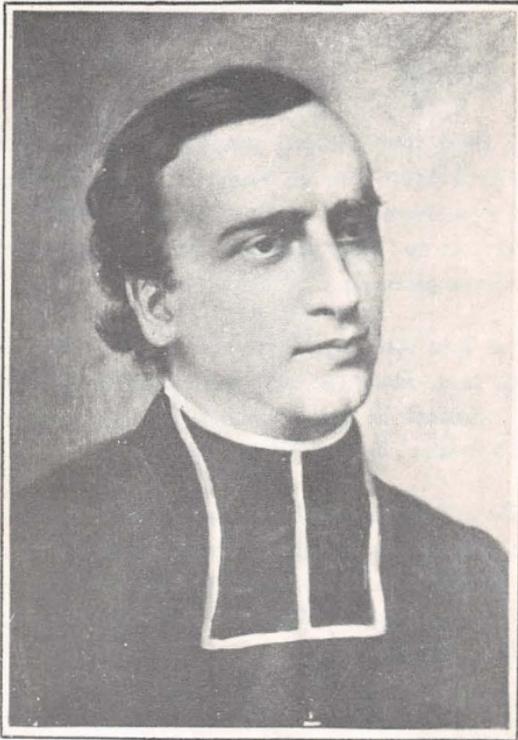


LIKE TO A GRAIN
OF
MUSTARD SEED

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OF MUSTARD SEED



REV. FATHER PETER VICTOR BRAUN.
Founder of the Sisters of the Sacred
Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

NIHIL OBSTAT:
EDWARDUS CAN. MAHONEY, S.Th.D.
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:
LEONELLUS CAN. EVANS,
Vic. Gen.

Westmonasterii,
die 24a Aprilis, 1939.

LIKE TO A GRAIN
OF
MUSTARD SEED

Being the Story of the Life and Work
of

FATHER VICTOR BRAUN
Founder of The Chigwell Nuns

Told by a Few Friends

In obedience to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII and other Sovereign Pontiffs, the writer declares that any graces and supernatural facts which may be related in this volume as witnessing to the sanctity of Servants of God other than those canonised or beatified by Holy Church, rest on human authority alone; and in regard thereto, as in all things else, the writer submits himself without reserve to the infallible judgement of the Apostolic See, which alone has power and authority to pronounce as to whom rightly belongs the Character and Title of Saint or Blessed.

PREFACE

THIS little work has been a labour of love! For many years we have watched with admiration the development of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Chigwell. And now we have told, very simply indeed, the story of yet another tiny "grain of mustard seed." It was cast into His field, not a hundred years ago, by a humble, warm-hearted Priest of God, labouring in France, poor and single-handed. And the seed has grown into a Tree, and the Branches have spread far; and the Birds of the Air have come there and found a Shelter and a Home. The Birds are God's helpless little ones—the poor, and maimed, and simple, and unwanted of a callous world. And what of the Fruit? That can be known only in Eternity!

Feast of the Sacred Heart,
1939.

Printed in Great Britain by Samuel Walker, Hinckley.

1939



To the dear Institute of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus
and Mary, with all my heart I wish the choicest
of God's blessings.

Vatican City, 25th May 1939.

N. Card. Canali

Cardinal Protector

LETTER FROM CARDINAL CANALI,
CARDINAL PROTECTOR OF THE
CONGREGATION

May 22nd, 1939.

Vatican City, May 7th, 1939.

Dear Mother General,

Many, many cordial thanks for your kind letter of April 25th, and also for your generous offering for the poor Trastevere boys—work so dear to our saintly Cardinal Merry del Val.

I am happy to say that the Holy Father, in my private audience of yesterday, granted a special Apostolic Blessing to your dear Community.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

N. CARD. CANALI.

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LIKE TO A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

CHAPTER I

1825—1851

**Saint-Avold. Family and Early Childhood.
Vocation to the Priesthood. Ordination**

FAR back in the sixteenth century a little band of apostolic men, led by Saint Fridolin, left the shores of Ireland to spread abroad the light of Faith wheresoever Providence might guide their steps.

Reaching the shores of Europe, they came to a lovely little valley in Lorraine, and there, attracted by its solitude and beauty, they built their monastery, and began their work for souls. In time arose a noble Benedictine Abbey, dedicated to Saint Avold, and around that Abbey grew the little town of Saint-Avold, the birth-place of Victor Braun, the venerable subject of this little work.

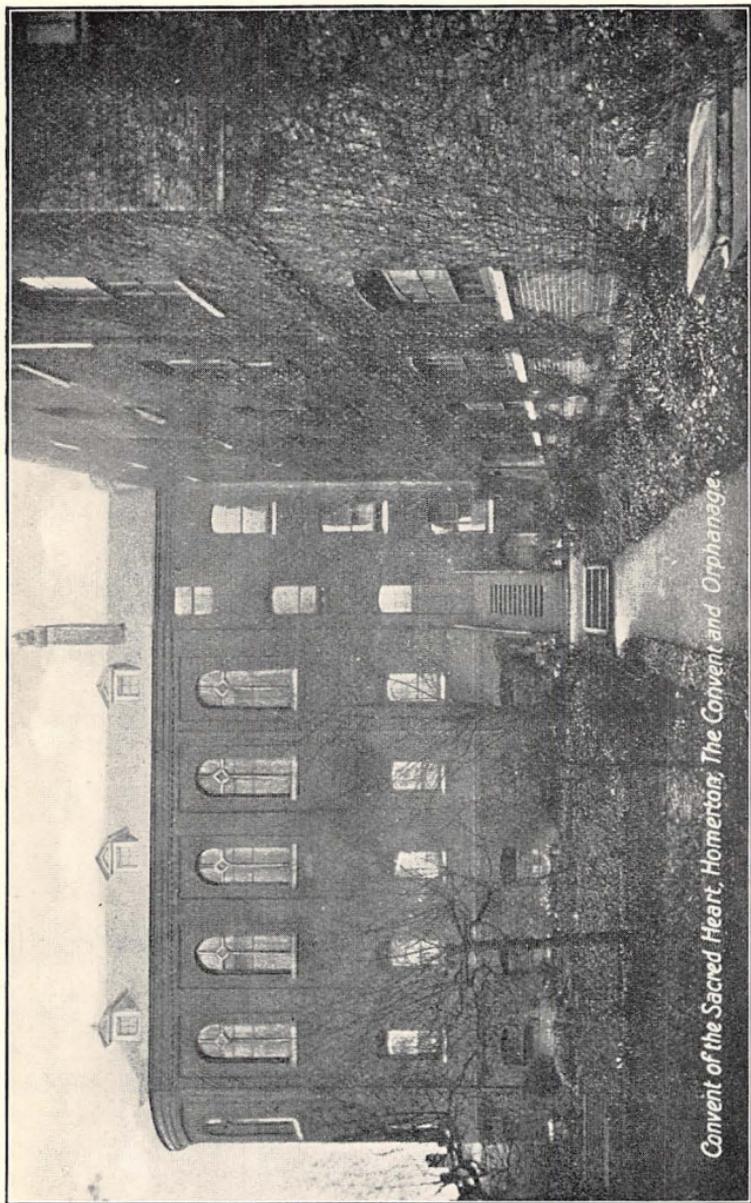
Peaceful as nature had made it, rival neighbours chose it as the theatre of their conflicts, and time and again it was rendered desolate by invading troops and the train of bloodshed and destruction they left behind them.

In the seventeenth century Doctor Bernard Braun came to Saint-Avold with the army of Duke

Charles of Lorraine, and when the Imperial Army withdrew, he was left in charge of the sick and wounded. The monks of the Abbey and the poor natives of the little town found in him a father and friend. He made his home among them, and became a member of the Senate, magistrate, doctor and friend of the whole town. Thus did Bernard Braun found the pious family from whom sprang the subject of our narrative.

Victor Braun was born on the 5th of June, 1825—the ninth of eleven children. His father had a prosperous business until again the little town was robbed by war of its tranquillity. But Antoine Nicolas Braun never lost his firm and smiling trust in Divine Providence, and, aided by his mother, the brave and dauntless Madame Braun, and his saintly wife, Marie-Gabrielle Richard, he brought up his large family in comparative comfort and strong in its devotion to the Holy Catholic Church.

The grandmother was one of God's heroines. The story of her life throughout the French Revolution was one of continuous adventure. Often had she incurred terrible risks by hiding hunted priests in her home. Through her, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass continued to be offered at Saint-Avoid long after it had ceased to be offered elsewhere. She was the providence of the poor, to whom she distributed food and clothing in spite of the suspicion she thus drew down upon herself. It was she who, at the risk of her life, rescued the miraculous Statue of Our Lady after it had been thrown into the river by a blasphemous mob. In spite of constant searches—in her own house and among her friends—she managed



THE CONVENT, HOMERTON, LONDON

to conceal it until it could be restored to the Church, where it stands to this day, an object of the greatest veneration.

The influence of a woman of such faith and energy, gave a tone to the whole family. She seems to have paid special attention to the young Victor and to his brother Antoine, both of whom became priests. The stories she had to tell of her life were a constant source of inspiration in the after-life of Victor, and we may well attribute to her much of the spirit which enabled him to carry through the great work of his life.

Not less inspiring was the influence of his devoted mother. She was born of a family which had given four of its members to the Priesthood, two in the secular clergy, and two Franciscans. They all died in exile for having refused the civil oath. From his father, Victor acquired that spirit of faith in God, without which he would never have succeeded in the work God had assigned him. From his mother came habits which marked his everyday life and thought. It had been a hard struggle to feed and educate her numerous family, for they had suffered heavy losses during the Napoleonic Wars. This undoubtedly was a remote preparation for the future struggles of the Founder and father of a quickly growing Community.

In his childhood, too, he learnt to love the Divine Service; each Liturgical Feast of the Church's year was celebrated as a family feast. Every evening, the Rosary was recited in common; then was read a chapter from the Lives of the Saints, followed by a passage from the annals of the Propagation of the

Faith. These records of heroic zeal, of the success, the adventures and difficulties which the missionaries met with in their apostolic labours, naturally inflamed the minds of the boys. Antoine, having become a Jesuit, died in Canada in 1885, while Victor was destined to be a missionary at home. From his earliest childhood, he showed signs of a remarkable piety. In his room he built a little Altar, before which he used to pray for hours, and to go through the ceremonies of the Mass with a friend who himself became a Priest in after life. But Victor was a delicate child, and his parents at once decided that any desire of his to become a Missionary was not from God. We may trace to his ill-health at this time his intense love of solitude. It was necessary for him to be in the open air as much as possible. The wooded hills, the streams, the solitary paths, became familiar friends to him. All this loneliness inspired him with serious thoughts beyond his years, and led to a type of mind which he revealed in the spiritual direction he gave to his penitents. He would often spend whole hours in a grotto situated on the side of one of the hills which surround the valley of the Rosselle, in the neighbourhood of Saint-Avoid.

Another indirect effect of his delicate health was his great love of Our Lady. Quite near to the town on the summit of a hill is the sanctuary of Our Lady of Valmont. This is one of the most ancient and most frequented of the pilgrimages of Lorraine. To this sanctuary the sickly child would go in the course of his walks, and alone before the Statue of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours would speak to Mary of his

future. This habit of consulting the Blessed Mother of God he never lost.

With such influences acting upon him throughout his childhood, it is not astonishing that the desire for the Priesthood should have developed in Victor; nor that there should be a strong inclination to the Missionary life. This latter, however, was not to be fulfilled, but God, having called him, helped him to satisfy his ardent longing to dedicate his life to the Divine Service in other spheres, undreamt of in his youth.

He entered the junior Seminary at Metz. His brother, Antoine, had entered before him, and had already finished his course in Rhetoric and Philosophy, and was taking steps to enter the Society of Jesus. While awaiting his admission to the Novitiate he remained at the Junior Seminary as Professor, and was thus able to smooth the way for Victor during the first difficult days from home. But in August, 1839, Antoine bade him farewell, and entered the Novitiate at Tronchienne in Belgium. Victor now found himself alone, the first of the trials he was to endure during his preparation for the work Divine Providence intended him for.

It was at the age of fourteen that he entered the school of suffering, in which he was to learn the meaning of true sanctification. This separation from his brother intensified the spirit of loneliness, which had already shown itself in him. He had to learn the difference between solitude in self, and solitude in God. That this might be clear, God permitted his weakness of health to show itself in the form of a painful nervous depression. It became impossible

to concentrate on his work, and it was found necessary for him to return home. To some, this would have meant the end of all hope of becoming a Priest. For Victor it meant the end of dependence on self, and the commencement of a strong and complete reliance on God.

He continued his studies to some extent with the help of the Priests of Saint-Avoid. But for the most part he sought an open air life, the restoration of strength which he knew that God would give him. His great ideal remained with him, even while it seemed impossible of realisation.

God did not allow these first difficulties to last too long. After some months his health was sufficiently re-established to permit him to take up his studies once again in the Seminary of Metz. But the trial had a great effect upon his character. Thus we find his sister Jeanne writing in 1840 to another brother: "We received Victor's report this morning; it is entirely satisfactory both from the point of view of conduct and of work. He has grown immensely; you will hardly recognise him when you meet him, as I hope you will do for a few days during the summer holidays. His character has changed as much as his appearance; he has become so thoughtful, so even tempered, so gentle; already he is quite a man." His father wrote in the same letter: "We received Victor's report to-day, and we are very pleased with it. His most frequent mark is 'very good' or 'good'. You will be astonished when you see him again—he has changed so much for the better."

He was able to continue his studies for some three

years, during which he worked seriously to prepare himself for the Priesthood. His natural eagerness was not always well directed. He was still depending too much upon himself. His spiritual life was governed by his own ideas, and his confidence was in himself rather than in the grace of God. Naturally difficulties arose, and it was fortunate for him that he had the habit of writing fully to his brother Antoine, who showed himself in his letters a useful instrument in the hands of God, for the spiritual development of the soul of Victor. Thus, when Victor had written to him a long letter about his studies, and had shown himself to be depressed because his poor health would not allow him the success he desired, Antoine replied: "I have read with great interest all the details you have given me concerning your work, and it seems to me that you have really made quite good progress in spite of your bad health. So cheer up, Victor; with patience you will reach success. If, however, your health will not allow you to work as you would wish, never mind. Other things as well as knowledge are necessary to a Priest: above all, virtue. If the good God visits us through sickness, He does so that we may progress thereby in virtue. Let us by all means ask God for health, but let us thank Him also when He send us sickness. Ill-health accepted with gratitude is a great good, and draws down on us new graces. Since you wish to consecrate yourself to God in the Priesthood, you should expect to endure what all suffer when they are called by God to this holy state. The devil will try to turn you away from it, by keeping your shortcomings before your eyes. When he tries to

discourage you in this way, tell him that he is teaching you nothing new, that you know very well how unworthy you are; but that you put all your trust in Jesus Christ, and that you hope to accomplish by His grace what you would not be able to do of your own strength. Trust in Jesus and Mary, and then go ahead with courage.”

At the age of eighteen, Victor entered the Senior Seminary and began his studies in Theology. Almost at once God tested his progress in self-abnegation, by allowing his health to fail once again. He had to return home. He continued his studies, however, with the help of the Priests of Saint-Avoid, though, humanly speaking, he had little hope of reaching the goal of his desires. Again, Antoine came to his help. “My dear Victor,” he wrote, “I am fully convinced that God will not desert you half way. He will give you the necessary strength to finish your studies. You need not worry too much. If your health demands a certain amount of rest, take a good year of relaxation in which to build up your strength again. You are not twenty yet; and it is not essential that you should be ordained exactly at twenty-five. Of course you must be a little weak in Philosophy; your studies have been interrupted so often. But with a little courage and patience you will get through all right.”

Victor was learning the lesson that he must rely upon God alone, and began to see that the Priesthood is not so much a means of giving something to God, as a means whereby we can serve God. He saw that the true ideal was to be a victim as well as a Priest, even as was Jesus, in order that the

sacrifice of the Cross and the work of redemption might be achieved through Him. He used to say to his mother, who was worrying about his health, "If only I become a Priest, even if it be just for one day, I shall be happy." He understood now that what is important in the Priesthood is to communicate the life of grace, above all, by the sacrifice of the Cross which Christ continues to offer in the Mass, and in the suffering members of His Mystical Body.

He was able to return to the Seminary, and on the 2nd June, 1849, the Bishop of Metz, Monseigneur Dupont des Loges, consented to give him the Tonsure, and on the 23rd February, 1850, conferred upon him the Minor Orders.

