to find himself cut off from the other communities, Father Braun left at once for Versailles, where he remained until, after the Commune was over and the storm had given way to calm, he was finally at liberty to make a thorough visitation of all the houses. He raised drooping spirits, gave instructions and repaired, as well as he could, the material damage.

Throughout the whole of the year 1871, he spent himself without counting the cost to consolidate his Congregation which had undergone such rapid and unexpected expansion. More than ever he thanked God and was able actually to experience what he had often affirmed with so much conviction, thanks to his spirit of faith: "It is the Sacred Heart Itself which is the founder of the Congregation; as for me, I am only Its servant." If Providence had kept him, as it were, imprisoned at Saint-Avoid, it was so that no one might ever think that the expansion of the Servants of the Sacred Heart had been the result of human prudence and design. Our Lord Himself, with His most loving Heart, had launched His Servants in the world, to set it on fire with charity.

This conviction impelled Father Braun to take the last step by permitting some Sisters to pronounce their

vows. They could not remain postulants or novices indefinitely or be satisfied with wearing a religious garb without the consecration thereby implied. Encouraged by the benevolent protection tendered to the Congregation by the Archbishop, Father Braun took steps during December of 1871 to accomplish this desire. His request was kindly received by Archbishop Manning who immediately granted the favor solicited. It was settled that this profession of annual vows should be made on January 29, 1872, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of the Congregation.

The news was immediately sent to the four French houses and it roused in the souls of the Sisters fervent sentiments of gratitude toward the Sacred Heart. At Stratford they could think of nothing but the preparations to be made for the occasion, while their hearts were being disposed for this great grace by prayer and retreat.

Father Braun had the inspiration of associating the four Superioresses of France with this profession. He summoned them hurriedly to London, sending to one of their number, together with advice and exact directions, the sum of three hundred francs for traveling expenses. It was January 19: "Come quickly," he wrote, "so as to prepare yourselves for profession by some days of retreat."

The four Superioresses responded with eager docility to the summons of their reverend Father. They arrived at Stratford in a happy frame of mind, to take their places among the retreatants.

On the same day, before the profession ceremony, Father Braun also gave the holy habit to two postu-

lants. This twofold ceremony was already an indication of the vitality of the young Congregation and augured well for its future prosperity.

The silence of the retreat had prevented the Sisters coming from France from speaking with their Stratford colleagues; but after the profession ceremony, and especially during the fraternal celebration which followed, all hearts overflowed with holy joy.

On their return to France, one can easily imagine the welcome they received in their respective communities. They could not answer fast enough the host of questions with which the Sisters plied them. Everyone admired and kissed respectfully the silver ring on the Superioress' finger, symbol of the alliance contracted with Our Lord by religious profession. The Father Superior, also returning to France, could scarcely contain his joy and exulted in the bounty of God.

Bishop Mabile of Versailles, who ever showed himself benevolent toward the Servants of the Sacred Heart and appreciative of the good they were effecting in his diocese, authorized them, in his turn, to make their vows.

During the course of that year, 1872, three ceremonies of clothing and five of profession were to take place.

VII

FULFILLMENT

The year 1873 was marked by two major events: the division of the Congregation into Provinces and the promulgation of the Constitutions.

The Father Founder was fully aware of all the disadvantages which might well result from the diversity of nationalities. He had observed at Stratford, and the Superioress often reminded him, how difficult it was to govern the community on account of the confusion of languages. To avoid such occasions for misunderstanding, he resolved to establish as many provinces as there were nationalities and to give to his Congregation a businesslike form of organization. He appointed Mother Francis de Sales at Stratford Provincial for England and Mother Gertrude of the Argenteuil community Provincial for France.

The history of the foundation in Vienna is interesting and demonstrates once more the action of Providence in all the phases of the Congregation's existence. It was one of the results of the dispersion caused by the war.

The Grande Gerbe ambulance at Saint-Cloud, where the Sisters were nursing in 1871, had at its head in the capacity of chief surgeon an Austrian, Baron de Mondì. He had observed the Servants of the Sacred Heart for many a long month attending the wounded. On his return to Vienna he painted a glow-

ing picture of the devotedness of the Sisters before the directors of the great Rudolf hospital.

It should be remarked that Austria had anticipated the future secularizing movement in France by replacing the Religious in the Vienna hospital with lay nurses. The very instigators of this move had begun, for the most part, to regret it and deplore its effects. The director of the hospital took advantage of this opportunity, therefore, to propose at least a partial restoration of nursing Religious. He began a correspondence with Father Braun and asked him for some Sisters, but only on trial and in one department only, on condition that they conform to very strict regulations.

On being informed of all these stipulations, the Father Founder decided they were unacceptable. Then, suddenly, he changed his mind; the reason for his decision remains a mystery; he confided it to no one. Had he not been favored with very special lights for the government of his Congregation? Just as he had predicted the London foundation, had he not foreseen the prosperous future of the house in Vienna? In a circular letter dated April 4, he speaks already of the Austrian Province and of its headquarters in Vienna.

He consented, therefore, to send to Vienna on May 1, 1873, a small colony of ten Sisters of which only six were intended for the Rudolf hospital. The other four were to form a little community in Vienna and await developments. This move was most prudent; in case of failure at the hospital, for whatever reason, the Sisters must be assured of an easily accessible refuge.

The administration of the hospital entrusted to the

six Sisters the charge of one ward, while the other four received temporary hospitality from the Visitandine nuns. The nursing Sisters accomplished their task with an efficiency which impressed the heads of the health service. Their management, cleanliness, discretion and many other qualities became the object of general admiration to such an extent that several doctors, amazed and forsaking their former prejudices, asked in turn for the Servants of the Sacred Heart to staff their wards.

The Sisters who had received hospitality from the Visitation monastery, on their part, soon established a community in a house procured for them by a lady whose mother they had nursed. Their devotedness soon became known and appreciated throughout the city. They could not cope with all the urgent requests made to them for the care of the sick. Father Braun therefore sent several more Sisters, both to the hospital and to the community established in the city.

The presence of the Sisters in Vienna stimulated a great many vocations which necessitated the establishment of a novitiate. Thus a new province was founded. Father Braun appointed Mother Mary Teresa of Jesus Provincial of Austria. Solicitous to insure to his daughters the necessary spiritual assistance, he recommended them to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Redemptorists who, together with his Fathers, accepted the direction of the Sisters with regard to confession and even promised to give them a weekly conference. The Sisters were in good hands. The province developed remarkably. At the end of their first year the Sisters numbered about forty.

But the presence and success of the Religious at the

Rudolf hospital exasperated the Freemasons who were not to be shaken in their purpose. Spiteful articles began to appear in the newspapers. The attacks became so violent that the hospital authorities themselves were obliged to undertake the Sisters' defence and put a stop to the scandal. This antireligious campaign carried on by a libellous press did not prevent the Sisters from prospering. Three years later the Rudolf hospital included more than eighty Servants of the Sacred Heart among its personnel.

By the establishment of the three provinces of England, France and Austria, the internal organization of the Congregation was well outlined. All that was lacking was to render it permanent by definite rules. The spread of his work made it impossible for Father Braun to continue the immediate direction which he had heretofore exercised. On the feast of Our Lady of the Seven Dolors, in 1873, he was finally able to announce the dispatch of the rules on which he had been working for some years.