Then came the most painful blow of all! The metal of his soul had to be fully tempered that he might do the work God desired of him in future years. When the question of Sub-diaconate arose, the Bishop hesitated. If his health did not improve, he would probably be a burden on the Diocese. His theological studies, so often interrupted, were certainly insufficient. And so Victor, who had heard the call of Our Lord more and more clearly, and who had responded to it faithfully and un-faillingly, found it impossible for his ardent desire to be realised. This time he threw himself wholly on God. "In Thee O Lord have I trusted; I shall not be confounded for ever," was his constant prayer. Confidence in self was completely replaced by the fullest confidence in God. Only then was his prayer heard. Monseigneur Dupont agreed to ordain him on condition that the family of the future Priest would guarantee never to leave him in need,

and that he would be prepared to undergo from time to time further examinations in Theology. Without hesitation, Victor and his parents gave the necessary undertakings. On the 18th May, 1850, Victor was able to write to his mother, "My dear Mother, I hasten to tell you the good news you are waiting for. In a week's time at this very hour I shall be a Sub-Deacon. Yesterday I was examined by Monseigneur Beauvallet, Vicar-General, who expressed himself quite satisfied with my answers. I owe this success, after God, to those good souls who obtained it for me by their prayers. I thank them for it, and will repay them on the day of my Ordination. So at last the time has come to which you have looked forward so anxiously, and which you feared you would never see; the day when the Lord will be my heritage, and when I shall swear a solemn oath to devote my heart to Him and to love no one but Him." On the 25th May, he received the Sub-diaconate, and on the 22nd of December of the same year, the Diaconate. At the Midnight Mass of Christmas in the Church of Saint-Avoid, Victor had the happiness of announcing from the Altar the "tidings of great joy."

Some months later, Victor wrote to his parents: "My dear Parents, The great day is now drawing near when I shall whisper to my happy soul, 'Thou art a Priest unto Eternity! The Lord is Thine inheritance for ever!' Yes, in a few days those sacred words which I, your son—Victor, will pronounce over a little bread and wine, will open the gates of Heaven and bring down the King of kings, the Eternal Word! It all seems like a dream to me now,

but it is nevertheless profound reality which makes me tremble, but at the same time fills me with joy. At last I have reached the goal to which the adorable and fatherly Providence of God has lead me by a road full of difficulties and obstacles. I should be very culpable if ever I were to forget so many blessings, and grow lukewarm in His service, instead of responding to the graces which I have received so abundantly from Him, and which I hope still to receive from His Goodness in the future."

On the 14th June, 1851, the eve of the feast of the Blessed Trinity, Victor was ordained. The next day he celebrated his first Mass at Saint-Avoid. All the Braun family were present with the exception of his brother Antoine, who had been sent by his Superiors to Canada a few days before. Victor was now a Priest for ever!

CHAPTER II

1851—1863

Metz. Grenelle. Teaching and Preaching

THE first two years of his priestly life were spent at home. The rest, the sunny walks through the smiling valleys, helped to build up his health. During these frequent excursions he found opportunity for expressing his gratitude to God; and the solitary places, formerly witnesses of his discouragement and melancholy, now saw him full of joy and hope. The influence of his saintly grandmother was still felt by him, and he still dreamt of consecrating his life to the conquest of souls in the missions. His health, however, prevented any practical steps in this direction.

The Bishop of Metz, hearing of the aspirations of the young Priest, and of the improvement in his health, thought it time to give him something to do. There was then at Metz a Diocesan College, the Institute of Saint Augustine, directed by the Abbé Eugène Braun, a relation of Father Victor. This establishment was divided into a senior and junior Institute. At the beginning of the new Scholastic year, his Lordship placed Father Victor at the head of the Junior Section as sub-Director, charged especially with the religious instructions. He had with him as Professor, the friend of his childhood, Father Kremer, who had been ordained Priest the

same day as himself. By his kind and fatherly way with them, the new sub-Director quickly gained the affection of his young pupils and the esteem and confidence of their parents. Very soon some of the best families of Lorraine entrusted to Victor Braun the education of their children.

Two years of laborious life in this work ended when the college passed into other hands. French Catholics had just acquired the liberty of teaching, thanks to the Falloux Law. The Bishop of Metz himself, yielding to the wishes of many families and to the Director of the Institution, offered to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus the direction of this Catholic College. Under these pious and learned religious, the College developed to such an extent that it was necessary to add to it the ancient Abbey of Saint Clement, which stood next to it, and thus began the great College of Saint Clement, which is one of the glories of Metz. But the junior section was closed.

Father Victor profited by this cessation of his work to take some months of rest with his family. Not long afterwards, on the advice of the Bishop, he founded at Metz the Institute of Nôtre Dame for children under the age of twelve years. He directed this school for two years from the 15th September, 1853, to the 10th September, 1855. In spite of his zeal, this effort, for want of money, failed. Then the Abbé Vincent, the Parish Priest of Flavigny, in the diocese of Nancy, offered him the direction of the Pensionnat de la Providence, which he had founded in his parish. Father Braun accepted this Mission, and devoted to it his usual whole-hearted

energy. In 1857 he was named Curate of Flavigny, by the Bishop of Nancy, and he thus became the co-operator of the Parish Priest in his works for youth.

Through all these different forms of Ministry, his heart preserved the desire of Missionary life, or for the Religious State. He believed he was answering the call of God by entering the Pères de la Miséricorde. But his health did not permit him to stay there long. Moreover, he did not find in this Congregation the ideal which he was seeking.

He returned to Nancy where he consecrated himself to the apostolate of the poor and the working classes. He then came to Paris with the intention of settling there, and carrying on the same type of work. The Soeurs de Marie et Joseph supervised at this time, at No. 86, Rue de Vaugirard, a home for young girls who had been sentenced in the police courts. Father Braun undertook the spiritual direction of these poor unfortunates. One of them, who had already acquired in the course of her short life a sad celebrity, owed her conversion to him. At the same time he was able to carry on with success many different works of zeal. But his health gave way, and once again he was forced to return to his home. Both his father and mother were now dead, but his three sisters, Thérèse, Jeanne and Christine still lived in the home, where they carried on the traditions of charity and good works of their venerated parents. They welcomed their beloved invalid brother, and very soon their wise and affectionate care restored him to health (1859).

During the year which he spent at home, he had

some experience of parochial life in the little parish of Durchthal, situated three kilometres from Saint-Avoid. As soon as he felt well again, he wished to resume that apostolic life for which he felt an irresistible attraction. He returned to Paris and got into touch with the Institute of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul, recently founded by the Abbé Le Prévost. He was given charge of the Oeuvre de Notre Dame de Grace at Grenelle. This work consisted of a working men's club, an institute for apprentices and school boys, evening classes for adults, savings bank and lending library. In addition he was able to devote himself to the work of the confessional every day in the Chapel of Notre Dame de Nazareth, and three times a week for some hours at a time at Notre Dame des Victoires. In this holy ministry, and in the direction of souls he proved himself capable of attracting the confidence of the people, and numerous conversions recompensed his zeal. He wrote to his niece Marie, "My ministry at Notre Dame des Victoires is blessed by God. Would that I had more physical strength to gather in the rich harvest of souls, but my health does not improve."

We may trace to the long hours spent in Notre Dame des Victoires, an increase of love and devotion towards Our Blessed Lady. It was shown afterwards by the burning enthusiasm with which in his conferences and spiritual directions he used to exalt the goodness and the power of the Queen of Heaven, and to urge his penitents to have a tender confidence in Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, as well as a love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This filial

piety for Mary led him to place his future Congregation under her patronage.

The variety of experiences we have so far recounted did not fail to produce their effect upon the mental outlook of Father Braun. His years of teaching gave to him very definite views upon the child and its education. "The child," he said, "contains within himself the whole future man, even as the tree is contained in the seed. Hope is to the human heart, what spring is to the year, and flowers are to the fruit. The child is the bond of mutual love of parents, on whom the father and mother lavish their most tender care; they bear for him all the hardships of their life . . . The Church considers the child as her own property, as her most precious treasure. She looks upon the Catholic home and family as a kind of seminary whose inhabitants are one day to people the Kingdom of Heaven. Read the ceremonial of Baptism. You would think you were assisting at the triumph of a conqueror. The Priest receives the child from the hands of its parents, in order to make it a child of God. Then he shows it to us as a young prince of the eternal Kingdom. He places on its forehead a crown, in the midst of which shines a cross. He clothes it with a royal, white mantle of innocence. He invites all the princes of the Heavenly Army to watch over its cradle according to the promises of Jesus Christ Himself.

The child is in the eyes of faith the living sanctuary of innocence, the immaculate temple of the Holy Ghost. The heart of the child appears to us as a golden thurible, whose pure and innocent

perfume is attractive even to God Himself. Notice how our Redeemer chose the form of a child when He appeared amongst us. Listen to Him saying that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to children, and that we must become like to them if we would enter it. Listen to those terrible words which fell from His gentle lips: I myself can never read them without trembling:

“Woe to him who scandalises one of these little ones, for their angels in Heaven ever see the face of my Father who is in Heaven.” Tell me if after such testimony we can still doubt the dignity of a child? What then must be our attitude towards the children entrusted to our care? Are we not the guardians of their tender youth? We share the awful responsibility of each Guardian Angel! God has committed them to you as to the Angels, that you may help to bring them to the feet of Jesus—to lead their souls to Eternal Happiness! You must answer for those priceless jewels—a thousand times more precious than all the perishable goods of earth—a treasure which Jesus purchased at the price of His most Precious Blood!”

This reverence for childhood he practised in all his dealings with children. He always showed a real understanding of those under his care. It will be remembered that at this time in Paris, he had to do with many young offenders who already knew too much of the wickedness of the world. Still little more than children, they had been convicted of crime, and condemned to prison! Writing of them to a friend, Father Braun said:

“Although I was never allowed to know the

offences of these poor unfortunate girls, I was expected to give them a spiritual instruction every morning. The prison was an old Carmelite Convent, and the girls were assembled behind the Grille to listen to my exhortation. I was perched on an old rostrum in a big room. The first time I felt very strange, as you may easily imagine! However, I spoke quite simply to them, and soon lost my nervousness. 'My dear children,' I said to them, 'I have been told you are not such good girls as you might be, but I am quite sure you have good, kind hearts. If so, I am delighted to make friends with you, and I can tell you many a grand little story!' I saw the poor creatures look slyly at one another, but they gave me no encouragement, as they sat there, in their drab prison attire. I persevered, of course, and the girls at last became quite friendly with me, and welcomed my little instructions. The only punishment I ever gave them was to omit the story. This was, indeed, a very mild punishment for young criminals, but it succeeded wonderfully well. With tears in their eyes, they would say to the Sister-in-charge, 'It is your fault the good Father told us no stories to-day,—you must have spoken to him of the trouble we gave you last night!' But the conduct gradually improved. The Sisters would say to me, 'Father, you get on splendidly with the girls. Before you came, we had three Chaplains who could do nothing with them. They rebuked them for their faults, and reminded them of their former evil lives, urging them unceasingly to amend their ways. The girls looked bitter, and turned their backs to the preacher, and even went so far as to



CHIGWELL CONVENT

start the profane songs of the streets they had known so well! We were in despair. The strait-jacket—the solitary cell—every sort of punishment was used—and used in vain! Matters went from bad to worse until the Good Providence sent you to help us!’

“Hearing this, I understood! Never would I refer to the sad story of their past lives—and I can assure you those girls taught me a lesson, which has been useful to me many times in my work. Some of the most beautiful moments of my life have not been those I spent in the midst of my dear Novices; but there, with those poor young girls, I have had the greatest spiritual consolations. Many began to approach the holy Table every month, and even every Sunday and on the Feasts of Our Blessed Lady. Yes, I had wonderful consolations—and what was the secret? I strictly avoided any words which could pain, or arouse resentment in their poor wounded souls!”

This respect and delicacy of feeling for whoever he had to deal with, underlay all his ideas connected with the problems of the classroom. He was fond of quoting the Reverend Father Balthasar Alvarez, “In any reprimand, there should never appear the least bitterness, nor anger, nor emotion; but only paternal gravity, tender compassion, and unvarying gentleness.” The following rather amusing anecdote shows well how Father Braun put this principle into practice.

While he was in charge of a school, one of the professors imposed upon a child as punishment dry bread for a whole day. “But, please Sir,” began

the boy. "Two days." "Really, Sir, I——"
"Three days, I tell you." "I assure you, Sir, I know nothing ab——" "Eight days dry bread—let me hear no more!" But Father Braun had heard. Choosing an opportune moment, he said to the Professor, "I have not the least doubt the boy merited some punishment, but ought you not to have kept a little more calm? I cannot, of course, allow such punishment—you yourself could not really wish it. Of course your authority must be upheld—I had better come into your classroom, and you will point out the culprit. I must then scold him, and threaten him with a double punishment. 'But, Sir,' you will say, 'it was only thoughtlessness on his part.' 'No, I will *not* let him off.' Still you will plead, 'But he has behaved himself much better these last few days; I think he could be let off this time,' and so I shall end by remitting the punishment, saying: 'Very well, since you ask me to let him off, I will do so.'" Père Braun was willing that his own personal reputation should suffer, rather than the child should be unreasonably punished.

In the same way, he gradually changed his method of preaching, bringing it more into conformity with the minds of his hearers. He himself described the change thus: "Yes, I remember that I changed my method. In my youth when I was a Professor, and afterwards as Director of an Institute, I used to compose fine discourses; nothing was lacking; I thought out all sorts of adjectives, and when necessary, searched the pages of my dictionary for the right word. The sermons were carefully learned by heart. Yes, they were very

fine sermons indeed! But I changed all that from the moment I read the life of the Curé d'Ars. I learned there that it is not fine sermons that convert people. A greater impression is made by a simple word simply said. The Devil once said to the Curé: 'Learned sermons do not do me much harm, but simple instructions injure me very much and prevent souls falling into my power.' There is a certain Bishop who has preached in nearly every pulpit in Paris. I remember in a Retreat at which I was present, this Monseigneur advised the Priests always to speak with simplicity. 'Gilded words,' he said, 'pass over the heads of the hearers, and do no good. If folk were asked as they came out of the church what you had said, they would exclaim: "What a learned preacher he is!" And if still asked what you had said, they would answer, "I do not exactly know, but he certainly said some really fine things".' The good Bishop insisted that academic discourses should be limited to at most three times a year; during the rest of the year the simplest language should be used."

From the day Father Braun realised that simple words were the most useful for his hearers, he strove always to explain even the most profound truths with a beautiful but reverent simplicity that went straight to the heart of the congregation. He spoke just as he felt, and announced the Word of God with that straightforward, earnest, pleading way that must have reminded his hearers of the Divine Teacher as He spoke to the multitudes by the way-side of Galilee.

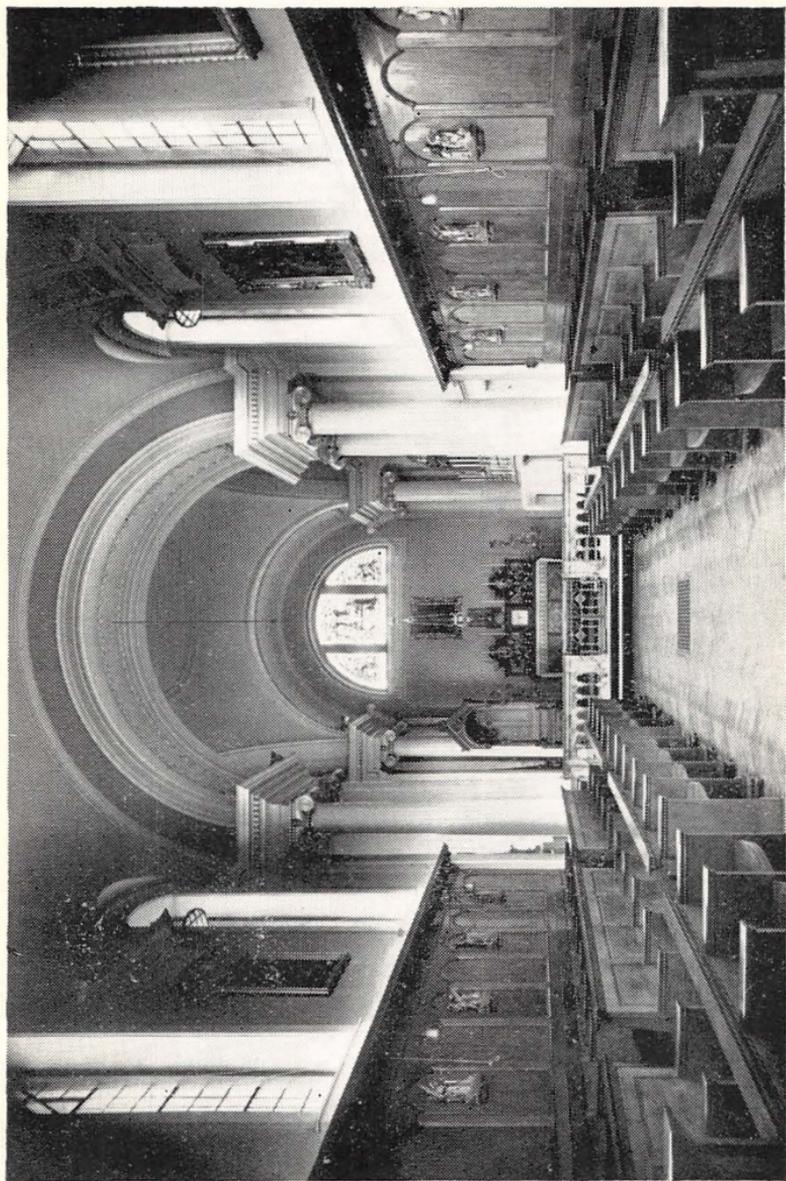
CHAPTER III

1863—1868

Paris. The Birth of a New Congregation. The protection of orphans and homeless girls.

Poverty and trials

IT was while he was working at Grenelle that the need of his future Foundation became clear to him. At this time (1863) in the midst of the dense working class population of that locality, there was a numerous colony of Germans and Alsations, for the most part Catholics. They spoke little or no French, and the Parish Priests could do nothing with them. Father Braun, who knew German, resolved to overcome the difficulty by founding a Mission which became known as the German Mission of Notre Dame. A Chapel was opened in the Rue Fondary, where, on Sundays and Holy Days, there was Mass, with hymns and a sermon, and several times a year retreats and missions were preached. Many German families soon grouped themselves around him, and he was able to start an organisation for adults with its own social centre for apprentices, and a savings bank. A large hall adjoining the Chapel was rented, and placed under the protection of Saint Joseph. There the men and boys assembled for evening classes and numerous social events. He founded also a popular library, gathering together books from various sources which provided good



CHIGWELL CONVENT CHAPEL

reading for his flock. Father Braun at the same time was the Chaplain of a Club in Montparnasse, and Spiritual Director at Notre Dame des Victoires.

As he spoke German, young servants and working girls from Germany and Alsace-Lorraine sought his advice. Most of them had come to Paris without knowing French, and their inexperience and poverty exposed them to dangers of every kind. Moved by this sad state of things, Father Braun determined to find a remedy for it.

His own description of the position was as follows: "Some years ago, there was in Paris a poor Priest who spent his days in a little room or in a confessional receiving unhappy sinners. But that was not enough for this Priest: he used to see with great sorrow in this Paris, so many young girls who found it very difficult to remain pious: he saw others innocent, without knowledge of evil, who, after a few weeks, or at the most two or three months, began to forget God, and their religious duties, and ended by entering upon the wide road of sin. He saw all these souls being lost, and his heart was afflicted at the sight of the outraged Heart of Jesus. This poor Priest, imprisoned in that cell which is called the confessional, desired to find charitable souls who would pity the misery of all these straying sheep—who would prepare a home to receive them when these poor little working girls would have not a halfpenny left in their pocket, and would find themselves tempted to a life of shame." This became his great pre-occupation. The idea came to him to found a Hostel for German servants out of situations. It was just at this period that he learned

for the first time the full meaning of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. He at once resolved to become a perfect servant of the Sacred Heart, and chose for his Hostel the title "The Sacred Heart Home for Working Girls."

Encouraged by Père le Prévost, founder of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul, and by Père Lantiez, who afterwards became the Superior General of the same Society, he did all that he possibly could to help those unfortunate girls. He addressed himself to several religious communities, begging them to take in hand this pious work, setting before them earnestly the great good waiting to be done. Some made promises; others asked for time for reflection; but in the end all his efforts remained without fruit.

Providence had other designs. Failure did not discourage Father Braun. He gave himself up to prayer to the Sacred Heart, and as a result, resolved to found the community which he had not been able to find. He confided his design to some of his penitents, setting before them the importance of such an institute. Three of them entered into his views, and at once took upon themselves the task.

Father Braun rented an apartment in the Rue d'Ulm, and furnished it for his three helpers. It consisted of two rooms on the first floor looking on to the court-yard. The furniture was of the simplest: three beds, a little table, an old sofa, a chair and a stool. The place of honour was given to a little statue of the Sacred Heart, the cost of which was fifty centimes.

Almost immediately a fourth person was added

to the original three, and before very long several others offered their services. It became necessary as a result to find larger premises, better suited for the purpose in view. These were found at No. 25, Rue Humboldt, which must be considered as the cradle of the Congregation. It was there, on the 17th October, 1866, the feast of Saint Margaret Mary, that Father Braun gathered together that little flock in a room which was used as an oratory. After a stirring exhortation, in which he set before them the works to be done, he consecrated his first co-operators to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and this day has always been considered as the date of the foundation of the Congregation.

It was decided that all should wear the same costume, and that they should give to each other the title of Sister, while retaining their own Christian names. Father Braun was known as Reverend Father. He at once gave to his daughters a Rule of Life: Prayer in common, Meditation, Spiritual Reading, recitation of the Holy Rosary, and the Little Office of Our Lady. Devotion to the Sacred Heart inspired the Sisters from the beginning. Under the impulse of Father Braun, with his advice, his encouragement, his almost daily conferences, the religious life began to develop in the little Community. The number of members increased. While it was still nothing more than a pious association, there was a marked progress towards the spiritual life of a Religious Community. Father Braun himself appointed the Superior whom all were to respect and obey.

The work became known, and met with unhoped-

for success. It soon became necessary to rent a much larger house. Young foreign girls without situation were welcomed without distinction of religion. They found in this home board and lodging, and a motherly care in finding work. Ladies began to apply to the Sisters for maids. The girls gratefully recognised the value of the work being done for them, and there was no difficulty of any sort in the conduct of the home. Among them were several Protestants, some of whom, touched by grace, and by the love and self-sacrifice of the devoted Sisters, were received into the Church by Father Braun, and later on, some were admitted to the little Community itself.

The charity of the zealous Priest was not yet satisfied. He learned that in railway stations, young girls arriving alone and inexperienced to take up situations in Paris, were exposed to terrible danger; for they would be accosted by strangers apparently wishing to help them, but in the end alluring them to houses of ill-fame! "Alas," the good Father would exclaim, "can we not try to do for God, what the wickedness of evil-doers tries to do for Satan?" And so it came about that a Sister set out each morning and evening for the station to seek out these innocent young girls, and to see them safely to their destination, or, if need be, to bring them to the safe refuge of the convent, till they could be suitably placed elsewhere. The Sister rarely returned alone, but at last she was noticed by the police. An Inspector of Police arrived at the Convent, enquired into this new work, advised the Reverend Father how to carry it on in conformity

with the official regulations, and finally arranged that this most charitable and necessary work should be exempt from all taxation. This was indeed a great relief to the Community, for it can be well imagined how small was the income, and how heavy were the expenses of this generous Priest. Moreover, the Institution was now known and sanctioned, and a certain degree of stability ensured.

Still there was the great difficulty of finding money for the rapidly growing family. Father Braun had devoted to the work the whole of his own income, and so had some of the Sisters; but many had brought with them nothing but zeal for souls, and willing hearts and hands to suffer and to do whatever could further the plans of their Reverend Father. Benefactors were rare—Poverty reigned supreme in the cradle of the infant community!

From the spiritual point of view, this was as it should be. Each day, Father Braun exhorted the sisters to love and welcome the sacrifices they had to make; to look upon all trials and hardships as a training for that Religious Life they were aspiring to—a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. The house had become too small for them, and there was no satisfactory accommodation for Community life. The Oratory was nothing more than a corner of the room cut off from the rest. The Father used to sit on a little stool, and the Sisters would group themselves around him, seated on the ground, listening to his paternal exhortations. It was during one of these spiritual visits that he said to the Sisters, "Do you know what you will one day be called?" "No!" they answered, and urged him to tell them.

It was not until he had opened the door, and was leaving them that he turned and said quietly, "The Servants of the Sacred Heart."

The love of the Sacred Heart and the necessity of reparation were the constant theme of the instructions of Father Braun to his daughters. In the month of June, 1867, the feast of the Sacred Heart was solemnly celebrated for the first time. A charitable lady had given the little Community a large and beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart with Saint Margaret Mary at His Feet. On this occasion all the Sisters renewed their solemn consecration as victims of reparation. Not even the poverty of the house prevented the holding of a frugal, but joyous, feast.

In the beginning, Father Braun had no other idea than to found a Congregation which would be devoted only to simple work for domestic servants out of situations. But all sorts of other works of charity were demanded of his Religious, and he had to widen his ideas very considerably. The first appeal was for a Sister to nurse a young Alsatian woman, dangerously ill. Father Braun at first refused, as nursing was not part of the work of the Institute. In the end he consented in view of special circumstances in this case. Then one of his own penitents was stricken with tuberculosis. She was living alone with no one to help her, and so she also was treated as an exceptional case. On the next day two ladies came to ask if a Religious could take care of a poor blind man! So it went on, until at last Father Braun declared, "My Daughters, God wishes it; you will also nurse the sick poor."

God was evidently not yet satisfied! Father Braun feared not for himself, but for his small Community. In spite of his delicate health, and almost complete absence of financial resources, he displayed astonishing activity in the performance of whatever seemed to him to be the Will of God. He had complete confidence in the Heart of Jesus, and following the example of his Divine Master, was inflamed with charity towards the abandoned, the sick, the afflicted, and poor orphans. He learnt in these early beginnings that when Our Lord finds souls determined to walk generously in His footsteps, He guides them, sustains and inspires them, and makes of them instruments of the designs of His own mercy.

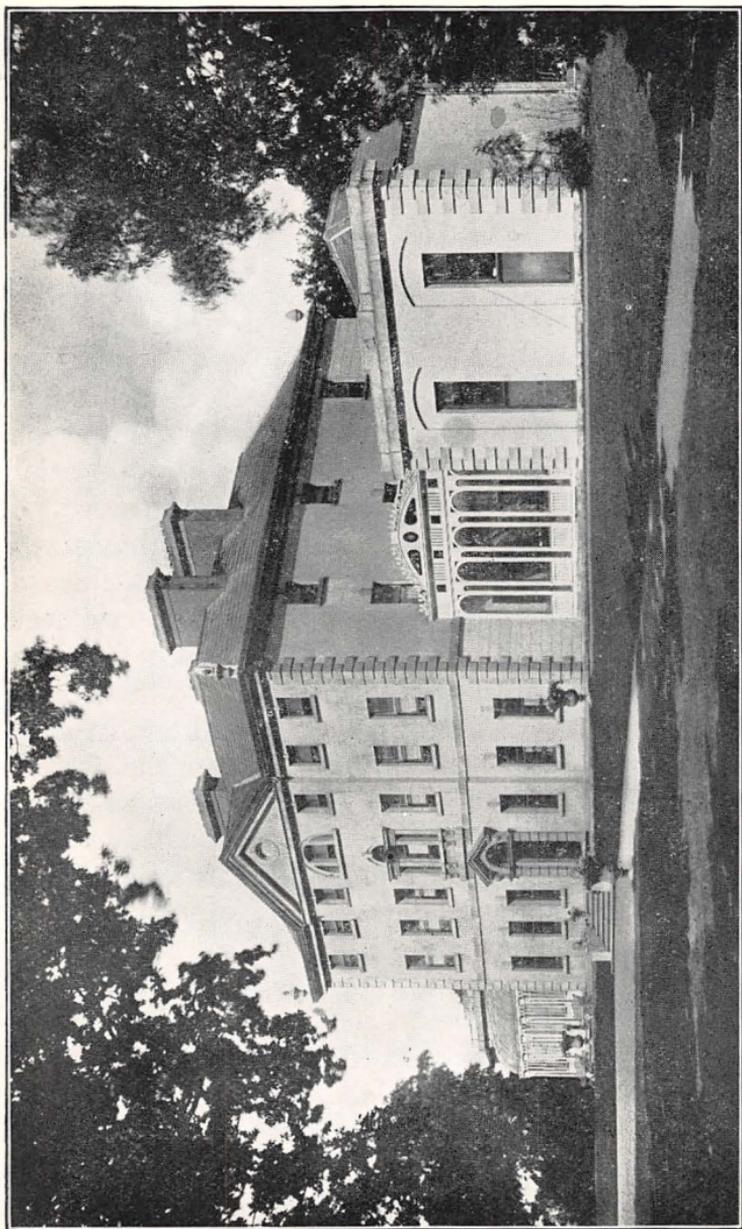
It was in this way that he was led to undertake the care of orphans. A workman in the neighbourhood was killed through falling from the top of a scaffold. The widow, who had a large family, asked the Sisters to take charge of two of her little girls. They accepted. At once other children in more or less similar conditions were brought to their notice, and accepted. Again Father Braun had to say, "My Daughters, God wishes it: you must serve Him as mothers of orphans."

The number of Sisters had now risen to fifteen. But even this was not sufficient to carry on the works of the house, which, in six months, had become so extensive that it was possible to support them only at the price of the greatest sacrifice. There were numerous sick people to be cared for, clothed and fed; and more than two hundred foreign servant girls, and some twenty orphans to be maintained.

Their poverty was still extreme, and all that the Sisters had brought with them was sold. They had to have recourse to begging. Father Braun bravely faced all the humiliations which this involved, and inspired his Sisters with the same courage. At last, their wonderful devotion to the poor opened not only the hearts but also the purses of the people of Grenelle, though still there was never really sufficient for the proper carrying on of the growing work of the Community.

The House in the Rue Humboldt was now much too small. It became necessary to separate the Orphanage from the Servants' Hostel, and the latter was transferred to 93, Rue de Théâtre, to which house was given the name of the Hostel of the Sacred Heart. The Orphans were brought to the Boulevard de Grenelle, where Father Braun rented a very large shed. There was little to be removed, but it was a good distance from the Rue Humboldt to the Boulevard de Grenelle. A barrow was hired to carry the heaviest furniture. Behind it walked the Sisters with the orphans, each carrying a big bundle. This party of thirty or forty Sisters and Orphans walking in procession through the streets of Paris was surely touching in its humble pathos and simplicity!

They took their poverty with them, too. There was but one big room for everybody, Sisters and children: and it had to serve for everything. They prayed in it, they worked in it, they ate in it, they slept in it! Apart from the few benches for the children, the only seats they had were trunks and boxes, and, as these were insufficient, some had to sit on the floor. Thirty-eight persons lodged in this



SACRED HEART CONVENT, CORK

room! A workshop was started in it for the children. For furniture there was but one cupboard which held the linen for the Sisters and the children alike. On top of this were placed the bread and other articles of food, together with the pots and pans. During the day they put planks on trestles to serve as tables, and during the night the tables became beds, and there were never enough for all: several had to lie down on mattresses or sacking on the ground; their only covering was their own clothing. It was truly a home of poverty, and yet no one thought of complaining. The Religious Spirit was aflame in the hearts of the Nuns, and the Orphans were rich in the love and devotion of their new Mothers.

But the calm which reigned could not destroy material cares. The purse was always empty; food had to be provided, rent must be paid. Saint Joseph was called upon to take charge of these domestic difficulties. Novena after novena went up to him, and never was he deaf to their prayers. At the end of one novena they found the money needed to pay the rent. Father Braun came in smiling and placed on the table a purse containing the necessary sum. Another time it was an unknown lady, who discreetly placed an offering in the hand of a Sister, and went away unknown.

Every day a Sister rose at 3 o'clock in the morning, and went off to the Central Market to buy vegetables cheaply. The men soon got to know her, and, always ready to do a good turn, used to add to her purchases, so that she would return heavily burdened and tired, but with a good supply of food

for the household. Twice a week another Sister would go for meat, knowing that every day there were spoilt or unsaleable pieces, scraps of all sorts, which the butchers never refused to give to the poor folk who came to ask for them. She would dress herself up as a beggar with a blue apron and an old bonnet, carrying a big basket, the handles of which were replaced by a length of string. She was not above bribing the butchers' boys with two or three sous, in order to get the attention of their masters.

Among the benefactors of the Sisters was the cook in an hotel. She used to put aside pieces of bread, sugar and food left over from the hotel meals. Each evening she would bring what she had gathered to the Sisters for the Orphans. One day the poor cook fell ill; her employers agreed to keep the situation open for her if she could find someone to replace her during her illness. One of the Sisters obtained permission to go and replace the cook. She put on a cook's uniform, arrived at the hotel, and was accepted. She had as assistants a maid and a kitchen boy. One of her duties was to go out early in the morning to get any provisions for the day. She made use of this opportunity to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion. One day the Proprietor's wife sent for her, and asked her point blank, "Is it true that you are thinking of becoming a religious?" The only reply that the Sister made was a peal of hearty laughter. The good lady reassured, said with a sigh of relief, "It would be a great pity for a splendid young girl like you to become a religious. Never do such a silly thing as that!" Some days afterwards, the cook, restored to health, took her

place again in the kitchen, and the Sister did the "silly thing" of going back once more to the religious life of her Community.

No work for God can be carried on without a share of the Cross, and the work of Father Braun was not exempt from this law of suffering. We have seen the poverty with which his new Community had to contend. However praiseworthy we may consider their lives to have been as we look back upon them, we can well understand that those in immediate contact with the work might well be filled with disquietude and even distrust.