In a few days you will receive in all the houses the Rule of St. Augustine and your Constitutions. You will find nothing there which you do not already know, since it has been explained to you by word of mouth for so many years, and which you have not put into daily practice during this time. I thank the Heart of Jesus for the great zeal with which you have so long been asking for them, fearing lest, too imperfectly aware of your duties, you might not fulfill them as well as your love for the Heart of Jesus and your devotion to the poor inspired you to do

Although there is not a single article of your Constitu-

tions which is not drawn from a great number of other Constitutions already approved by the Church, we are nevertheless waiting until time and the counsels which will be given us have perfected them, before submitting them to the approbation of the Holy See without whose approval the noblest of enterprises would be afflicted with sterility.

Father Braun continued with a tribute to their fervor and good spirit, exhorting them not to relax in doing good, but to continue progressing courageously. Two days later he sent a circular letter on the spirit of sacrifice and imposed some penitential practices for obtaining numerous vocations.

It was at Paray-le-Monial, that hallowed spot which our Lord had sanctified by the revelation of His divine Heart, that the Father Founder desired to make the offering of his work, presenting to the divine Master these His new Servants. He happened to be in London when he learned that an English pilgrimage was being organized to go to Paray-le-Monial. He saw therein the invitation of Providence to accomplish the wish he had so long cherished. Accompanied by three Sisters representing the three provinces, he joined the pilgrimage. They left London on September 1, 1873. A stop was made at Paris. At the shrine of Our Lady of Victories, the four pilgrims consecrated themselves to the Blessed Virgin and placed their pilgrimage under her protection. This was symbolic: in the pilgrimage of his life had Father Braun not also been led from devotion to the Holy Virgin to the priesthood and thence to devotion to the Sacred Heart? They arrived at Paray-le-Monial on September 3 at eleven o'clock

in the evening. We borrow the account of this pilgrimage from the circular letter which the Father Founder addressed to all his daughters on that occasion:

Dear Daughters in the Heart of Jesus,

I am at Paray-le-Monial! How can I describe to you the joys of this beautiful day and all the emotions which fill my soul!

The reception accorded our pilgrimage was splendid. The church, the public monuments, the whole town were illuminated. The French pilgrims who happened to be at Paray that day came out to meet us and welcomed us with shouts of: "Long live England! Long live Catholic England!" The next evening during the torchlight procession the same ovation was renewed; the cry of: "Long live England!" went up from several thousand French pilgrims, to which the English pilgrims replied with: "Long live France! Long live Catholic France!"

Traversing the streets of the town, all festooned with garlands and rich banners bearing the image of the Sacred Heart, entering into the chapel of the Visitation, into that blessed enclosure of the monastery where our Blessed Margaret Mary lived and died, one is seized with an indefinable emotion

After Mass, we marched processionally over that blessed ground, so often trodden by the feet of the divine Saviour and by our holy patroness. On Golgotha the Heart of Jesus was opened by the centurion's lance so as to allow the last drops of His precious blood to issue forth; at Paray-le-Monial, in the house of the daughters of St. Francis de Sales, that adorable Heart often opened to permit the flames of its love to pour out in torrents over the world

Yes, this is truly holy ground, this cradle of the devo-

tion to the Sacred Heart. I should have wished, my daughters, to see you all here with your Father and the three Sisters who have had the happiness of visiting these venerable spots. You would have felt that you heard once more the complaints of the Saviour addressed to the Servants of the Sacred Heart as to their holy patroness. You would all have felt born and growing in you the resolve henceforth to respond better to the appeals of His divine charity.

It was with joyful confidence that I laid upon the body of the Blessed a golden heart containing the names of all the Sisters of the Congregation, praying your holy patroness to offer to the Heart of Jesus your hearts made golden by charity.

Do not forget that it was the promises of Our Lord to the Blessed and the complaints of His divine Heart which gave birth to your Congregation of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Without that special object, the Congregation would have no reason for existing; for other Congregations accomplish as well and perhaps better than you your works of charity toward the poor and working classes. Enter generously then, my daughters, into the merciful designs of the divine Heart. That is your special mission. The Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are repairers for the divine Heart. They should be souls who bless It in the midst of those who outrage It, souls who appease It in the midst of those who offend It, souls who implore pardon in the midst of those who call down Its chastisement.

After encouraging the Religious to give themselves entirely to their beautiful vocation, Father concluded his letter with some advice concerning their exercises of piety.

On September 5, the pilgrims were on the return journey. Father Braun repaired to Argenteuil. From there he made several visits to the three provinces so as to unite ever more intimately to the Sacred Heart these Religious whose names were to be found inscribed in the golden heart at Paray-le-Monial. The fervor and generosity he observed in all the houses persuaded him to take a further step forward and to make gradual preparations for the approbation of his Congregation by the Holy See Itself. On March 30, 1874, he besought from Pius IX his blessing upon the Congregation; a month later this prayer was granted, to his very great joy.

My Daughters in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Let us rejoice, I would say with the Apostle, let us rejoice in the Lord. The Sacred Heart of Jesus which has overwhelmed us with so many graces, especially in these latter days, has just manifested to us anew how pleasing is our special devotion to It and our devotedness to those It loves most, namely the poor and the orphans.

The sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, the infallible Vicar of Jesus Christ, who has already blessed us several times before, has just done so in a manner still more consoling to you and to me, by signing with his own hand a blessing which I sought in a petition wherein I summed up the history of your foundation, your expansion and your labors. This benediction, for which you will help me to render thanks to the good God, will give us all renewed zeal to make the Heart of Jesus loved. It would seem that Our Lord casts a glance of special benevolence upon our poor efforts just now, and that He wills to come to the aid of our enfeebled arms. May you all be abundantly filled by the Sacred Heart of our good Master with the consolations which are the reward of doing good in union

with Him. Let us thank the Heart of Jesus for these new favors; let us entrust our thanksgiving to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Father Braun redoubled his efforts to put the finishing touches to his foundation. From the beginning he had cherished that concept of the devotion to the Sacred Heart which Pope Pius XI subsequently developed in his encyclical on the spirit of reparation. To the three ordinary vows the Sisters added a fourth: "I also vow to consecrate myself to the Sacred Heart after the manner defined in our Constitutions." The sense in which this consecration was understood can be learned from a circular letter whence we extract the following lines:

No one, of course, should bind herself, without a genuine attraction and without an obedience, to this way of reparation and victimhood which is the object of your dear little society. But when a soul knows, through the decision of him who is charged with her direction, that the most lovable Heart of Jesus does her the honor of choosing her as His servant and as His victim, oh, let her accept! Let her accept with profound humility, as considering herself unworthy of such a choice; let her accept with generosity in spite of all the difficulties, griefs, humiliations and sufferings she perceives to be involved in the choice; let her not be troubled or astonished at the repugnances which nature experiences. Such repugnances manifested themselves to an extraordinary degree in Blessed Margaret Mary but they did not prevent her from being to the very end a holy and most efficacious victim. Let her accept with confidence for, if the Lord is exacting, He will also be lavishly bountiful. The divine Heart affirmed as much to the blessed maid: "I shall be thy torment," he said to her, "but I shall also be thy joy and

consolation” At the moment when persecution against our holy Mother the Church is universal, at the moment when the impious are preparing to celebrate their victory at sight of the great number of souls they manage to snatch from Our Lord, who among you would dare refuse to be a victim for the salvation of these poor souls, who among you would refuse to make reparation for these offenses daily committed against the Heart of Our Lord?