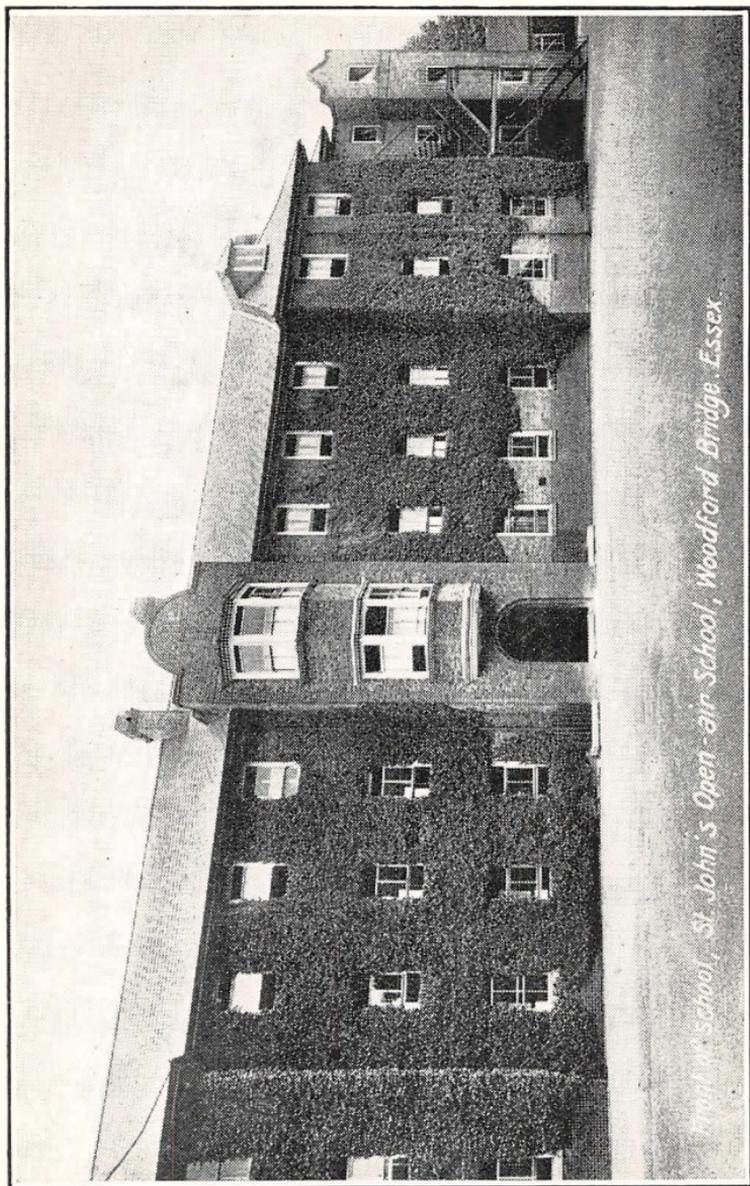
There were, of course, the usual number who always cry out when an effort is being made to cope in a practical way with the difficulties which beset God's children. It may be their own conscience against which they fight. Father Braun had to suffer in this way, but he understood human nature, and was not greatly disturbed thereby.

There were, however, well-meaning souls, who considered that a certain amount of human prudence was demanded even in the carrying out of works of zeal. For them it was not easy to see what good this Community could do without resources, and without helpers—almost without hope. It seemed condemned to failure from the beginning; the Founder himself was unknown, and an invalid, who could expect not more than two or three years to live. Criticism of this sort reached the ears of the Sisters, and of Père Braun himself. It was very discouraging, humanly speaking; but he had learned that the spirit of God acts not always according to human reason. The more the future appeared

gloomy, the more did he encourage his helpers to renew their confidence in God, and to redouble their zeal for those whom God was entrusting to their care.

His own family at Saint-Avoid grew disturbed when they learned the details of what Father Braun was doing. After all, they had taken the responsibility of his maintenance in case of sickness. They had to think of themselves a little, when they saw him leading a life which might easily have broken the health of a strong man. And they knew that he had spent every penny of his own on the new Foundation. Fortunately they had some of his own spirit, and their expostulations were very mild. They never hesitated to assist on the many occasions when they received from their brother an appeal for material help. A little later they went still further, and turned the family home into a place of rest for the Sisters, whom they always treated with the greatest reverence and generosity.

The really painful trials were those which arose in the Community itself. It would seem almost impossible that discord could arise among those whose lives were so marked by charity and self-sacrifice. Experience has shown only too frequently that it takes only one individual of the wrong type to upset any community. It is the old story of the rotten apple in the middle of a barrel of good ones. In the beginning, Father Braun had in mind nothing but the servants, the orphans, the sick whom he wished to assist. He welcomed anyone who appeared likely to be useful in the work. Quite probably he was very pleased on the day when one who



Front of School, St. John's Open-Air School, Woodford Bridge, Essex.

had left a Franciscan Convent through ill-health presented herself to him for acceptance. He made her Superior of his little band, presuming naturally that she had been well trained in the religious life. With her came other "ex-nuns." He was now to learn that although they had changed their community, they had not changed their characters. Health had been an excuse for their departure, but the Superiors doubtless saw in their sickness the benevolent hand of God. Father Braun found it necessary to expel most of these ex-nuns. This was easy enough in the case of all, except the Superior herself. She proved herself to be full of the dominating, proud spirit which inspired Lucifer and brought strife into Heaven itself. She was forced to leave the Community. At once she strove to destroy the Founder's work by every possible means—by violent lies, calumnies, threats—nothing came amiss to her. She organised opposition and started intrigues with which the devil inspired her. She did her utmost to gain the Archbishop of Paris to her side. In the end the truth became manifest, and the unhappy woman was revealed in her true light; but the whole experience was extremely painful to Father Braun. Fortunately for him, he had learned to take refuge in the Heart of Jesus, and to find therein not only consolation for himself, but even a sorrowing love for those who were striving to harm him. And what he could not obtain from the Sacred Heart, he obtained from Our Lady during the hours which he spent in the Chapel of Notre Dame at Grenelle.

One thing stands out very clearly in the refer-

ences which he made afterwards to those happenings. They show how fully he had learned the lessons which God had taught him in his earlier years. It is clear that what saddened him most was neither the possible ruin of his work, nor the humiliation to himself, but the sorrow which would fill the Sacred Heart, if the good work were to fail and those for whom it was intended be deprived of its support.

CHAPTER IV

1868—1869

**With the Dominican Nuns at Sèvres. Canon Codant.
The spirit and work of the Servants of the Sacred
Heart of Jesus**

THE extension of the work, the high cost of food and lodging, and the difficulties described in the previous chapter, which had not only lowered the reputation of the new Community, but also had brought suspicion with regard to it into the minds of the Ecclesiastical Authorities, were so many motives which decided Father Braun to transfer his community from Paris. He chose Sèvres, perhaps because of the small colony of Alsatian workmen established there which might offer a congenial sphere of work.

Sèvres is a little town which then counted from five to six thousand inhabitants, on the banks of the Seine, between Saint Cloud and Meudon. The town stretches out along the main road from Paris to Versailles.

A lady placed at the free disposal of Father Braun for three months a large furnished house in the Avenue de Belleville. The Founder installed a few Sisters there, while he looked round for a permanent home. He had practically no choice; the only house at all possible for his immediate purpose was No. 20, Rue de Troyon. It was in a very bad condition, and not nearly big enough; during the day the

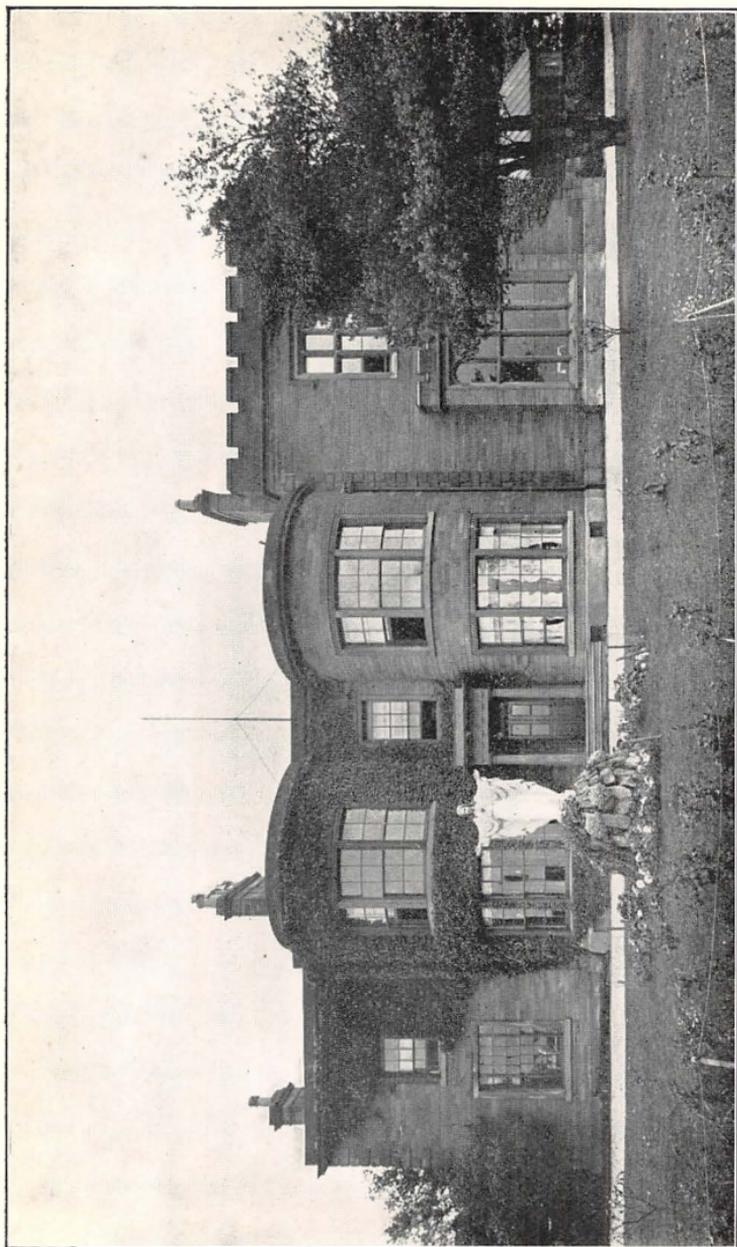
largest room had to serve as workshop, refectory, and Oratory. When night came, the same transformation had to be made as at Grenelle; tables became beds for the little ones, while the Sisters and the older orphans slept on mattresses laid on the ground. Twenty Sisters and about as many orphans formed the first family. The poverty of Paris went with them to Sèvres. What work the Sisters and children could find did not pay for the upkeep of the household. On one occasion the baker refused them bread, and it was then that he made the rule to be paid each day. As usual, they had recourse to Saint Joseph; they started a Novena, and their petitions were heard the very next day.

About this time a friendship which had begun in Paris between Father Braun and a member of the Chapter of Versailles, Canon Codant, became greatly strengthened. Canon Codant was a Missionary Apostolic and Director of the Convent of the Dominican Nuns at Sèvres.

Father Braun still belonged to the Society of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul. He lived at Grenelle, and from there he directed all his works.

When he came to Sèvres, he never failed to have recourse to the great influence and wisdom of Canon Codant, whose purse, too, was often opened to the needs of the eager young Founder.

The Canon was well known throughout France for his oratory which was of quite an exceptional nature. He was a generous man, always anxious to help others. It was he who spoke of Father Braun to the Bishop of Versailles whom he led to see the great good that could be done by the pious



CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND MARY, DURRAN HILL, CARLISLE

association in his diocese. The venerable prelate gave the necessary permission to Father Braun to take up his threefold work—the care of the sick, the care of orphans and the care of servant girls out of a place. He went further, and urged Canon Codant to hasten the coming of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, insisting that they should be installed before the Feast of Saint Joseph.

The Bishop had serious reasons for thus acting. Another congregation was seeking to settle in his diocese, of whose work he had very little knowledge. It is easy to imagine the joy of Father Braun and his Community when they heard the good news. It would now be possible to regularise the position of the Community, which up to the present, had no right to the title of Sister, although they wore a religious habit.

The action of the Bishop of Versailles constituted recognition of the work, and gave it the status of a new foundation. Father Braun at once set to work to do what was necessary for the proper organisation into a religious body, of the devoted little band who had helped him so generously. For that he had recourse to the Dominican Sisters of Sèvres, who entered fully and practically into his design.

It was arranged that the first Clothing should take place in their Chapel on Friday, the 28th February, the feast of the Crown of Thorns. Canon Codant himself made the Canonical Examination of the Postulants, and admitted fifteen to the ceremony. As only fifteen days remained before the date fixed, it was decided that the new Sisters should take the Habit of the Dominicans, except that instead of

white the costume of the Servants of the Sacred Heart should be black; for the cord, purple was chosen in memory of the episcopacy of Saint Francis of Sales, the secondary patron of the infant Community. Thanks to the good offices of the Daughters of Saint Dominic who worked literally day and night making the robes, veils and scapulars for their new Sisters in Jesus Christ, all was ready by the day appointed. The usual preparatory retreat was made, and on the eve of the Clothing a special chapter took place, presided over by the Superior General of the Dominicans and her Mistress of Novices. Canon Codant presided at the Ceremony, assisted by Father Braun, and the Chaplain of the Convent. After the Ceremony the Dominicans completed their work of hospitality by throwing open their Convent to the new Religious and providing for them the "Marriage Feast." No account of the birth of the Congregation would be complete without recording with loving gratitude the substantial help and practical sympathy of the Dominican Sisters of Sèvres.

Father Braun would have liked his Daughters to be named "The Poor Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," but Canon Codant did not like this title, and his choice would have been "The Visitandines of the Sacred Heart." Even one hour before the taking of the Habit, the two were still discussing the point. Father Braun was obstinate in his choice, save that he consented as a concession to the insistence of his friend and benefactor, to suppress the word "Poor." He regretted this always.

Sèvres is consequently the spiritual cradle of the Congregation. Step by step, however, this religious

family moved towards Versailles, where it became finally fixed.

The year 1868 marks the turning point in the life of Father Braun. The canonical recognition of the Community by the Bishop of Versailles reversed the relationship between himself and his sisters. Hitherto they had helped him in his ministry, now he was to become their helper. The first step necessary was to define the spirit of the Congregation by means of a "Rule." Father Braun had always before his mind the work of Saint Francis de Sales. That saint, when commencing the foundation of the Congregation of the Visitation, had in view the showing forth to the world the love of God by means of this order for women. But the Visitation developed into a contemplative Order. Father Braun's idea was to make of his Daughters what Saint Francis had intended to make of his—an active Order doing among the poor the good works taught by the Incarnate God during His three years of active Ministry.

He himself wrote as follows: "When our Saint had the idea of the Visitation, he did not at first conceive this Institution as it exists to-day. The pious congregation of which he dreamed should be neither enclosed nor separated from the world as we now see it. He wished to form souls truly interior, truly detached from creatures and from themselves, under an outward appearance quite ordinary and attractive. He imposed upon them as an exercise of charity the visiting of the poor and of the sick, and hoped doubtless to edify men and bring them to sanctity by the attraction of their virtues. Things

turned out otherwise than he had hoped, but he had no reason to regret this. Yet it remained true that the thought of the holy foundation has not been realised in its entirety, and that the Christian world is still awaiting its fulfilment. The Daughters of the Visitation are indeed angels! But who knows them? Who is a witness of their admirable perfection? Who has the opportunity of being edified by it? Very few persons, surely!

“That is why we try in spite of our unworthiness and incapacity to take up the plan of the holy Bishop of Geneva; to come back to the origin of its conception, and to transplant the Visitation into the world outside the Cloister and the Grille. It is this spirit of Saint Francis de Sales that the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must try to acquire. Meditation on his virtues, his great love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, his deep humility, his gentleness, his loving simplicity and his tender zeal for the salvation of souls, for the poor, and particularly for great sinners, will give the Sisters an insight into the heart of this great Saint, and make them share his spirit.”

It was therefore quite natural that Father Braun, when drawing up his Rules, should find inspiration in Saint Francis de Sales. At the same time he strove to discover a new formula which would express his own ideal. During the next six years he worked with the help of God's grace to ripen his idea, transmitting to his Daughters from time to time, by means of circular letters, rules of interior life and of community life. We may well quote here some of these writings which bring out most

clearly the spirit which he sought to communicate to them.

“My Daughters, the more our Congregation advances, the more pleased I am that I gave you as father and Patron the good and lovable Saint Francis de Sales. You are not a contemplative order, although you must contemplate each day the sufferings of the Heart of Jesus occasioned by the sins of men; nor are you a penitential order, although you should do penance each day for your own sins and for the sins of others. You are a legion of devout virgins, who, after having sanctified yourselves, must go out into the world to the sick, and to young girls in danger, or already lost, in order to spread everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ, and to bring back souls to Him through your goodness, and gentleness, by making them love the good God and the filial service of Him as practised by you. This is the only sermon which people of the world can understand. Now it was the gentleness which our good Father Saint Francis had learned in the school of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which from his infancy until his last breath fashioned his distinctive character. It was the unction of his gentleness which converted so many sinners, consoled so many afflicted hearts. You know that he was naturally fiery, impatient, and of angry temperament. He has told us himself it was only by frequent examination of conscience throughout twenty-two years, by vigilance, combats, victories over himself, by ‘taking his anger by the throat,’ as he himself puts it, ‘strangling it, and treading it under foot,’ that he succeeded in overcoming his temperament, so

that he became a true type and perfect model of the virtue of gentleness among men. I can understand that cry from the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul, his friend! 'Oh! my God, if the Bishop of Geneva is so good how good must you yourself be!' 'Ah! Yes,' exclaims Saint Francis de Sales, 'it is far better to have to render an account of too much gentleness than of too much severity! Is not God wholly love? Is not God the Father, the Father of mercies? Is not God the Son, the Lamb, while God the Holy Ghost shows Himself in the form of a Dove, which is gentleness itself? If there was anything better than kindness, Jesus Christ would have told us so, and yet He sets forth only two lessons that we should learn from Him—meekness and humility of heart! Would you then wish to prevent me from teaching and practising the lesson that God has taught? Are you more wise than God?'

" 'But, my Father,' you will say, 'think of what people are saying against us! Think of that dreadful woman, that young girl! You surely do not understand life.'

" 'Would you have me answer sincerely, from the very depths of my poor heart! Alas! is there then only God and myself to love these poor sinners, as though they were not by that very fact the more in need of your compassion and tenderness! You wish me to forget they are my sheep; you wish me to *refuse my tears* to those for whom Jesus Christ gave the *whole of His Blood*! To whom then should I be merciful, if not to sinners? No! My heart refuses to treat these sinful children harshly. The day may come when they will change into Lambs,

and will be more holy than we. Had Saul been driven away, we should not have had Saint Paul! God sends me sinners that I may heal them. Do you wish me to refuse these services to God? I know well I am their Bishop, but I prefer to be to them a father.'

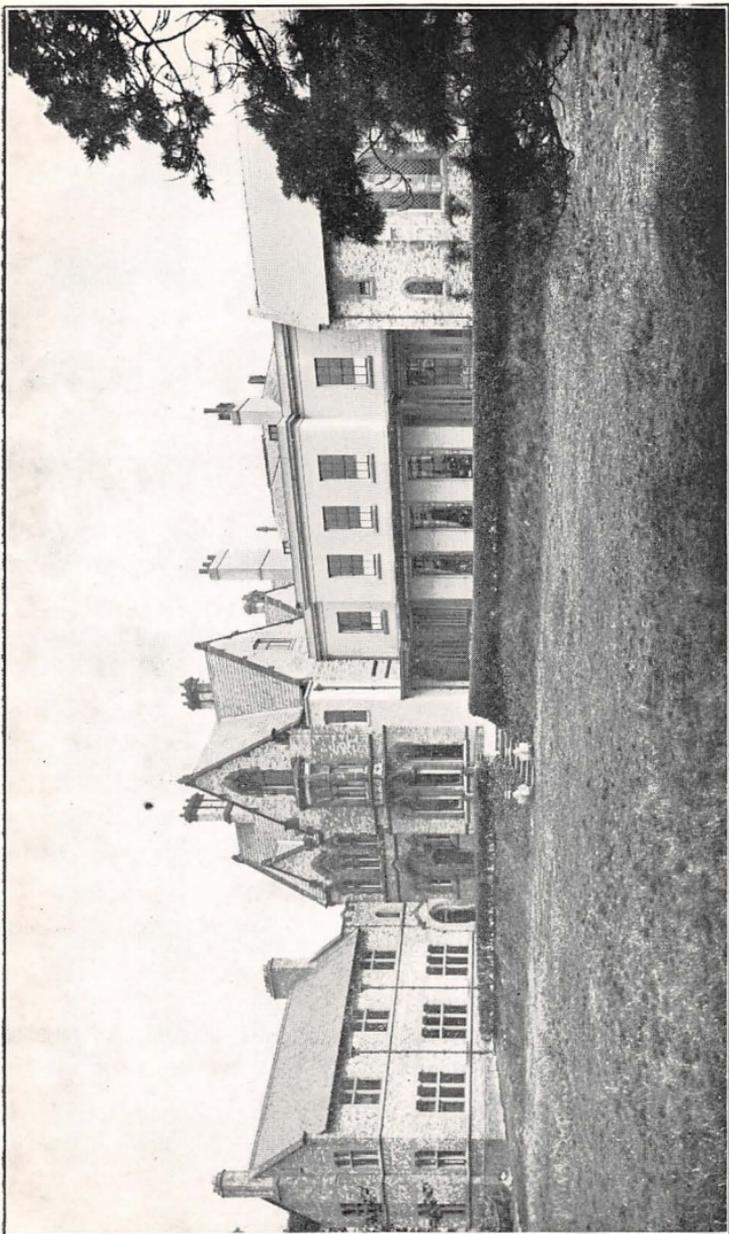
"These are the words of Saint Francis to his Daughters of the Visitation. How far is your poor Father of Grenelle from those sentiments! Pray to the Heart of Jesus, and to our Patron Saint, that they may be given to me, and to you my Daughters, so that God may penetrate us with His Divine Compassion for sinners. May this be the distinctive character of the Poor Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is on this condition only that we may bear this beautiful name. Without it people will say of us, 'A poor simpleton wished to found a Congregation! He succeeded only in gathering together a lot of women full of themselves, selfish, vain, ungentle, and devoid of human and Divine charity'."

On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, 1868, he wrote to the Sisters—"To-day should be the feast of our little orphans, poor innocent creatures. What would become of most of them, if you did not offer them a welcome. Love them very much. Be good mothers to them, and Jesus will love you. He who blessed them with His Divine Hands says to you—"Suffer little children to come unto Me."

"But you are not all called to take care of the children. Most of you are destined to nurse the sick, or to go about edifying people in order to bring them to Jesus Christ. We must live and work in this world without accepting its ideals or its

maxims. We must spread abroad what our good Father Saint Francis used to call 'the good odour of piety.' Souls really pious, those who have understood devotion to the Heart of Jesus, resemble flowers which shed around an agreeable perfume. We perceive when we are near them something so sweet and pleasing, such as we experience in the springtime as we pass near a bank of violets. These souls are naturally so good, so simple, so modest, so forgetful of themselves, so eager to give pleasure, so devoted to every kind of well-doing, that we feel in them a charm that wins us to virtue almost unconsciously. Saint Francis of Sales tells us that all men and women are happy who by their example diffuse in the world the good odour of piety, not for their own glory, but for the glory of our Heavenly Father, the only glory which true piety ever sets before itself. May this good odour of Jesus Christ remain when you have finished your work of Charity in those houses where you care for the sick or the infirm!

"My hands, wearied by the number of absolutions I am giving, have yet enough strength to bless you all. My daughters! I am ashamed each time I call you so, for I grieve that you have so sad a Father! I console myself, however, that I have given you another whom you can, and should imitate in everything, as I have said to you so often. He is your true Father, and it is he, the good and holy Saint Francis de Sales, who should be your teacher. I will continue, therefore, to bring his spirit before you, often quoting his own words, so that it may be he, our holy Patron, who comes to guide you and



BACK VIEW, HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE (KELTON), LIVERPOOL

to encourage you. See that you give him a good welcome!

“When reading his life, you have seen that he had his full share of suffering, of evils, of distresses of all sorts. He was relatively poor, often suffering, often disdained and insulted, and yet he sometimes trembled for fear that God was giving him his paradise in this world. All these tribulations were to him of little account in comparison with the consolations he experienced in the midst of them. What an example for us, my children, who cry out so loudly at the least scratch—at the least contradiction; and who think that God owes us an eternity of happiness because of the little nothings about which we make so much noise! We ought to love every word our good Saint repeated so often: ‘I do not know what adversity is. I have never known poverty; I have suffered but little. Of your goodness, help me to thank God!’ Truly Christian words, upon which we can never meditate enough, if we are to learn to thank God always in sickness and in health, in evil fortune as in good; in trials as in consolation; remembering moreover, that it is not suffering which opens Heaven to us but *the way in which we accept suffering*.

“This man so tried, but uncomplaining, taught his daughters to be poor, gentle, affectionate towards their neighbours, and especially to any who were a burden and a trial to them. In that he showed himself indeed the disciple of Him who commands us to love even our enemies, and to pray for those who hate us. There is little merit in loving those who love us; the Pagans did this. But to love our neigh-

bour when he is poor, when he is importunate, trying, burdensome, irritating; when he is an object of repulsion and disgust; to treat him with goodness and gentleness, with affection, in spite of so many reasons for avoiding him: such is the true Christian spirit, the spirit which must in the highest possible degree animate the Servants of the Sacred Heart, those new Daughters of Saint Francis de Sales, for it is thus they prove that they love with a pure and holy love God—'God alone!'

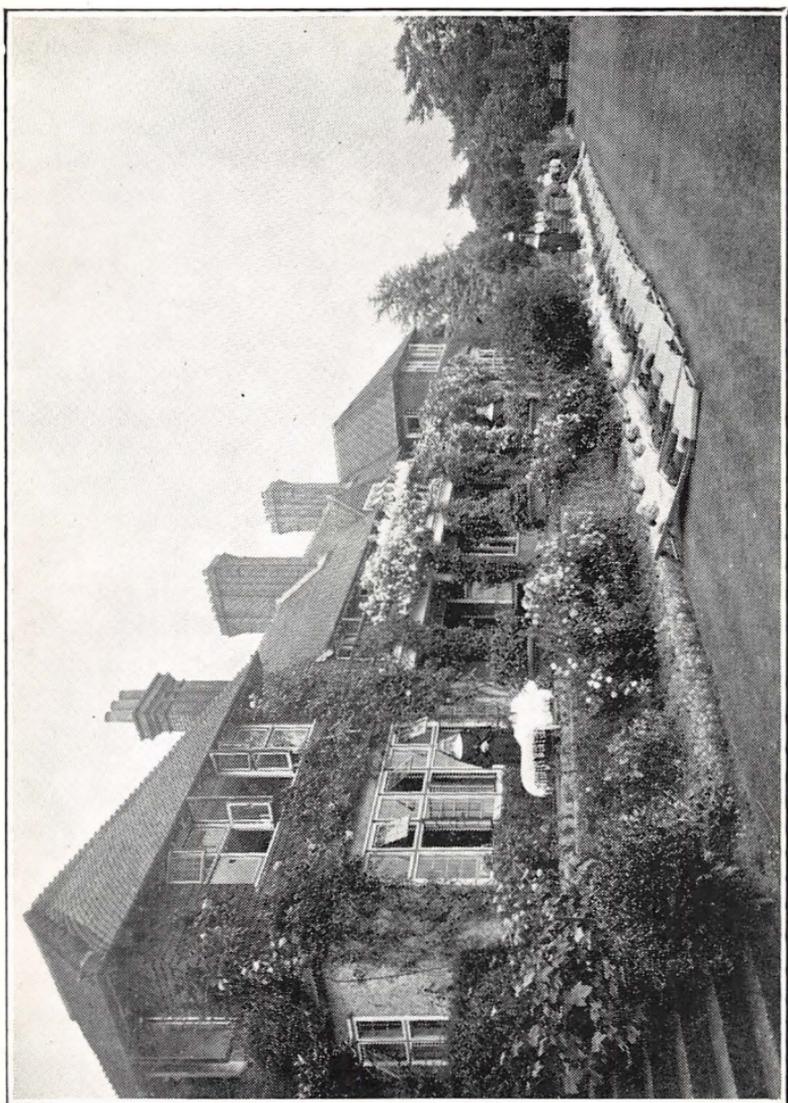
In another letter to his Daughters, Père Braun wrote: "I must stop in order to arrange the room where our good Sister Caroline is about to receive the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction. How good it is to die when we have loved the Heart of Jesus! Death for our Sister is a feast day, the most beautiful of her life. She was surprised yesterday because she felt nothing but joy, and no temptation came to trouble her. "I am in the Heart of Jesus," she said, "I do not fear Satan."

In one of his beautiful discourses on Holy Poverty he said: "May Mary obtain for you the grace to understand your sublime mission towards the poor, whom Saint Vincent de Paul used to call 'our lords and masters.' Poor yourselves, living only on the alms which you beg from door to door, you have been able up to the present to do very little—too little compared with the needs of so many poor whom you visit every day. As you well know, for them the material miseries are often the least. That old man who has no son—that child who has no longer a father—doubtless they suffer from the cold and from hunger, but this is their least suffer-

ing since public pity can so easily provide a remedy for it. What saddens them most is the lack of a friendly hand, of a kindly heart open to their sorrows. This void the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—you, my Daughters—the nurses and friends of the poor, must strive to fill. You do not go to the homes of the poor with only soup, or a loaf, or some meat or a garment which your hands have made. You go there above all *with your heart united to the Heart of Jesus*: with a soul full of lively pity; with words drawn from the Heart of Jesus, the greatest comfort of all. You convince the poor sufferer that you do more than pity him, more than help him—that you love him! You do not limit yourselves to entering his house; you sit down on his only chair, or on a little bench, and there you listen to the misfortunes of this unhappy man; you urge him to unburden himself of those secrets which weigh heavily upon him; you mingle your tears with his, and there your patience and affection bring to life in this dry old heart some love in return for that which you have shown. Too often, alas, the poor man is incredulous and ignorant. He does not know that after this life of expiation and of suffering there is Eternity—that in Heaven reigns a God of mercy and of clemency, who permits His children to suffer, only to test them and to make them better, and Who, for the pain which they have suffered patiently here below, promises them recompense which shall have neither end nor measure. Instead of uniting his sufferings with those of God our Saviour, instead of drawing from them as do so many fervent Christians, a reason for hope and a cause of merit, he

blasphemes Divine Providence, curses God and yields to despair. When you meet such a soul, how helpful you can be by revealing to him his immortal destiny, by setting before him infinite happiness as an immense compensation for passing evils; you can open up his heart to a world of joy and hope. By your supernatural lives you show to this modern world the loveliness of poverty accepted with resignation, even with joy, and borne with dignity as being the precious bond of brotherhood with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

“It is thus that the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must understand the visiting of the poor. What you are able to do for the material needs of the poor is very little. You are necessarily limited by the poverty of your material resources. But when it is a question of giving spiritual alms, your treasures are inexhaustible, since you bestow graces drawn from the inexhaustible riches of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Never will you have to restrain your liberality and cease to give of your spiritual abundance.”



SAINT DOMINIC'S OPEN AIR SCHOOL, SURREY

CHAPTER V

1869—1870

Troubles at Sèvres. New Foundations at Saint-Cloud, Argenteuil, Vaugirard and Pithiviers

THE little Congregation was growing fast! Père Braun was at Grenelle where the work for unemployed servant-girls was calling for more and more Sisters. The orphans at Sèvres were far too numerous now to be accommodated in the Dominican Convent. There was no Novitiate, and Père Braun was still Master of Novices, Director and Superior of both "Houses." Such a position could not go on, and, in his anxiety, the good Founder began to look for premises where, perhaps, he could combine the works, or at least bring them nearer together.

His zealous friend, Canon Codant, spoke to him of a building adjoining the Dominican Convent, which might serve his purpose. It was taken! No contract, no business discussions! There was the place which would house his Sisters and orphans; his friends, Canon Codant and the Dominicans encouraged him, and helped him with the transfer; the matter was there and then settled! Did the Reverend Father realise the debt he was incurring? the uncertainty of his tenure—and the claims of the present occupants? Human prudence and human means seemed as unnecessary to his work for souls, as they did to the Divine Founder of the Church,

when He chose impetuous Peter for its Foundation Stone! It is a point one likes to dwell on—it brings out, indeed, that Victor Braun was a chosen humble soul, founding a work that was to endure and to give glory to “GOD ALONE!”

And so it came about that Canon Codant, thinking to perform another act of friendship, induced the Dominicans to take over a block of buildings adjoining their own Convent, and to offer it to The Servants of the Sacred Heart. Father Braun accepted the offer without hesitation and without any further enquiry, presuming the good Canon would do all that was necessary. The buildings consisted of a laundry and Public House—“*Au Sapeur.*” The Sisters were given to understand that both of these would be closed, and that they would have the sole use of the building. Actually, only the Laundry had come to the end of its lease; the Public House could go on for another six years. In spite of this, the Sisters moved into the former laundry, to which only a few hasty repairs had been made, and some new plaster put on the walls. The entrance and gardens were common to the Convent and to the Public House, which exposed the Sisters and children to the jokes and raillery of the passers-by. The laundry was very damp, and, of course, generally unhealthy. As a result, several of the Sisters and some of the children fell victims of typhoid fever. Fortunately, all recovered except a young girl of fifteen.