We sense to what a degree Father Braun had penetrated into the spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart. To him the preaching of the Cross was neither a “stumbling-block” nor “foolishness” but rather the “power and wisdom of God.” He understood the words of St. Paul. “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church.”

The constant cultivation of the interior life ought, in his opinion, to be for his Congregation the surest guarantee of its existence. The spirit of reparation was expressly indicated by the Constitutions as the motive animating all the actions of the Sisters.

He also worked toward the exterior organization of his religious family. For a long time he had wished to name a Superioress General so as himself to be able gradually to relinquish the task of governing it and devote himself entirely to its spiritual direction. He was considering Mother Gertrude, the French Provincial, for this post. But as she was stricken with a serious illness, it was not until the Spring of 1875 that he was able to accomplish his plan and finally withdraw somewhat from business matters. He selected the Motherhouse at Argenteuil as his residence. From

there he wrote further circulars rich in doctrine and made a visitation of the English and Austrian houses in turn. His Congregation was now flying with its own wings, so to speak, growing from day to day under the action of grace, while he was becoming more and more the holocaust consumed for its sake.

This was most apparent on the occasion of his twenty-fifth anniversary of his priesthood, June 14, 1876. It was a day of great joy for Father Braun and all his religious family. On the eve of that day the Sisters and orphans presented their good wishes to him. These evidences of filial love touched him profoundly; the end of his priestly life was accomplished, the work which grace had inspired in him was done: a long rank of dear little orphan girls preserved from the corruption of the world, a whole generation of holy souls leaving the world at his summons and following Jesus, becoming reparative and propitiatory victims for the salvation of their neighbors. With what holy satisfaction did he not enumerate the fruits of his labors and trials, and with what eagerness did he not attribute all the glory to the Sacred Heart!

The next day, the Sisters of all the French houses came to Argenteuil to attend the holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered by the reverend Jubilarian in thanksgiving. The preacher, a Brother of St. Vincent de Paul and an intimate friend of Father Braun, recalled these words of the Gospel: "I have come to cast fire upon the earth and what will I but that it be enkindled." He then showed how this desire of Our Lord's was fulfilled in the life of Father Braun. In conclusion he wished the Jubilarian the joy of seeing his work grow in solidity and extent.

After the religious ceremony, all repaired to the garden which had been transformed into a delightful little earthly paradise where the children revelled in their play together with the Sisters. The relatives of the children and the friends of the house had been invited. This day of days was celebrated with poems and songs and a little play which portrayed very felicitously the significance of those twenty-five years of priesthood. A very skillful display of fireworks brightened the close of the day. But while the rockets were extinguished one by one, Father Braun saw an important phase of his life closing in as well.

A new phase was beginning, entirely devoted to prayer and the spiritual formation of the novices at the Motherhouse. We possess a significant collection of conferences from this period, piously set down and preserved. It will not be without relish, we believe, that the reader will peruse some of these pages, filled with simple good-heartedness, psychological insight and supernatural prudence.

Simplicity

To possess the fullness of the virtue of simplicity demands a special grace. If you had already acquired that virtue I should say that you were little saints, even big saints.

This virtue does not exist in the world; you see how false that spirit of the world is, that wordly spirit.

For instance, the doorbell rings. As soon as the lady of the house discovers that it is Mrs. So-and-so whom she doesn't like, she bursts out with: "O, that old cat! Why didn't you tell her I wasn't in There's nothing for me to do now but receive her; this is my day at home."

So she comes in. "O, Mrs. So-and-so, how good of

you to come and see a poor shut-in like me! I was pining away because it was so long since I had had the pleasure of seeing you. Really, you are too kind!" So the conversation continues; an hour goes by and inwardly she is saying: "She isn't going yet!" Then comes the moment of departure: "What, are you leaving already? Oh, I suppose I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again soon!" They bow for the first time to each other: "Please do not be so long in coming next time." Then they bow a second time: "I hope you will come again soon." Then a third bow: "Come now, Mrs. So-and-so, I will see you soon, won't I?" She closes the door: "Phew! There, she's gone! At last I can breathe . . ."

You are laughing, aren't you? Because that may have happened to you, or if it hasn't happened, you have witnessed such a scene, you know that that is the way things are done. Well, now, the Christian spirit does not consist in saying such silly things to people; no, that is the spirit of vulgarity. Don't go looking for fine phrases; just speak simply: How good it is, that spirit of simplicity! Speak with a person who is simple; right away, you feel that goodness; yes, the soul relaxes and experiences a moment of happiness . . .

Consider a child four or five years old; there is a charming loveliness about him. He asks you all sorts of questions. When you are traveling you sometimes meet such little children on the train; they stick their heads out the door of the railway carriage and never stop asking questions: "Oh, mama, look! What's that?" Sometimes mama gets very tired of answering. The virtue of simplicity is to be found in childhood; it must therefore be found in novices.

Ask our good father St. Francis de Sales to help you to acquire it. "Simplicity," he says, "is like humility; without natural dispositions or a very special grace it is rarely possessed in its fullness; it has almost disappeared from

the world” It gives to a novice all the loveliness of a child, all the grace of infancy, all the candor of a heart that has never loved aught but God and His Mother and who scarcely knows the meaning of sin. St. Francis de Sales tells us that “simplicity makes one resemble children who think, speak, and act openly and without malice; they believe all they are told; they have no worry or care about themselves.” That is true simplicity; it never even occurs to them that anyone would deceive them; they are unconcerned for they say: “It’s all right, mama is there.” They love disinterestedly, because a person has been kind to them. They do not say: “I must love this person because he might be useful to me in two or three years.” No, such things are far from their thought; they love guilelessly “Simplicity is a contagious virtue thanks to its charms; it suffices to have one truly simple soul in a novitiate for all the other novices to seek as if instinctively to resemble her.” One cannot help oneself; there is something infectious about it; she must be loved. The mere desire for simplicity presupposes beauty of soul and goodness of heart To the extent that one becomes less upright one no longer wishes to be simple and begins to make fun of simplicity

“Love one Another”

Oh, if you but knew the pleasure you give to Our Lord when you do not spurn a soul whom He loves. The soul you reject thus may be loved by the Sacred Heart more than you are. Do not refuse it any service then. If you see, for example, that one of your Sisters is in sorrow, try to console her. Be more gentle, more considerate of her. That is a Christian virtue. The apostle St. Paul tells us to weep with them that weep. But there are different ways of weeping. I don’t mean to say that if you see a Sister crying in a corner you should go and cry with her or

that you should go and say to her: "I've come to weep with you since you enjoy doing so." No, that isn't it. But when a Sister has a real sorrow, yes. Not when she has received a proclamation at chapter and is humiliated by it. Pay no attention to the grief that springs from self-love, from hurt feelings. But there are real sorrows over which one is permitted to weep, for instance on losing a loved one There is also another trial of which I have spoken to you during these days, which is called nostalgia, homesickness. I find nothing quite so frightfully devastating as that malady; there is no worse torment. Well, then, these are real trials when one experiences them and which need to be shared. A person who has not endured them cannot understand them. I mention them because I know what they are, having experienced them myself. You can't imagine how painful a state that is. If you pass by a Sister who is experiencing that trial and you give her a cold look, you are sticking a dagger into her heart. Your cold smile, your philosophic remarks, all of that only aggravates the wound. It is especially at such a moment that a kind word, a friendly smile does a great deal of good. You will never forget what a Sister says to you under such circumstances and, later on, if you find yourself in the same grief once more, you will see that smiling face again, you will recall her sympathetic words. How much good they do you!

Abnegation

What I am going to read to you is from St. Francis de Sales; you will perhaps be astonished to see that St. Francis de Sales, who is so kind, can be so severe in this respect:

"The mistress of novices should frequently try those who are entrusted to her. [It is St. Francis de Sales who is teaching her the lesson.] Let her ground her daughters

well in solid virtues, let her make them supple as a glove. [You hear And she must obey St. Francis de Sales faithfully since he is her father.] Let her despoil them and detach them from everything, contradicting their inclinations, their judgments and their will at every turn; let her enlarge their hearts by tearing out of them as much as she can the silliness, the sentimentality and the indolent attitude which are wont to benumb the mind, especially in young girls. These are the excellent mortifications which she should make them practice continually during the novitiate and all in the spirit of love for God."

You hear that, now; she is charged with enlarging their hearts and in order to do so she must tear out the silliness, sentimentality and indolent attitude. It is not I who say that; it is St. Francis de Sales: to enlarge the heart, one must tear out the silliness I see Sister Novice Mistress has her pencil in hand; I am quite sure she wants to remember that so as to make use of it.

St. Francis de Sales continues: "You know, my dear daughters," says that lovable saint, "that if the grain of wheat falling into the ground does not die, it remains all alone; but if it decays, it will bring forth a hundredfold. Consequently you who aspire to the habit, and you others who are looking forward to holy profession, consider well more than once whether you have enough determination to die to yourselves and live only to God. For I declare to you, my dear daughters, and I do not wish to flatter you [You see, St. Francis de Sales speaks after the good old Gallic fashion. He is frank.] If anyone wants to live according to nature, let him remain in the world; and let those who are determined to live according to grace come into religion, which is nothing else but a school of self-denial and mortification, interior as well as exterior."

We cannot go into detail, but the novice must be aware

of the fact that it is not arbitrariness or ill-nature that motivates her Mistress. She has as her object, and that as a duty, to make sure whether the novice has made some progress in the spirit and virtues of the novitiate; she has the object primarily of breaking her will It is in the tearing asunder of this will that cracking sounds are heard Sometimes we hear murmurings, little objections and retorts when a reprimand has been made. Well, those murmurs and retorts are what we call the cracking sounds from the tearing asunder of self-love

Simplicity in Piety

As you all know, St. Francis de Sales has no use for singularities, for they do not constitute true piety; he has a horror, too, of the petty practices which render it ridiculous. All that kind of thing is not simplicity; don't imagine it to be

I don't know who it was who said that people who wear a certain prayer on their persons will not die without seeing the good God or the Holy Virgin. Even some Sisters put stock in it and I have seen them copying that prayer in their notebooks. I don't know who said it, but don't put any faith in it; it is sufficient for you to wear the scapulars and a medal But leave aside all those practices of piety, for they would become ridiculous, and if you were to speak of all those things to a person of the world who was anxious to become a good Christian, he would say: "Oh well, if religion consists in all those ridiculous little devotions, I would much rather stay the way I am!"

No, people do not realize the harm that they do by believing in all those absurdities that have been invented by some narrow-minded, sanctimonious persons You must be very wary of all that because that way leads

to scrupulosity; and that is a disease which makes people either insane or impious. For a scrupulous soul never wants to obey her director; she always knows more than he does

In Praise of Recreation

I come to speak to you today about a subject which is very important, although at first thought one might be tempted to say it is not so, whereas it is perhaps the most important of our rules. It forms the subject of a chapter in our Directory, and the title of that chapter is: Recreation.

But how can it be so important? A great saint who was a great scholar proposed a question on this subject. That saint was St. Thomas Aquinas. (It can be said that up to the present he is the greatest scholar who ever walked the earth. It is he who was called the Angel of the Schools.) Well, then, St. Thomas Aquinas proposed this question: Can there be sin in always remaining away from recreation? He answers: Yes, especially in religious communities. Moreover, the Church has never approved of any religious community when there is no provision for recreation in the Constitutions. Hence, in a community, there may be sin in always remaining away from recreation.

I assure you, and permit me to say it to you, as soon as the devil gets under your coiffure, under your veil, that day he involves you in withdrawing from recreation. And that is very easy to understand. When your conscience is right with God, you enjoy recreation, you are glad to go to recreation. But when your interior is not quite right with the good God, when the devil is enthroned in your heart where the good God ought to reign, then you no longer like recreation. And, I ask you, when is it that

you are usually the most gay and joyful if not after a good retreat, the day you have made every effort to correct yourself of your defects, to do an act of virtue, to carry off some victory over the enemy of your salvation? Hence recreation is one of the most important points of the rule.

Even in the most severe communities, recreation is prescribed. And it is said that it is in the communities whose rule is most severe, in cloistered communities, that the Sisters are the gayest, even more joyous than others. This is so true that among the Carmelites, for example, when a person presents herself for entrance, a question on this subject is always asked. According to the affirmative or negative answer to it the superiors refuse or accept her. Even after several days or weeks, if the superiors find a gloomy, melancholy temperament, the subject is sent away.

I have observed on several occasions that the Jesuit Fathers (an Order whose rules are so perfect as to have given so many saints to the Church within a few years), the Jesuits never permit anyone to absent himself from recreation. Only their meditation is made in their cells. Only in the evening do they assemble for night prayers which consist merely of the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints with the prayers which follow. They have no other common exercise during the day. But no one may ever fail to come to recreation. So, if you have need of speaking to a Jesuit Father, I advise you not to go and ask from him during recreation, or you will come up against the Brother porter. He will receive you politely and ask you to wait, but he won't disturb himself. In this respect, the Brother porter is heartless, while continuing to be polite nevertheless; but he will not even go to look for the Father you ask to see, will not even go to inform him that someone is waiting for him. He has received orders not to disturb anyone during recreation.

Keeping Cool

This year the retreat ought to take on a special character on account of current events. You will therefore realize the need for a good retreat, in the times in which we are living, in this time of persecution against the Church, against religion, against all that concerns the good God. As Our Lord said, the hour of the powers of darkness has come, that is to say, of those men who have enrolled under the banner of Satan and who are the executors of his high counsels. They are becoming bolder and bolder. If you could see what is happening outside, you would have been able to see yesterday by merely looking out the window, a hundred of these men filing past to perform a civil burial service. They were Freemasons wearing the external badge of their diabolical society, a nosegay of everlasting flowers. I am not too sure why they chose that flower

In France at the present time the Freemasons are masters and not only in France but in all the countries of Europe. We Christians, children of the Catholic Church, know that the Church will always triumph. There will certainly be some victims of reparation, but they are not the ones to be pitied. They will go to heaven and receive their crowns. They will be there before the others, that is all.