And then came difficulties with the Dominican Sisters, which made it absolutely necessary for Father Braun to find yet another home for his work.

He seems to have assumed that the good Nuns intended to hand over their house to the Servants of the Sacred Heart gratuitously. It was only when, at the end of the first six months, a demand for rent for the house to the amount of 2,500 francs was sent in, that he found this was not so.

At this time the Sisters had as much as they could do to pay for the poorest and scantiest of food. Those who were nursing received no pay, since their services were limited to the poor, from whom, in most cases, they received nothing. What little work the orphans could do, brought in next to nothing, and the alms of the charitable barely sufficed to feed and clothe the hundred and ten persons living in the house. To pay the rent demanded was entirely out of the question. The Dominicans also required the Sisters to sign a contract equivalent to a lease for six years, at a rent of 5,500 francs a year, and rates and taxes amounting to yet another 1,000 francs! There was nothing to be done but to tell the Dominicans they could not honestly sign such a contract, and that they must leave the house. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the Dominicans had bought these premises, not for themselves, but for the Servants of the Sacred Heart, and that they had incurred an expense of many thousand francs in doing up the buildings, and were paying heavy interest on their expenditure. Canon Codant wrote a very strong letter to this effect, which concluded with a warning that he might be obliged to advise the Bishop to disband the Community, reducing the Sisters to the lay state again.

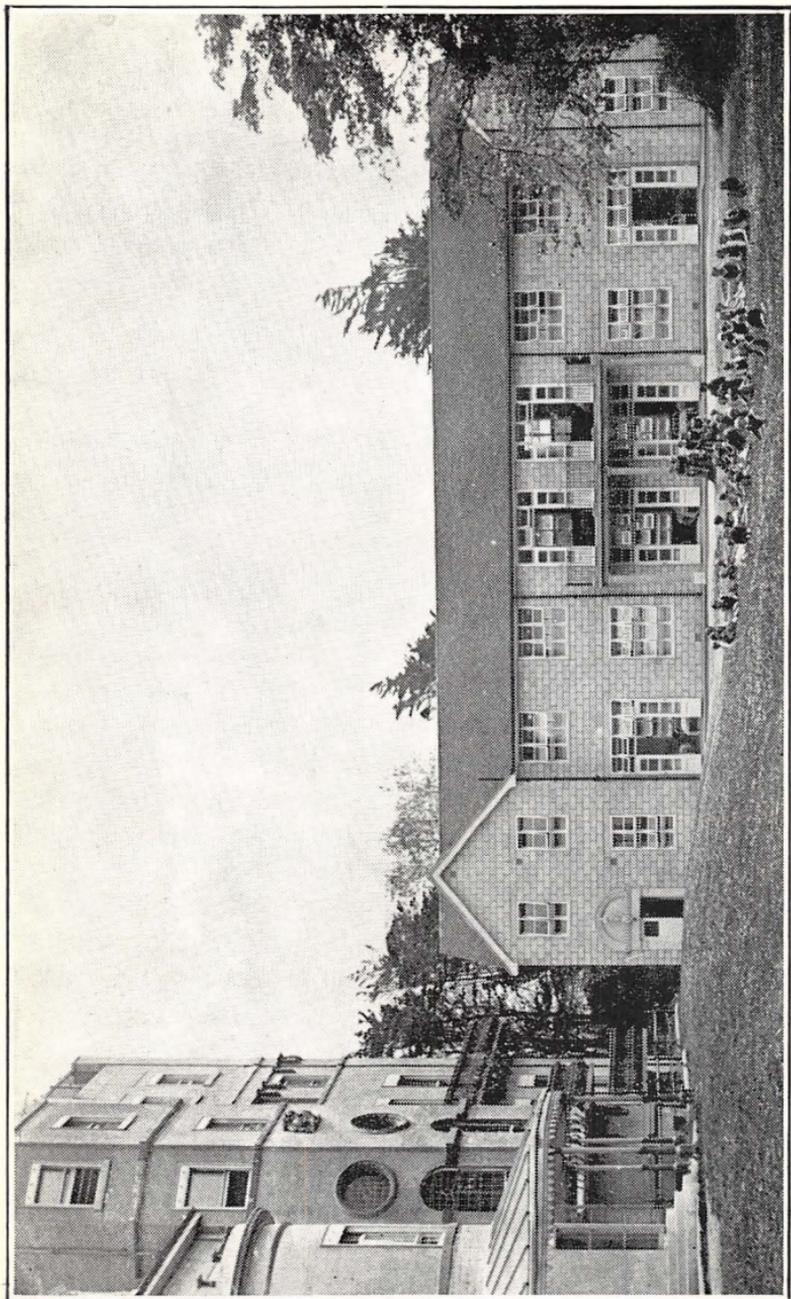
Father Braun's reply was characteristic, and is

worth quoting, for the light it throws on one aspect of his life's work.

“Permit me to answer your letter in all simplicity and with perfect frankness. You say that it was for us that the house was bought. I cannot deny your statement, but what are the facts? The Dominicans have kept for themselves a large part, the publican has another, and we have the rest! It was agreed that all the leaseholders should be dismissed; this has certainly not been done. Our poor Sisters and their young charges are obliged to live in contact with the sort of folk who loaf about a public-house, and under conditions which no authority, Ecclesiastical or Civil, would sanction. To my mind the position is quite impossible.

“Moreover, we cannot sign a lease of which certain clauses are inadmissible. You take away from us the best part of the garden, the only part where our Sisters and children were sheltered from public view; and you retain the right to use the wash-house and drying-room. Would it be honest, I ask you, to promise to pay thousands of francs, knowing full well that we are not the least likely to be able to keep such a promise?

“And then you are turning us out of the Chapel, and sending us to the Parish Church where they do not want us. What conclusion can there be save that we must go elsewhere? In all this affair, my Daughters and I have had but one great anxiety, to avoid causing you pain, you, our best of friends, who have been so extraordinarily good to us. It was your powerful protection which gained for the



ST. PATRICK'S OPEN AIR SCHOOL, HAYLING ISLAND

Servants of the Sacred Heart 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 yourself have often said in public and in private. It is impossible for us to think that now that we cannot accept these too onerous conditions, you will close to us the door of your heart, and withdraw from us that paternal protection of which we have so much need.

“We do not know where we shall go. Never has our position been more precarious. But while we remain faithful to God, we are confident He will not abandon us if He desires us to do His work. If not, we would rather cease to exist without having offended Him, than continue burdened with debts and obligations which we cannot satisfy. A previous experience cost us too much. We shall not renew it.”

In the end Father Braun found a small villa at Saint Cloud. He at once wrote a letter to his Sisters couched in most enthusiastic terms: “This time we can indeed say that the good God has thus wished it. Saint Joseph, during his month, seemed deaf to our prayers. The Holy Virgin, although invoked throughout the whole of Her month, under the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, found us nothing, and Our Lord Himself waited until the month consecrated to His Heart was half finished, before finding for us what is better than we had ever dared to hope for. It was on Wednesday, the day consecrated to Saint Joseph, that the matter was decided, and on Friday, a happy day for us, the lease was signed after a vow which we all made to

the Sacred Heart, and a special vow made by Our Reverend Mother to Notre Dame de la Salette. Thus the Sacred Heart of Jesus combined with the most Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph to give us this new house, and to-morrow, the first Sisters will take up residence there . . . ”

In the month of June 1869, the Sisters and their orphans finally left Sèvres for Saint Cloud in the Rue de Montretout. Here it is true they were better lodged than ever before, but still the house was altogether too small for them. The police intervened and compelled them to cut down their numbers, to satisfy the sanitary authorities.

As a result the Sisters decided to send twenty of the elder orphans to their house in the Rue de Théâtre in Paris. Two Sisters accompanied them. In this house was already installed the work for servant girls, which took up most of the space available. No notice had been sent of the arrival of these twenty-two, and it is but natural that the welcome they received was distinctly lukewarm. However, the Superior did her best to make arrangements for a stay of a few days. Providence again stepped in. Just at this period one of the Curates of Argenteuil, the Abbé Poulain, accompanied by Madame Démony, a great benefactress of the Parish, came to ask Father Braun for some Sisters to look after the sick poor of Argenteuil. Father Braun eagerly consented, and a few days after, several Sisters took up residence at Argenteuil in an old house situated in the midst of large grounds. Very soon all the orphans, both from St. Cloud and from Paris were brought to the new house, and twelve

Sisters with Mother Gertrude at their head, also left St. Cloud to form a new Community.

This did not mean the closing of St. Cloud. On the contrary, it made possible the organisation there of a Mother House. Through the kind offices of the Curé of the parish, Father Braun obtained permission to open a Chapel and reserve the Blessed Sacrament. He rented for himself a room in a neighbouring house and so was able to say Mass for the Sisters, and to place himself entirely at their disposition. Several times a week he preached conferences, and gave up much time to the organisation of a Novitiate. It was now that he finished composing the Rules in their essential lines, which he explained in detail in his conferences. Mother de Chantal continued as Superior of St. Cloud, and Mother Marie du St. Sacrament became Mistress of Novices. Postulants came in great numbers, and on the 8th December, 1869, twenty-one received the Holy Habit. This was the fourth ceremony in the history of the Congregation. With the departure of the orphans, the house of St. Cloud devoted itself entirely to the care of the sick poor by day and by night.

It will be seen that the Congregation now consisted of three houses, one at Grenelle, wherein was carried on the work for servant girls, another at St. Cloud, to which was attached the Novitiate with the nursing of the sick as its principal work; the third at Argenteuil where lived forty orphans. Soon a fourth foundation was added to these. The Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul carried on at Vaugirard, in Paris, an orphanage for boys, and at Chaville a

junior house of studies; the whole comprised some three hundred persons, for all of whom the laundry work was carried on in the establishment at Vaugirard. The Brothers asked the Servants of the Sacred Heart to take charge of this Laundry, and Father Braun thought that he could not refuse his brothers in religion the services which they were asking of his Daughters. He consented, therefore, and sent to Vaugirard five Sisters who were soon followed by four others. Lodging was provided for them at No. 52, Rue Dombâsle.

It was specified in the contract which was drawn up that the Sisters were to take full charge of all the work of the Laundry and of the Infirmary, and were to direct the women who helped them in this work. For this, each Sister was to receive an annual payment of 200 francs, out of which they were not only to keep themselves, but also to provide for the upkeep of the house and for all the materials necessary for a laundry. The regulations of the Diocese of Paris made it necessary for them to put off their Religious Habit, in place of which they put on once again their dress as postulants. It was practically impossible for them to carry on any of the religious exercises unless it were before 7 o'clock in the morning, or after six o'clock in the evening. For Mass they had to go to the parish church at a very early hour. For some reason, although there were three distinct Chapels in the establishment itself, the Sisters were not admitted to any one of them until many years afterwards. It was with a sense of great relief that this foundation was suppressed in 1890. It was in the same year, 1869, that Father Braun

was able to accept the offer of a house at Pithiviers, made by a charitable lady of that town who had devoted her life, health and money to the care of the sick and the poor. As this work corresponded with the aim of his Congregation, Father Braun placed three Sisters at the disposal of this saintly woman, who handed over to them a house and an endowment for the same. The Franco-German war prevented actual occupation of the property until May 1871.

CHAPTER VI

1870—1873

Effects of the Franco-Prussian War on the works of
Father Braun. First Foundations in England and in
Austria

THE Franco-German war of 1870, while causing an upheaval in the life of the Religious and of Father Braun during the actual period, was a cause under God of a great extension of the Congregation. When mobilization began, Father Braun set out for Saint-Avold, which he realized would be in the very heart of the military operations, that, living with his family, he might carry on his priestly work among the French soldiers. He had the idea also of introducing the Sisters into the work of nursing the wounded. It was, of course, with a feeling of anxiety that he left them in Paris. He wrote to them every day, and his letters, while keeping them in touch with what was happening around him, showed his great solicitude for their welfare. He made arrangements with different priests to act as temporary Chaplains to the Houses. At the same time he warned the Sisters to be ready to leave for the front at a moment's notice, bringing with them medals, scapulars, and linen for the wounded; he even sent them dimensions of bandages and compresses as used in the military hospitals. He speaks of the work in the camps, and of the church full of soldiers each evening; the thought of death had brought

back to them a sense of religion, and he was able to describe how they would sing and pray while the three Priests in the area were hearing confessions by the hundred. "To each one," he says, "we offered a scapular and a medal, and we have not yet found one to refuse these gifts."

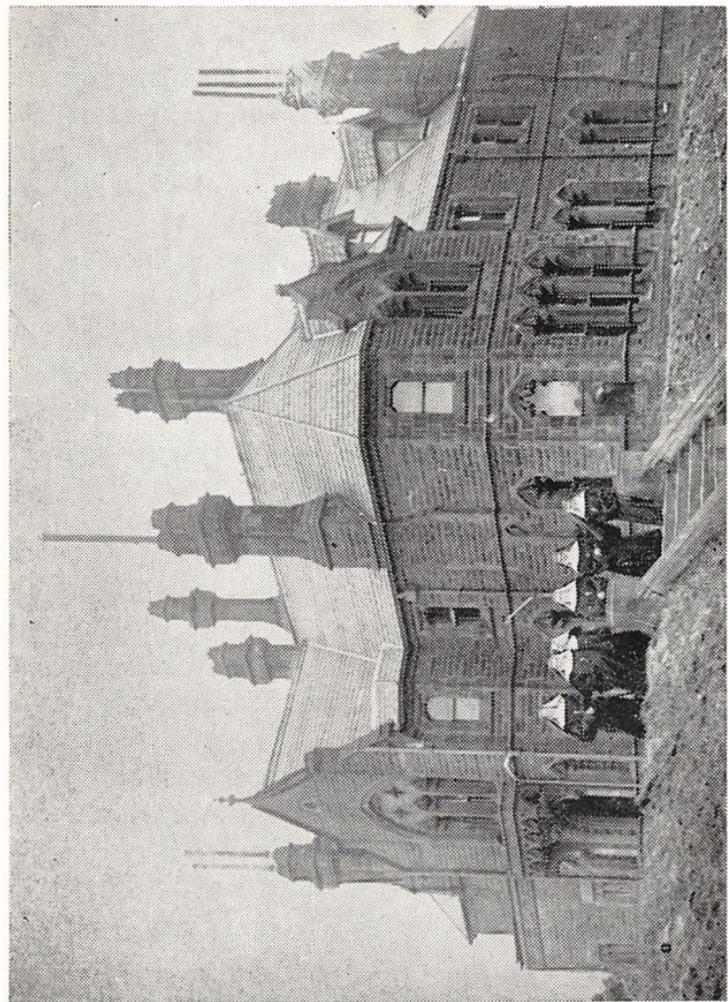
Then came the defeat of the French army. France was invaded: there was the expectation that it was only a temporary set back: but continuous disasters shattered all hope. Father Braun soon found himself in the midst of the enemy in an occupied area. He continued to write to his daughters, but the majority of his letters went astray, a few arriving only after long delay. The Religious were greatly distressed by this suppression of news from their Founder; they did not know whether he was alive or dead. Other difficulties were embarrassing them. Immediately after the declaration of war, the order was given that all persons of German nationality must leave France. This meant that the House at Grenelle where was carried on the work for German servant girls had to be closed, and those among the Sisters who themselves were German had to leave the country. These went to Cologne by way of Belgium.

As the enemy approached nearer and nearer to the capital, the houses at Argenteuil and St. Cloud had to decide whether they would flee as all others were doing, or remain. Where could they go? And, far more important, where could they find a shelter for the orphans? They decided to remain. The military authorities decided otherwise. At Argenteuil they destroyed a bridge and the neighbouring

buildings, and the Sisters had just time to take the last train for Paris, where they found refuge with the children in the house at Grenelle. They had taken with them nothing but what they could carry in their hands. The contents of the house and Chapel had to be left behind. Characteristic of the simplicity of these first Religious is the act of the good Sister who lit a candle before the statue of the Sacred Heart before they left, leaving all to Its Divine Protection.

The Sisters of St. Cloud went to Versailles, where the Bishop invited them to help in the care of the wounded in the Ambulance Station established in the Chateau itself. When the German army entered Versailles on September 19th, this ambulance station passed into their hands, but the Sisters were kept on as infirmarians, a fact which was to have an important result.