Now, nevertheless, you must not let your young imaginations get excited, after what I said in the letter I addressed to all our houses with reference to the events that are shaping themselves. On the contrary, on receiving that letter all our Sisters were happy and pleased to know the line of conduct they are to follow. They trust in the goodness of the Sacred Heart and the prudence of their superiors. So do not get excited. You must not say as one young novice did about this matter: "We await

the enemy resolutely." That is an excess of ardour. It is the effect of an over-excited imagination. Another writes me that she is ready to give her life for the community, to let them cut off her head, to be a martyr if necessary, but at the end of her letter she asks what she ought to do: "Is it better to escape or to remain? In short, Father, what should be done?" No, there is no question of giving one's life, no question of dying. So let's not have any excited imaginations; what should be most painful to us is to see the good God and His Church insulted. What should sadden our hearts is the offenses offered to the good God even in His holy temple. What is even more heartrending is, for instance, to have our soldiers deprived of military chaplains and prevented from fulfilling their religious duties; it is to see those poor folk also refused a chaplain who are dying in the hospitals. That is what should make our heart sorrowful. It is not a question of dying a martyr. No, believe me, we haven't come to that yet! It is more than likely that we shall not leave. There is no question of departing from our fair beloved country. We are not living in the days of persecutions when people die as martyrs. Even if it were true, if we were obliged to leave, we should not be too unfortunate. We should do as our Sisters did after the Revolution of September 4, shortly before the end of the war. Some were in England; they were received with open arms by other communities, which even resulted in the founding of our Congregation in England. Others were received in Germany where they found a refuge and, on the very next day after their arrival, an opportunity of fulfilling the duties of their vocation by caring for the wounded. They nursed thousands of captive French soldiers, just as other Sisters nursed the wounded inside Paris. Well, they themselves have said that they had never been so happy as they were then. During that time they lacked nothing, and

even after the war a hundredfold was restored to them of what they had lost.

At that time there were as yet no professed Sisters. There were only novices and postulants, and no one left. Postulants and novices all remained faithful. So, even supposing the worst were to happen: if we are forced to leave, some will go to England, others to Austria. In London you will find a great city two or three times the size of Paris. In Vienna as well as London you will find the same Sacred Heart on the altar; you will find your patron saints; you will find nothing changed. You will find Sisters who will receive you with a warm-hearted welcome and rejoice to see you after so long a time; and then, from the very first days you will find once more the same customs, the same exercises as at the Motherhouse. You will also have your Father in the midst of you as here. You see that you will not be very unhappy. You will have had the pleasure of making a lovely trip, of seeing a railway locomotive. And then, when the day of victory arrives, we shall return—for that will not last long; and then you can talk about your travels.

So there now, everything is settled in case the worst happens. I don't mean to say that I have the railway tickets in my pocket, but it is just as if I did. So don't be disturbed by what you hear around you. You mustn't get worked up. On the contrary, tell yourself interiorly that you are still very fortunate and let it be apparent on the outside that you have never been so gay.

That is, insofar as you are concerned. But as for the insults, the outrages committed against the good God, you must not be indifferent to them.

When these events take place, it will be just about the time of the feast of the Sacred Heart. Since that is the time when the Professed renew their vows, if they wish to

leave, they will be free. The rest will also be free. If there are any cowards who want to go, they will go; the door will be opened to them. This is something I wanted to explain to you quite frankly and simply, and I think you have enough confidence in the sincerity of your Father Superior to believe what he tells you. I am persuaded that you will entrust yourselves to his prudence inspired by the good God, by his confidence in God. You too must have this confidence and entrust all things to His hands. You know the Psalm: *Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum . . .* If we do not rely upon the good God, if we do not base our confidence on Him, it will be useless for us to speak and act, we shall do no good. In vain will we say: "I shall await the enemy resolutely"; all of this would be nothing but bluster. There is no question of that.

That is why I tell you that you must make a fervent retreat, more fervent than all those you thus far made.

Prayer

Manifest your needs simply to the good God; there is no need to be poetic about it. There is a book which is not a good seller in the bookshop, a book which they do not recommend and which is, nevertheless, the best of all. This book is your heart. Make constant use of it. Always prefer short prayers to long ones; likewise prefer the prayers of the Church, the litanies approved by the Church, for example, the Litany of the Sacred Heart. Leave aside all those beautiful prayers and beautiful books which are filled with "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" There the matter ends . . . I had one of those beautiful books myself, which contained aspirations for before and after Holy Communion. They were all ecstasies, the soul lifted above the earth. But gradually I became so disgusted

with it that I couldn't use it any more. You will say to me: "But when I read those beautiful things, I am always in ecstasy." Hush! When one is in ecstasy, one doesn't need any book.

Good Manners and Cordiality

We have seen that a novice ought to be first of all a good Christian in order to be a good Religious. We have also seen that during her novitiate a novice should apply herself to reforming her character But it is the Mistress of Novices especially who must explain all these things in detail and give you advice on this subject. It is rightly said that the confessor does not know you I am not saying that it is your fault or that you hide anything from him; but, after all, when you are in the little box behind the little window with your hands folded, the confessor thinks he has a little saint, since he hears nothing but small sins

Defects of character are never corrected better than by the common life I once heard a preacher who died two years ago, the Bishop of Nîmes. I heard him in an institution which he directed giving a conference to the young students. He said to them jokingly: "Do you know how they make billiard balls? They put some little stones in a barrel, the barrel is rolled, and by dint of rolling around and rubbing against each other, the little stones become round. Well now, that barrel is your school where there are very different characters." It is the same thing in a community; there are characters with sharp corners. That is what we do in common life: we get rounded off. I never verified the fact that that is how billiard balls are made; but the comparison is quite authentic And then, don't worry, you'll get your revenge; if you are rolled about today, tomorrow it will be your turn to roll

the others. It is common life which removes the sharp edges of character

We have already said that we must rid ourselves of our external defects. I don't mean that if you are a hunchback you must pull in your hump, although in our day they have invented certain contraptions for doing so. Nor do I mean that if your nose is too long there is any hope of shortening it. We are not concerned with such defects as those But you mustn't have eccentricities, mannerisms that are unpleasant for the others. I know that Sister Novice Mistress makes observations about all this to you, too, but perhaps not severely enough. In your novitiate at Vienna the Mistress is much more severe; she is terrible when she meets a novice, for instance, swinging her arms, she reprimands her You mustn't walk too fast, either, nor too slow; either way would be an exaggeration You mustn't laugh noisily A novice must therefore accept with humility and gratitude all the advice that is given her on this subject; it is to be desired that they be not spared, according to the counsels of St. Francis de Sales.

You ought therefore to practice good manners as if you were members of a great family. You can in fact say: "I am of high birth; a Religious is the spouse of Jesus Christ, the King of kings"

You should apply yourselves to making yourselves amiable: "Get rid of those distressing bad habits which age and neglect can increase; accustom yourself to reflect on all that might annoy your Sisters . . . learn on the contrary to bear with kindness all that might be annoying in others: demanding nothing, excusing everything" Thus does St. Francis de Sales make of all this a single virtue, he reunites patience and modesty in a single one which is kindness.

Kindness gives to a Religious a distinctive physiognomy and that is so beneficial for souls

Someone once said to me: "How kind that Religious is!" and it was true. I wish people would say the same to me of each one of you and that it would be true. Always be gracious, but not with that affected grace which is met with in the world. We have spoken about that.