At this period the care of the wounded was almost entirely in the hands of private assistance. The International Society of the Red Cross, which then was under the control of the English, had charge of the hospital at Versailles. It was from them Sister Josephine, who was Irish, obtained permission to go to England. She had in mind to seek help and a shelter in London, and then to go to Lorraine to find the Father Founder. Furnished with a passport and the armband of the Red Cross, she left Paris on the 26th August, accompanied by three other Sisters. She reached London the next day and at once obtained an audience with Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster. She spoke of her Congregation and of the difficulties in which it was



HEART HOSPITAL SCHOOL, ST. JOSEPH'S, RAINHILL

involved, and begged his protection and permission for some of the Sisters to take refuge in London. The Cardinal gave the necessary permission and as a sign of his pity gave the Sister a crucifix for Father Braun, charging her to tell him that he and his Congregation would be welcomed with open arms.

Overflowing with joy, Sister Josephine returned to Paris, and sought Père le Prévost, the Superior of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul, who was then in charge of the Congregation. She told him of the success of her journey, and named some of the convents to which he could send Sisters. She returned at once to England with five Sisters, who were welcomed by the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Nazareth. She then set out with a companion to find Father Braun. This meant journeying through Belgium and Luxembourg; she arrived on the 9th September at Saint-Avold, needless to say completely worn out. Fortunately her troubles were over. Two good soldiers took charge of their baggage and led them to Father Braun. At the moment of their arrival Father Braun was just finishing a long letter to the Sisters in which he recalls to them how St. Delphine wrote to her husband Saint Eleazar, complaining that he had left her without news during a long absence. "The Saint answered her, 'If you seek me, if you sigh for my return, you will find me in the wound of the Heart of Jesus.' It is there, too, that I dwell; and there you can find me." Sister Josephine gave Father Braun all the news she had of the Sisters at Versailles, and then handed to him the gift from Cardinal Manning.

The next day Father Braun clothed Sister Josephine with the Habit of the Servants of the Sacred Heart, which she had not yet received. He then set out for England with the two Sisters, all three protected by the Red Cross armlet. At Sarreburg, to their astonishment, they recognised one of their own Community. She was on her way to Cologne in search of Father Braun. This meeting decided him to interrupt the journey to England and to go to Cologne. There he found twenty of the German Sisters who had been sent out of France at the beginning of hostilities, and who were nursing the wounded French prisoners. Father Braun gave them his instructions, exhorted them to remain faithful to their vocation and left them a little money.

He set out again for England by way of Belgium, and, with the two Sisters, reached London on the 20th September. The next day he was received by Cardinal Manning, who said that he had not forgotten the good produced in Protestant England by the clergy and religious who had been exiled during the great Revolution. He hoped that the coming of Religious Communities from France would again accomplish the same good, and lead to a return of the Catholic faith. He then gave to Father Braun a sum of money sufficient for present needs, and full permission to make any foundations he desired. He blessed him most fervently, and urged him to go and work in his Diocese like a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Full of courage and confidence, Father Braun gathered together his scattered flock and rented a house in Stratford which he called "The Convent of

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart." The house was completely empty, without any furniture, nor even cooking utensils. Sister Josephine went round begging, and in a few days had acquired a bed for each, and at least all household necessities.

It is interesting to recall the words of Father Braun at Sèvres in 1869. On this occasion two English girls were among the postulants: "Perhaps Providence has sent you to us so that one day we may be able to do in England what we are already doing in Paris. It is especially in the large towns that we shall have opportunity of doing good. Let us keep in our heart the consoling hope that one day we shall penetrate into England, into that country which formerly gave so many saints to the Church."

In a very short time it was seen that in England there was plenty of scope for the type of work done by the new Institute. Father Braun consequently wrote to the different houses which sheltered his scattered flock at Paris and Versailles, and in Germany, instructing the Sisters to make their way at once to England, unless their presence was absolutely necessary where they were. The good Father forgot that communications with Paris were difficult, and would soon become impossible. The Sisters there could but await the horrors of the Siege and of the Commune.

Sister Marie de Jésus, whom they still called Sister Josephine (her name as a postulant), was asked to make her way again to Versailles ostensibly on Red Cross business, but principally that she might bring back with her the Sisters who could be spared from the hospital. This was her third journey from

England to France since the beginning of the war, and before it ended she had made eight other journeys. Armed with English passports, and wearing the Red Cross armlets, she and Sister Augusta left London on the 28th of September, taking with them some thousands of francs and six large parcels of linen, and other medical necessities. They reached Versailles the next evening after many adventures, for they had to make their way through both the French and German armies. They went first of all to the headquarters of the Red Cross, and handed over the supplies which they had brought from England. The next day, to their great joy, they got into touch with their Sisters in the hospital, and told them of the welcome which had been accorded to their Founder in London, and of the prospects of extension of the Congregation there. Then they went personally to the Prince of Prussia, and through the good offices of the President of the Red Cross Society obtained passports from him for five more of the Sisters. The seven left Versailles on the 2nd of October. It was however with great difficulty, in spite of their credentials, that they worked their way through the German lines. They were treated as spies, and one of them was even put into prison, but was released after two hours.

Meanwhile, several of the Sisters in Germany had received instructions from Father Braun and had set out for London. For some reason unknown, instead of passing directly through Luxembourg and Belgium, they tried to make their way through France. Needless to say they had a great deal to suffer, but they ultimately reached Belgium. Both



ALLERTON PRIORY, WOOLTON, LIVERPOOL

parties arrived in London on the 4th of October. They were welcomed not only on their own account, but also because they represented so many more workers in the great field of labour which had opened itself to the Servants of the Sacred Heart. Their skill in nursing and their care and devotion to the sick led them to be sought after even by non-Catholics. The work was soon firmly established in London.

Soon, a second foundation became necessary in Germany. Princess Alice of Darmstadt, although herself a Protestant, invited the Sisters to take charge of the wounded in the hospital which she had founded in that town. She had learned of them through her sister, the Queen of Denmark. Father Braun himself conducted three of the Sisters to Darmstadt, and profited by his sojourn in Germany to pay a visit to the Community in Cologne. He returned by way of Versailles. It is easy to imagine the joyful surprise and the emotion of the Sisters when they saw their beloved Father return to them during those terrible times when Versailles was filled with Prussians.

Father Braun soon discovered that there was work to be done in the spiritual life of the Community. It will be remembered that these good Sisters had had a very incomplete religious training, and that they had not the safeguard of the Religious vows. The scourge of war, the complete demand upon their time caused by the number of wounded, and the absence of the Founder had led to a state of disorder, for which they could hardly be blamed. A dangerous spirit of independence had crept in among them, and threatened to destroy the unity and peace

of the little Community. Strong action had to be taken, and after getting advice from the Bishop, Father Braun expelled from the Congregation all those who had refused to live a life of obedience.

What he saw at Versailles made him fear for the Sisters in Paris. He would have liked to visit the Convent there at once, but was prevented from doing so by the Siege. It was not until March 18th, 1871, that he was able to visit the two houses of Grenelle and of Vaugirard. They had come well through all the horrors of the war and the misery of the Siege.

During the battle of Champigny, Mother Gertrude and others of her Sisters had actually carried on Red Cross work in the midst of the fighting. On the very day of the arrival of Father Braun, Civil War broke out. That he might not be separated from the other Communities he at once returned to Versailles, where he remained until the fall of the Commune, when he could visit all the houses freely and thoroughly. He was thus able to arouse the courage of the religious, and to repair as far as might be the material damage done during those troubled times.

He then returned to England, more than ever convinced by what he had seen that the Sacred Heart of Jesus was indeed the Founder of the Congregation, and he himself only a servant of the Sacred Heart. He saw in the compulsory separation during his stay in Saint-Avoid, a proof that Providence did not wish it thought that the spread of the Congregation was due to merely human prudence and energy. It was this conviction which made him take the last step necessary if the Congregation was to exist of itself

and not in dependence upon him. He therefore approached Archbishop Manning, and obtained from him permission for the Sisters to bind themselves by the Vows of Holy Religion. The permission was gladly given, and it was arranged that the first Profession of Vows should be made on the 29th of January, 1872, the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, the Patron Saint of the Congregation. Father Braun sent for the four Superiors in France, that they also might make their Profession, sending over the money necessary for their fares. The ceremony was carried through in a most solemn manner at Stratford at the end of the canonical retreat. On the same day two English postulants received the Holy Habit, the beginnings of that future religious development which was to make the work of the Servants of the Sacred Heart so notable a feature of Catholic life in England.

The four French Superiors returned to their houses wearing the silver ring—emblem of their spiritual alliance with Our Lord by religious Profession. Father Braun accompanied them, and at once approached Monseigneur Mabile, the Bishop of Versailles, for permission to hold similar professions in his diocese. The Bishop readily gave the permission, and in the course of the year 1872, there took place three ceremonies of Clothing and five of Profession.

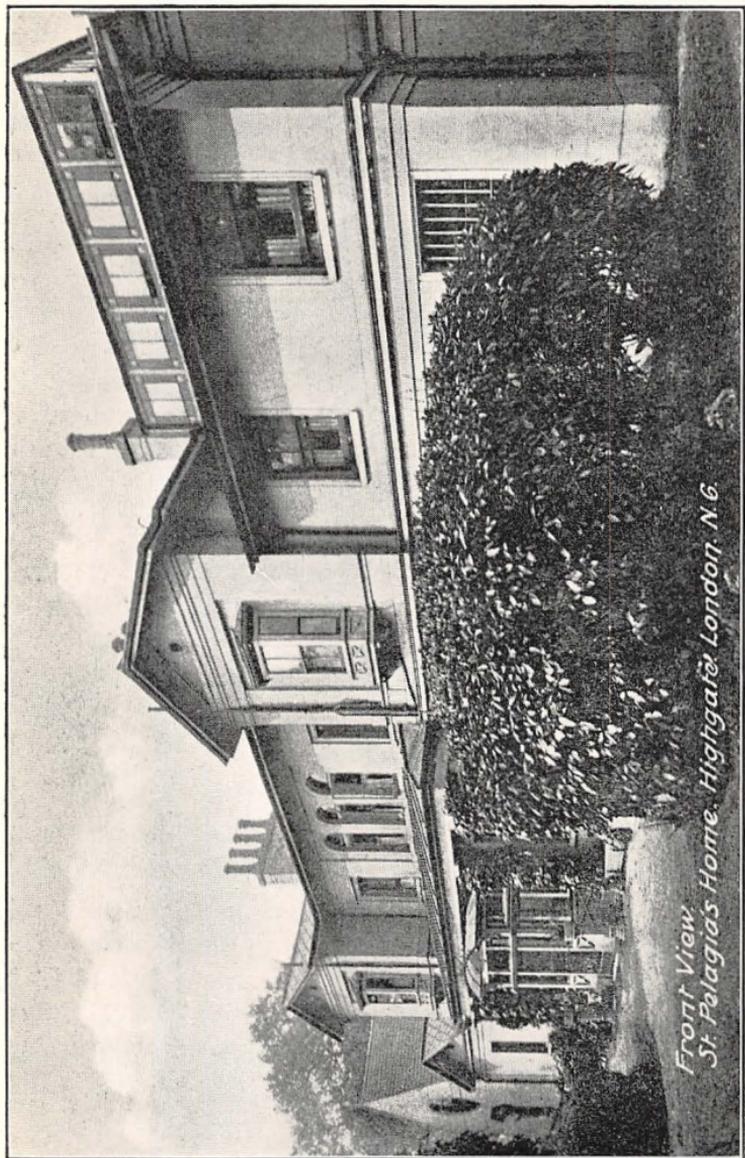
CHAPTER VII

1873—1876

The Congregation divided into three Provinces: France, England and Austria. The New Constitutions receive the Approbation and Blessing of Pius IX. Paray-le-Monial

THE year 1873 was marked by two events completing the work of Father Braun. These were the division of the Congregation into Provinces, and the promulgation of the Constitutions. He had discovered the many inconveniences which result from diversity of nationalities. He saw particularly at Stratford how difficult it was to govern the Community without a knowledge of English; he determined therefore to divide the Congregation into as many provinces as it contained nationalities among the Religious. He named Mother St. Francis de Sales as Provincial of England, and Mother Gertrude as Provincial of France.

At this same time, the Congregation received a call to Vienna in Austria. This foundation was the cause of much anxiety to Father Braun. The invitation came as the result of the war work of the Sisters at St. Cloud. This had so impressed the Chief Surgeon, that when he returned to Vienna he urged the Administrators of the large Rudolf Hospital to introduce them into this Institution. But Austria had replaced religious in the hospitals by



*Front View
St. Pelagia's Home, Highgate, London, N. 6.*

ST. PELAGIA'S HOME, HIGHGATE, LONDON

lay nurses. These were not satisfactory and the Director of the Hospital decided to experiment with a view to restoring the Religious to the work of nursing. He therefore agreed to accept the Servants of the Sacred Heart for a limited period, and for a special work, on condition that they would follow the rules laid down by the Management. After some hesitation, Father Braun agreed to send to Vienna on the 1st of May, 1873, ten Sisters, of whom six would work in the Hospital, while the other four would live in Community in a convent which would be a home for the Hospital Sisters in case of necessity.

The story of this Foundation is intensely interesting, but it enters rather into the later history of the Congregation than into the life of Father Braun. The Foundation was entirely successful, and was the beginning of yet a third Province of which Mother Marie Thérèse de Jésus was named Provincial.

Father Braun's next work was the drawing up of the Rules and Constitutions by which the Congregation was to be governed. He had already been working at these for some time. While residing at Saint-Avold during the war, he had given up what leisure he could find to this work. The extension of the Congregation and its division into Provinces, made it impossible for him to maintain and develop by personal contact the spirit which he desired should animate his Foundation; and the Religious themselves, who for years had lived in accordance with this spirit, were anxious to see his teaching embodied in an approved form.

After much reflection he resolved to give to his

Daughters as the basis of their Religious life the Rule of Saint Augustine. This was the foundation of the rules of most communities with Simple Vows. Father Braun studied many of these, and from them he chose such as were based on Canon Law, and added sections which were to characterise his own Foundation as it then existed. These sections were, of course, liable to be changed in the light of further experience, and were intended to be only temporary.

On the Feast of Our Lady of the Seven Dolours in 1873, Father Braun wrote to the Houses the following letter:

“In a few days you will all receive the Rule of St. Augustine and your Constitutions. You will find therein nothing that you do not already know, which you have not practised every day during many years, in the course of which the substance of them has been explained to you. I thank the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the zeal which has led you to demand them, fearing that through an imperfect understanding of your duties, you might not fulfil them as well as your love for the Sacred Heart and your devotion to the poor inspire you to do. Although there is not a single article of your Constitutions which has not been drawn from Constitutions already approved by the Church, we wish we had more time and good advice to perfect them before submitting them to the Holy See, without the approbation of which even the most beautiful works must become sterile.”

Father Braun seized the opportunity offered by a pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial, organised in England, to place his work formally under the pro-

tection of the Sacred Heart. He took with him three Sisters who were to represent the three Provinces. Whilst in Paris, the four pilgrims visited the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires, where they consecrated themselves to Our Lady, thus repeating the dedication of Father Braun himself, who, when setting out on the pilgrimage of his life, had first consecrated himself to Mary and then to the Sacred Heart. The sentiments of Father Braun on this occasion were expressed in a circular letter which he wrote from Paray-le-Monial to all the Houses:

“This is indeed a holy land, this cradle of devotion to the Sacred Heart. I should have liked to see you all, with your Father and your three Sisters, united in the happiness of praying at this venerable spot. You would have heard the tender complaints of Our Saviour addressed to you, the Servants of the Sacred Heart, as they were spoken to your holy Patroness, Blessed Margaret Mary. You would have resolved most ardently henceforth to respond better to the appeals of divine charity.

“It was with joy and confidence that I placed upon the body of the Saint a golden heart enclosing the names of all the Sisters of the Congregation, praying your holy Patroness to offer to the Heart of Jesus your hearts turned to gold by charity. It was the promises of Our Lord and the complaints of His Divine Heart which, as you must never forget, gave birth to your Congregation of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Without this special purpose, the Congregation would have no reason for its existence. Other Congregations carry out as you do, and perhaps better than you, pious works of

charity towards the poor working classes. Enter generously, my Daughters, into the merciful purposes of the Divine Heart! This is your special mission. The Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must live to make reparation to the Sacred Heart; they must be souls who please that Heart in the midst of those who outrage It; souls who console It in the midst of those who grieve It; souls who implore pardon in the midst of those who call down the anger of God."

The next few months were occupied by visits to the three Provinces, in the course of which he strove to unite the Religious to the Sacred Heart ever more perfectly. So pleased was he with the spirit which he found animating the different Houses, that he decided the time had come for steps to be taken towards obtaining the approbation of the Congregation by the Holy See. It was with this end in view that he begged of Pius IX to bestow his blessing upon the Congregation.

A month later he was able to write to the different Houses: "The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, the infallible Vicar of Jesus Christ, has blessed us many times already. But now he has done so in a way most consoling for you and for me. He has graciously signed a special blessing, in asking for which I had explained in some detail the purpose and work of our Foundation. This Blessing, for which you will help me to thank the good God, will give us all a new zeal in spreading devotion to the Heart of Jesus. It would seem that Our Lord has a kindly regard for our poor efforts, and that He desires to come to the help of our weakness. May

you all be abundantly filled by the Sacred Heart of our Good Master, with the consolations that those enjoy who do good in union with Him. Let us thank the Heart of Jesus for these new favours; let us beseech Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to thank Him for us."