You ought to have, I would almost say a noble dignity, yes, a worthy nobility so as to make Religious respected. By respecting Religious, people will respect religion in general. And all the honor will revert to the good God.

As for the consideration the Sisters should have for one another, here is the beautiful rule formulated by St. Paul: "With honour preventing one another; . . . let each esteem others better than himself." You yourselves should remember that when you were little girls and went into a classroom, as you met a Religious you greeted her with respect, . . . you understood that she was not an ordinary person on account of her vows, her religious profession Well then, now that you are Religious yourselves, you ought to have the same respect for one another

Among sisters there ought to be cordiality. The word cordial comes from the word *cor*, meaning heart Cordiality is even more than charity. Charity, if you will, comes from the heart, but cordiality is that exquisite charity, that delicate charity which is not only interior, but which takes very gracious forms in external behavior; it is that intimate gift of self which exists among sisters.

"It follows thence that when they communicate with outsiders, they must know how to do so with charity and edification."

If you said to yourselves: "Oh, but I am like that at home! If I were to go out, I would watch over myself, I would know how I should act, I would not be the same person with outsiders" No, Sister, if you do not

possess those qualities which I have just described in dealing with your sisters, you will not have them with outsiders either . . . and if you don't have them, you can become for your neighbor a source of scandal, and that will reflect upon religion, and will give occasion for offenses against the good God. You must not, by your conduct, give a false idea of religion, but rather on the contrary evince a real piety such as God requires it to be so that it may be loved.

Just yesterday, as a matter of fact, I received a letter from Homerton, from the Superioress of the hospital, who told me that the people like our Sisters very much because their piety is so attractive. A woman came to the hospital to visit her Protestant husband; she found the Sisters so amiable that she said to herself: "Well now, since these Sisters are so kind, theirs must be the true piety, the true religion. Why don't I adopt that religion, then, which makes piety so attractive? Why don't I become a Catholic?" You see how far-reaching it can be. She spoke to the Sisters who sent her to the Superior of the French Mission in London; he prepared her to make her abjuration and instructed her in the catechism.

You see what an amiable piety can do. If the Sisters had been cold, had received that woman with indifference, had been rude in their manners, it would not have occurred to her to become a Catholic.

People must say to themselves in speaking of you: "Since those Sisters are so kind, the good God must be very kind." You know the expression of St. Vincent de Paul with reference to St. Francis de Sales: "How kind the good God must be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so kind!" It is by kindness, by charity that hearts are won And to manifest this kindness you must have it in the depths of your heart . . . for it is very hard to give what one does not possess"

The last years of Father Braun were darkened by successive bereavements. Bishop Mabile, who had once invited him so urgently to begin the work in his Diocese of Versailles, and who had given him the first ecclesiastical approbation, died in Rome while on a visit to the Holy Father. Canon Codant, in his turn, had passed away shortly afterwards, he who had had so large a part in the foundation. A few months later, Father Braun learned of the unexpected death of his sister Jeanne who had been so closely associated in all his labors and whom he had once thought of appointing as the first Mother General. Then it was the turn of Mother Gertrude who, after making a visitation of the houses in England, Austria and Germany, was taken seriously ill and almost immediately went to join his sister Jeanne in eternity. Thus little by little a solitude began to surround him.

Following the death of the Mother General, he fulfilled his function as Father of the young Congregation once more. In a letter dated February 22, 1881, he made the necessary preparations and gave orders regarding the election which was to take place on March 4. It was a further opportunity for him to ascertain the good spirit of the Religious and to realize that his mission was accomplished.

He undertook a trip to Vienna, but arrived there ill. He was taken with very persistent hemorrhages which weakened him to the point of causing grave anxiety to the Sisters. His strength was exhausted. So much journeying, so many fatigues and labors from the time of the foundation until the definitive organization of the Congregation had completely un-

dermined his health, delicate as it had always been. A slight stroke and considerable spitting of blood warned him that his arms were about to fall, as he had already anticipated some years before; but this time it was undeniable.

When he had recovered sufficiently to be able to travel, he returned to the Motherhouse at Argenteuil. There was a veritable outburst of joy at the news of the impending arrival of the good Father whom they feared never to see again. They gave him a very elaborate welcome which had long been in preparation. To give some idea of it, we can do no better than to reproduce in all its simplicity and candor the account set down by one of the novices.

Praise be to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart! Thank you, good Mother of Heaven, for bringing back to us our beloved Father and Founder. Our hearts suffer at feeling their powerlessness to express to you all the gratitude they contain. We can only say over and over again: Love, thanksgiving to the Heart of Jesus which has heard the prayers of His humble servants through the intercession of His Immaculate Mother.

We had been led to expect our good Father's return on Saturday, November 15. We awaited that date with lively impatience, giving ourselves up with a holy emulation to the preparations for his reception.

The day was already declining: six o'clock in the evening; we were beginning to give up hope, when suddenly shouts of joy resounded on all sides: "Father is at the station; he's coming. "We ran everywhere to spread the good news; some laughed, some cried for joy. Each one went quickly to occupy the post assigned to her by the program.

We posted ourselves. Sisters and children in two rows lined his path so as to form a triumphal way for him.

Enthusiastic acclamations greeted his arrival.

All the bells began to ring. Songs and repeated shouts of "Long live Reverend Father!" resounded through the house. Our good old people, whose cracked voices could not make themselves heard, made up for it with rockets and fire crackers, conferring their detonations upon us with unheard of liberality.

Father walked between us, his face smiling, gazing at us all with inexpressible tenderness. One could see from the tears glistening in his eyes how much his great heart was touched at finding himself once more at the Motherhouse in the midst of his children. He expressed his joy to us in a few brief loving words and gave us his blessing before going to rest after the fatigue of his journey.

Our hearts overflowed with joy. Two huge, happy circles of Sisters and of children were formed in the yard. They sang and played until evening. At 8:30, the bell called us to the chapel to offer to the Lord, together with our most fervent night prayers, the sincere gratitude of our hearts. Then each one went to sleep, dreaming of the morrow's joys.

But on Sunday a disappointment awaited us. Our Reverend Father's fatigue made it necessary to postpone the feast until Monday. We took advantage of this delay to put the finishing touches on the preparations for the celebration.

On Monday at 7:00 A.M. we attended the first Mass at which everyone, Sisters and children, received Holy Communion in thanksgiving for the recovery of our good Father's health. At 8:30 the high Mass was sung. Oh what a consolation it was for us to see him once more

celebrating Holy Mass in that chapel filled with the echoes of his prayers and his fatherly instructions!

Our humble chapel had assumed its most festive air. The Sister sacristan had spared nothing to beautify and decorate it. The altar was dazzling with flowers and lights. In the course of the ceremony the Sisters and children sang their most beautiful chants. At the end of the Mass, Mother Mistress intoned and everyone took up with great fervor the *Magnificat* of thanksgiving which, according to our good Father's touching expression, is the Blessed Virgin's *Te Deum*.

At ten o'clock the bells announced the time for well-wishing. The long pathways of the gardens used by the professed Sisters and by the novices, through which our Reverend Father was to pass were adorned with garlands, lanterns, banners and flowers, all the way to the door of the Novitiate, which had been transformed into a reception hall. Gold and white hangings and flag pennants tastefully ornamented the walls. At the farther end a throne was erected, adorned with flowers and plants. Facing it there was unfurled a streamer artistically decorated and inscribed with the favorite motto of our Reverend Father: "*Cor unum et anima una in Corde Jesu.*"

It was amid these decorations that our Father Founder entered, accompanied by our Reverend Mother. He replied with fatherly affection to the compliments paid to him. He found in his deeply moved heart the warmest accents for congratulating and encouraging us. He told us how happy he was to find once more the good spirit of simplicity, charity and obedience which characterizes the Servants of the Sacred Heart.

Then the children came to offer their good wishes and render a glad festive song which was very well done.

Then it was the turn of our good old people, so happy

to extend an emaciated hand to our Reverend Father. They were delighted with the kind words he said to them and especially cheered by the little glass of white wine he had served to them.

The Father Founder had lent himself gladly to these demonstrations of filial love and very legitimate pleasure. The happiness of his daughters was a joy to him and caused him to forget his physical infirmities; but after these days of emotional strain and fatigue, the sad reality arose before him. He sensed that an inexorable malady was consuming his poor frame.

On January 1, 1882, sorrow and anxiety broke through the New Year's greetings and good wishes offered to him by the Sisters and the little orphans. The decline in his strength became rapidly more apparent from that time on.

Once more for the last time he wrote a circular letter. The Mother General had requested of the Holy Father, through the mediation of the Nuncio at Paris, the apostolic blessing; and Leo XIII had responded in terms that were highly encouraging. Thereupon Father Braun wrote:

My daughters in Our Lord,

I come to announce to you some good news, a consolation which you will be glad to share with your Father.

You remember that, in the past, the immortal Pius IX deigned to encourage our modest efforts to console the Heart of Jesus by granting us several times his apostolic blessing.

This same favor has been sent to us by his successor, His Holiness Leo XIII. Some months ago, our Chaplain was kneeling at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff present-

ing to him a long list of relatives and friends for whom he was requesting the apostolic blessing. Leo XIII, glancing down that list of names, at the top of which appeared that of our Sisters, exclaimed:

"Sister Servants of the Sacred Heart! Oh, I like that name very much; yes, yes, it behoves the Servants of the Sacred Heart to spread the great devotion everywhere. That remedy will cure your France and the whole world."

You will experience a holy pride and deep gratitude on learning that the hand of the Holy Father has been raised to bless you all; it will be an ample recompense for all your sacrifices, a pledge of hope for the success of our works.

That signal favor imposes on you the obligation of redoubling the fervor of your prayers for the triumph of the Holy Church.

Your Father in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Victor Braun.

This was the last circular letter addressed to his daughters by Father Braun. From that time forward, the good Father did not leave the Motherhouse; he only declined in strength during the three months which preceded his death.

He took advantage of a little sunshine to go and walk in the garden; and he would go and rest beside the statue of the Blessed Virgin, reciting his breviary and his rosary.

Now that he saw his Congregation working throughout the world and blessed by the Vicar of Christ on earth, he could say with entire confidence: "Now, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace, O Lord, according to Thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy Salvation." In profound peace, he made ready for

the last journey. He never lost his amiable serenity. When he saw the Sisters bustling about him, he said jokingly: "You're killing me with kindness!"

One day when he had been to confession to the house chaplain, he said as he was leaving: "Father, sometimes the good God gives us presentiments. Well, I have had one: that I am nearing my death. I shall not be here for long. As I shall not be able to return to Paris, I have chosen you for my confessor and director. Do not let me die without the sacraments."

As much as his strength permitted him, he would go into the novices' garden; he often visited the old people and the children with whom he chatted gaily, in spite of his sufferings.

The visit he paid to the novitiate on Wednesday, May 2, was to be his last. When he returned to his room he felt more ill than usual and was obliged to take to his bed. The following day he seemed pre-occupied, absorbed in thought. Of the Sister who served him at table he asked several times: "What am I supposed to be doing?" He suffered from headache and was obliged to go to bed once more after his meal.

During the following week, he made use of the moments of respite allowed him by his sufferings to dictate some letters and draw up various notes which were to be discussed at the General Council. He summoned the notary who had attended to the English houses so as to settle some business affairs. He explained the manner of presenting the Constitutions for the approval of the Holy See, settled some points with regard to the retreat for Superioresses and then the retreat for the children; and he did all of this with

such deliberation and gravity that the Sisters' fears increased. They insisted that a doctor should be summoned from Paris; for the first time, he consented.

However, his strength declined visibly from day to day. The Sisters asked his permission to begin a novena of prayers and penances for his recovery. "Very well," he said simply, "so that I may have nothing with which to reproach myself."

This novena included a daily pilgrimage to Montmartre; every morning three Sisters, three novices and three orphan girls could be seen leaving the Motherhouse in Argenteuil for Montmartre, walking in silence and fasting so as to hear Mass and receive Communion.

By May 14 his condition had become so much worse that he could no longer celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. When the chaplain brought Him Holy Communion, Father asked at the same time for Extreme Unction. He received it with great fervor; and the chaplain remembered then a remark which Father had made to him and which was that day verified. It was at Easter time that the chaplain was bringing the holy oils to the Motherhouse; Father Braun, happening to meet him, said: "You will make use of them the first time for me."

Shortly after receiving the last sacraments, Father was seized with delirium; he recited the prayers of the Mass, the *Panis Angelicus* and *Tantum Ergo* while the Sisters watched with him, overcome with grief. The doctor who had been summoned in haste prescribed a cupping which relieved him somewhat.

During the days that followed, moments of lucidity

alternated with hours of prostration or delirium. He suffered a great deal but without complaint, without a movement of impatience. He was gradually growing weaker; paralysis was spreading over his face; his tongue was encumbered and great efforts were necessary for him to pronounce even a few words.

Seeing the earnestness of his daughters assisting at his bedside, he said once pleasantly: "You are nursing Sisters. Oh, how attentive and foresighted nursing Sisters have to be. You must admit it" Another time he murmured: "I offer my sufferings for you." On still another occasion he said very firmly: "Above all, let no decisions be changed. No one should change any of the decisions of the major Superioresses."

The thought of the Sacred Heart seemed to occupy him especially. He had a little statue brought to him which he kissed tenderly and had placed beside his bed.

On Wednesday, May 17, his breathing became very painful. With his eyes closed, he prayed in Latin and repeated: "*Ecce dilexi vos.*" (Behold I have loved you.) The chaplain, to assure himself that he was fully conscious, asked: "Whole words are those?" Father replied: "Our Lord's to His apostles."

A moment later, with great effort, he pronounced the words: "*Filioli, diligite invicem.*" (My little children, love one another.) "Are those the words of St. John to his disciples?" asked the chaplain. "Yes" came the reply. "To whom do you say that?" He passed his glance over the Mothers gathered about his bed and pointed to them with his left hand.

Shortly thereafter he entered into his agony. All the Sisters in the house left their tasks to assemble in the chapel and recite the prayers for the dying.

The following day, Feast of the Ascension, May 18, 1882, at about half past one o'clock, the soul of this good and faithful servant entered into his eternity. He went to meet Him in peace for whom he had spent his powers until they were completely consumed.

VIII

OPERA ILLORUM SEQUUNTUR ILLOS

At the end of a letter dated September 13, 1871, Father Braun had written:

I am not yet fifty years old and already my hairs are whitening; my eyesight is failing and my body is bowed. I shall go when the good God so wills. I dare not say St. Martin's prayer: "My God, if I am still necessary to my flock, I do not refuse the toil," for I have great hopes that my successor will do better than your poor Father who blesses you once more

It was with such sentiments of humility and self-effacement that he had detached himself from the work he had created. But beyond the tomb, the devotion he had for it did not cease to manifest itself; by his prayers he continued to plead its cause before the good God. "The just shall live for evermore: and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the most High."

Will the dearest wish of his daughters ever be fulfilled? Will miracles obtained by his intercession permit his cause for beatification to be introduced? One thing is certain: Providence does not abandon the Servants of the Sacred Heart. God intervenes, it may be said, by countless favors. Daily He gives to the Servants of the Sacred Heart new development so as ever to accomplish better and better the ideal offered

to them by their Founder, namely: by a love that serves to enkindle in the hearts of men a love of God. In France, England, Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia there are today more than two thousand Sisters * devoting themselves to the relief of suffering humanity and bringing men back to a belief in the love of their Saviour. From the first days of their foundation, superabundant graces have poured forth upon their works. By their means a new light has been shed upon thousands of human hearts wherein the love of God had grown cold and which perhaps no longer believed in the love of men. Where shall we find the wellspring of that stream of grace? In the ardent charity of Father Braun and in his docility to Providence.

In the Christian family which cradled him, his soul had offered itself and expanded to the sun of grace; thus was he chosen by the great High Priest to share in His priesthood, to be inserted in the head of His mystical body. Then one day, full of joy, he had been able to write: "Behold the great day approaching when it will be said to me: 'Thou art a priest forever. The Lord is thine inheritance unto eternity.' "

Faithful to the grace of his vocation, he had pressed forward toward an ever growing intimacy with Our Lord, living only in Him and with Him. How his heart was set upon all that concerned Christ prolonged

* Today the French, English and German Provinces are independent. The French branch, whose Motherhouse was transferred in 1884 from Argenteuil to Versailles, at 59, avenue de Paris, at present includes 324 members dispersed among 57 houses. The principal convents are in the industrial regions of the North and in the suburbs of Paris.

into His Church! How his filial love for the Holy Father suffered at the misunderstandings and persecutions of which he was the victim! All the joys and sorrows of the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth were felt by him as if they were his own. The atheism of his contemporaries, their lives of sin, their hatred for one another pierced his heart and urged him to reveal to the world the love of God. He could say with St. Paul: *Caritas Christi urget nos*.

Then it was that a picture of the Sacred Heart had fallen into his hands, that a flame had issued from that divine Heart to consume him entirely, and that henceforth there was accomplished in him in the full sense of the words that other assertion of the Apostle: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me" He had dedicated himself entirely to the apostolate of the Sacred Heart. He had set himself at the school of Him who had said: "Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart." And his labors had always been sustained by this conviction: "It is not he who plants or who waters who achieves anything; it is God who gives the increase."

Until his very last sigh, he had to an extreme degree that respect for the action of God, that self-effacement which causes one to say: "We are unprofitable servants." Two days before his death, when the Sisters spoke to him of making a vow so as to recover his health, he answered in a spirit of detachment: "But I don't know what I could promise." Thereupon the Mother General suggested: "Why not promise to go to Rome with the Constitutions to have them approved by the Holy See?" "Oh, no, no!" he replied in a de-

cided tone. He knew no other course than resolutely to follow after grace and not to put himself forward presumptuously. He liked to quote the words of St. Vincent de Paul: "Let us not outstrip Providence."

Father Braun had preached charity. How timely was his undertaking! Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical on Peace has drawn a striking picture of the evils of our era. He described how, in every walk of life, souls have become anxious, embittered, gloomy. The characteristic of our time is enmity between nation and nation, between class and class, between man and man, so that "inveterate hatred has for a long time become among many a kind of second nature. Hence, only too often, man sees in his fellowman, not a brother as Christ has ordained, but a stranger and an enemy."

Could Father Braun offer to our century anything more opportune than the great lessons of the Sacred Heart? He sent his Religious, first to the sick, the poor, the workers, to bring to them charity. He accomplished a work whose importance continues to grow in our era.

We should like to cite here a letter from a worker wherein is clearly revealed, it would seem, that bitterness, that resentment and hatred which poison the hearts of thousands of men today:

You were right in saying, Father, that we are frightfully unhappy; but you give as the reason for it the fact that we have turned away from God. Pardon me if I differ with you. How many times have I not observed that men are happy when they love! As long as love is alive it fills one's existence with unspeakable happiness and with

generosity. Man only becomes miserable when hatred has taken root in his heart. We workers hate, we hate so passionately that if those who were the object of our hatred had any suspicion of the violence of that sentiment they would be terrified and look for means of pacifying it

But, you will say, one ought not to hate. Father, the worker labors hard all day in a mine, a shop, a factory; and he hears it said that these eight hours during which he is exploited are even too short, that the wages are too high, etc.; when he comes home in the evening he finds his children hungry, threatened with tuberculosis, his wife out of sorts, the house untidy, his bed hard and uncomfortable, while those who live by his sweat are in the lap of luxury. That is when his resentment and hatred come out. His hatred feeds on the obstacles put in our way, on all kinds of miseries, on unjust legislation Do you understand our hatred? Do you understand why we shall cry out as long as we get no satisfaction? Yes, it is hatred, hatred, and if there is no change, then hatred for eternity.

Amid such heavy darkness, only charity can restore light and peace, that peace which "penetrates hearts with fraternal good-will and reconciles them" (Pius XI, Encyclical on Peace). That is the ideal which Father Braun set before the Servants of the Sacred Heart.

"You must enter," he said on the occasion of a clothing ceremony, "into the interior of the divine Heart, so as to be animated with Its sentiments, to think Its thoughts. That is the contemplative side of the life. Then, when the heart has thus been enkindled by meditation on the life of Our Lord, the apostolic life begins.

“One can no longer contain the flames drawn from the Heart of Jesus but feels the need of communicating them and thus becomes an apostle. By meditation one has become aware of how many souls there are in the world who do not love Our Lord, who never hear anyone speak of His love for men and His mercy toward sinners. The sinner who does not know the goodness of God, after a life spent in sin, says to himself at the hour of death: I have offended God all my life, it is not possible for Him to love me; He must hold me in horror; I feel that His justice must take its course Then it is that the little Servant of the Sacred Heart will approach the poor sinner; she will come with a kindly smile to that abandoned old man, as if she were his own child; she will hasten to that poor sufferer who thinks himself deserted by everyone, who expects that no one will come to wipe the sweat pouring from his brow But he sees the poor little Servant of the Sacred Heart enter; she sits down; she comes to render service, she speaks to him with kindly words. And the poor sufferer, the poor old man will say: ‘Is there still someone who loves me?’

“‘Yes,’ the Servant of the Sacred Heart will say, ‘the Heart of Jesus loves you; you can see that, for He sends me to you to tell you so. You, too, must love the Heart of Jesus’”