It was at this time that Father Braun began to lay much stress upon the spirit of reparation, as recently set forth in the Encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI. He wished the Sisters to add to the three ordinary Vows—"I also Vow to consecrate myself to the Sacred Heart in the manner indicated in our Constitutions." In what sense this is to be understood we can gather from an extract from one of the Reverend Founder's circular letters to the three Provinces:

"Of course no one must enter upon this way of reparation without a real attraction thereto, and as an act of obedience, even though it be the end of our dear little Society. But when a soul is assured by its Director that the most loving Heart of Jesus honours it by choosing it as His Servant and Victim, let her accept; let her accept with a deep humility, feeling herself to be unworthy of such a choice; let her accept with generosity, regardless of any difficulties and sacrifices, humiliations and sufferings, which this choice clearly involves; let her not be disturbed nor astonished if her nature rebels; let her accept with confidence, for if the Lord Jesus Himself requires so much of her, surely He will also show Himself most liberal to her. The Divine Heart Himself has said to Saint Margaret Mary: 'I will be

your suffering, but I will also be your joy and your consolation.'

“At this moment, when the persecution against our Holy Mother the Church is universal, when the impious are ready to sing of victory over the great number of souls they are snatching from Our Lord—who is there among you who would dare refuse to be a victim, to save these poor souls? Who among you would refuse to make reparation for the offences committed each day against the Heart of Our Lord?” The Constitutions expressly indicated that this spirit of reparation was to be the motive of every action of the Sisters.

CHAPTER VIII

1875—1882

Last years of the Reverend Father Braun. Extension of his Foundations. His last illness and death

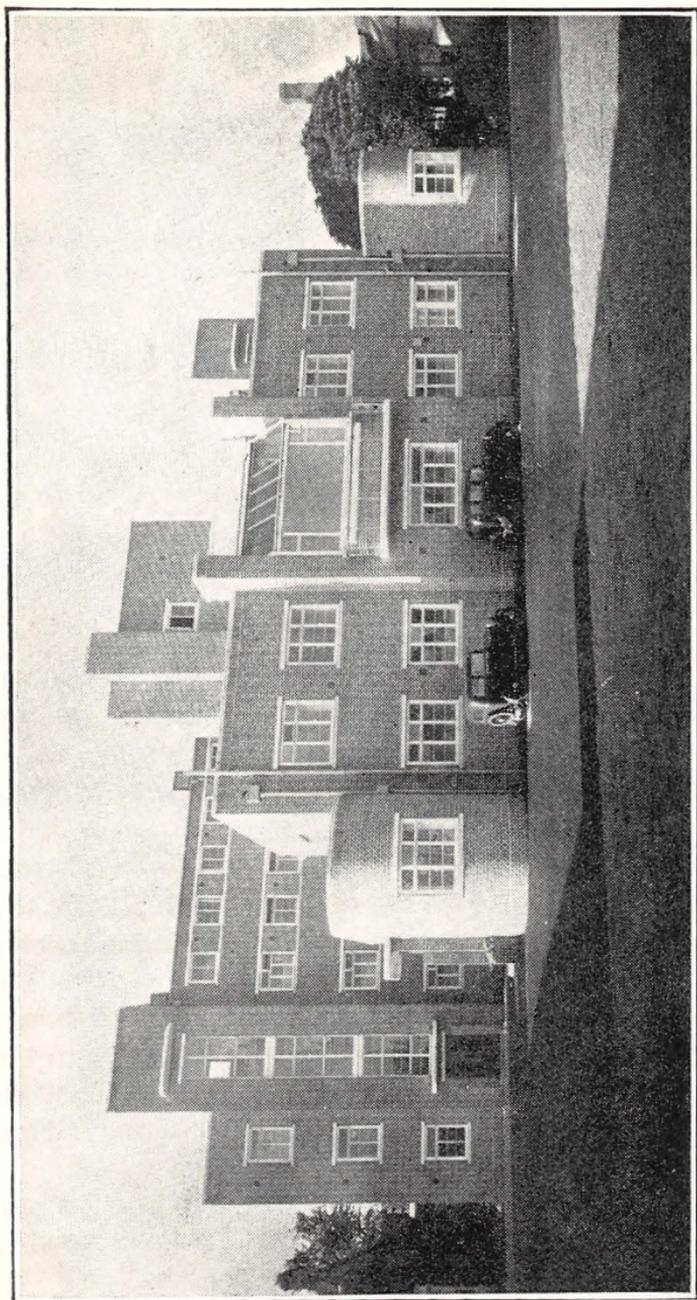
S Father Braun approached the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination to the Priesthood, he realized the necessity of completing the external organization of his religious family. Already he felt that his state of health might soon require his release from active participation in the conduct of the material side of the work. For this it was necessary that a Superior General should be appointed, to whom he could delegate, little by little, the government of the Congregation, while he devoted his attention entirely to its spiritual direction. His choice for this post fell upon Mother Gertrude, who was the Provincial of France. But she became seriously ill just at this time, and consequently it was not until 1875 that he could realize his project. For his own residence he chose the Mother House at Argenteuil.

The rest of his life was occupied partly by visits to the houses of England and Austria, but much of his time was given to writing circular letters in which he revealed the riches of his spiritual knowledge. The wonderful growth of the Congregation was shown clearly on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee, the 14th of June, 1876. During the reunion on the evening before, when Sisters and Orphans offered him their

good wishes, he saw that the purpose of his priestly life was now attained; the work which Grace had led him to undertake was accomplished. Before him were the dear little orphans preserved from the corruption of the world; there, too, were the generous holy souls who, hearing His voice, had left the world and followed Jesus, to be victims for the salvation of their neighbours. With a holy pride he counted up the fruits of his labour and of his pains, whilst he rendered all glory and praise to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

He looked forward to another term of life which should be entirely consecrated to prayer and to the spiritual formation of the novices at the Mother House. In a succeeding chapter we shall see some of his teaching on the spiritual life during this period, by means of extracts from the Conferences which he gave. This period of his life was but short. He suffered much as one by one, those who had been associated with him in his work, were taken away by death. Monseigneur Mabile, from whom he had received his first Ecclesiastical approbation at Versailles, died at Rome while visiting the Holy Father. Canon Codant died soon after. A few months later Father Braun learned of the unexpected death of his sister Jeanne, who had been so intimately associated with all his works. Mother Gertrude, the Superior General, was seized with her last illness after having made a visitation of all the Houses of England, Austria and Germany. Thus as time went on he at length found himself alone.

The death of the Mother General compelled him to act as Superior once again until such time as a



SAINTE WINEFRIDE'S HOSPITAL, CARDIFF

General Election could be held. This took place on March 4th, 1881, when Mother Francis de Sales took up the Office.

The end of his life was now drawing near. Difficulties having arisen in connection with the house in Vienna, he thought it necessary to go there personally. He arrived a sick man. Severe vomiting of blood enfeebled him to such an extent that the Sisters feared his end had come. He recovered, however, sufficiently to be able to return to the Mother House at Argenteuil. His arrival was signalled by a great outburst of joy on the part of the Community; but the next day found him confined to bed. He forced himself to rise to take part in the little feast of welcome which his children had prepared, so that they might not be disappointed. But even as he rejoiced in the happiness of his Daughters, the sad reality was clearly before him. On the 1st of January, 1882, sorrow and anxiety took the place of the New Year's loving wishes which the Sisters and the Orphans desired to offer him. His strength was declining rapidly. For the last time he wrote a circular letter. The Mother General had asked the Holy Father for the Apostolic Blessing, and Pope Leo XIII had answered in most encouraging terms. Father Braun thus wrote to his Daughters in Our Lord:

“I have some good news to tell you—a consolation which you will share with your Father. You remember how in the past the saintly Pius IX deigned to encourage our modest efforts to console the Heart of Jesus, by granting us several times his Apostolic Blessing. This same favour has been

renewed by his successor. Some months back our Chaplain knelt at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and presented to him a long list of the Religious and friends for whom he implored the Apostolic Blessing. Leo XIII, glancing over this list, at the head of which figured our Sisters, suddenly exclaimed: 'Sisters—Servants of the Sacred Heart! Ah! I love this name very much! Yes, yes! To the Servants of the Sacred Heart I give a very special benediction. Tell them most earnestly to propagate everywhere this glorious devotion to the Sacred Heart. This remedy alone will heal the troubles and spiritual maladies of all your friends and of the whole world!'

"I am quite sure that this blessing will be received with great reverence and joy by all our dear Communities, now that it has been confirmed solemnly, thanks to the kind offices of the Papal Nuncio himself.

"You will rejoice indeed, and be deeply grateful when you learn that the hand of the Holy Father has been raised to bless you all. This is an ample reward for all your sacrifices; a pledge of hope for the success of our works. This great favour imposes upon you the obligation of redoubling your fervour in prayer for the Holy Church.

"Your Father in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
"VICTOR BRAUN."

This was the last circular addressed by Father Braun to his Daughters. The good Father never again left the Mother House, and his health steadily grew worse and worse during the three months which preceded his death. The most that he could do was

to take a little walk in the garden that he might sit down near the statue of Our Lady to recite his Breviary and Rosary. His last days were full of peace. As he told his confessor on one occasion, he knew that death was drawing near; his only fear was that he might die without the Sacraments.

His last visit to the Novitiate took place on Wednesday, the 2nd of May. On his return he had to take to his bed. During the following weeks he was able to dictate some letters, and draw up notes for discussion at the next General Council. He settled his business affairs with his Solicitor, particularly concerning the Houses in England. He explained how the Constitutions were to be presented for approbation to the Holy See; and spoke of retreats for Superiors and for Children. His active mind remained clear to the end, in spite of periods of intense physical suffering.

The Sisters who came in contact with him realized the gravity of his illness, and insisted upon his seeing a doctor from Paris. On the 14th of May, his weakness had become so extreme that he could no longer say Mass. When the Chaplain brought him Holy Communion, he asked also for Extreme Unction. Meanwhile, the Religious were making a Novena of prayers and penance for his cure. But it was not to be. Shortly after having received the last Sacraments he became delirious, continually reciting the prayers of the Mass, the *Panis Angelicus*, and the *Tantum Ergo*. The next few days were passed in moments of quiet rest and hours of prostration or delirium. He suffered much, but without complaint or impatience. He became weaker and weaker;

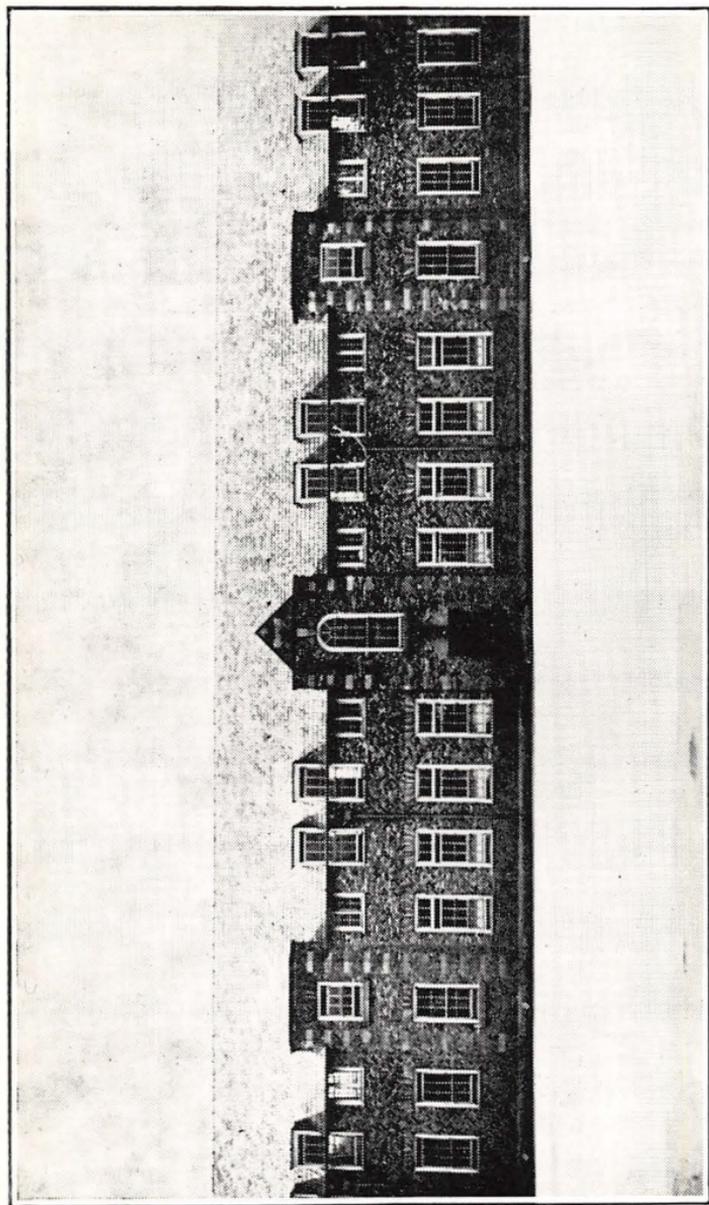
his face was paralysed, and he could scarcely speak.

Even now, his thoughts were for his Daughters. Once he said, "You are nurses. How attentive and far-seeing nurses must be!" And another time, "I am offering my suffering for you." And again, in a little louder voice, "Above all, change nothing of what has been decided. No one should change any one of the decisions of the higher Superiors." The thought of the Sacred Heart was always in his mind. He had a little statue brought, which he kissed frequently, and kept close to the side of his bed. He was conscious almost to the end. On the day before he died he was praying in Latin with closed eyes, and repeating "Ecce dilexi vos."¹ The Chaplain, to test his clearness of mind, asked him "Whose words are these?" He at once answered: "Our Lord's words to His Apostles." Shortly afterwards, with great effort, he said "'Filioli, diligite invicem,"² These are the words of Saint John to his disciples." The Chaplain said, "To whom are you saying them?" He turned his eyes upon the Mothers around his bed, and indicated them by a gesture of his left hand. He then entered upon his agony. The next day the feast of the Ascension, the 18th of May, 1882, at about half-past-one, the soul of this good and faithful servant entered into eternity.

The funeral service took place on Saturday, May 20th, in the Chapel of the Mother House. His body was laid to rest in a tomb near to that of Mother Gertrude and the other deceased Sisters. Here it remained until 1925 when, on September 18th, the

1. Behold, I have loved you!

2. Little children, love one another.



PONTVILLE SCHOOL, ORMSKIRK

remains were exhumed and taken to Versailles, there to be placed in a vault specially made to receive them in the apse of the Mother House. Full of energy, aflame with the love of God and of souls, he had spared himself in nothing. A man intrepid and courageous, above all, a saintly priest and true apostle, with profound and tender love for the sick, the poor, and the orphan; truly a priest after God's own Heart, preferring the direction of the Divine Will to the counsels of human wisdom, proud of the accomplishing of a glorious work for God and Holy Church—such was Victor Braun, humble son of staunch Alsatian Catholics, and Spiritual Father of countless Daughters of the Universal Church—Servants and Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

CHAPTER IX

The spirit of The Reverend Victor Braun. Some extracts from his spiritual writings, and exhortations to his Sisters

IN selecting and translating into English, any passages from the Conferences or writings of Father Braun, one meets at once the obvious difficulty of preserving the natural beauty and simplicity of thought expressed in his native idiom, which cannot be adequately rendered in any other tongue.

The actual words spoken so perfectly reveal the glowing soul of the zealous Founder, that, in the following translations, they have been kept to as closely as possible, at the cost, perhaps, of appearing sometimes naive and even brusque! That is the fault of the language—not of the warm heart which inspired them! The interested reader will only thus be able to gather the full force of Father Braun's strong convictions, his irresistible humour, his gentle playfulness at times, when he had an extra hard lesson to teach! He is unmerciful towards all signs of vanity and affectation, outspoken and very severe towards ambition and pride of power; he will not tolerate singularity, superstition, or foolish scruples. But he extols, above all, humble simplicity, goodness of heart, and mutual charity.

All these points are more or less evident in the few typical passages here quoted from his instructions which have been preserved either in his own

careful notes, or in the records of his conferences drawn up by the Sisters who heard them.

ON SIMPLICITY

“Simplicity is very rare, and few possess it in all its fulness. It gives to the Religious all the lovable-ness of the child, all the graciousness of early years, all the candour of a heart which has loved only the good God, and a pious mother—a heart unsullied by evil! Simplicity speaks and acts without guile. Simplicity knows no deceit, neither in itself nor in others. It loves and serves without calculation, without seeking any reward but the joy of doing all things well!

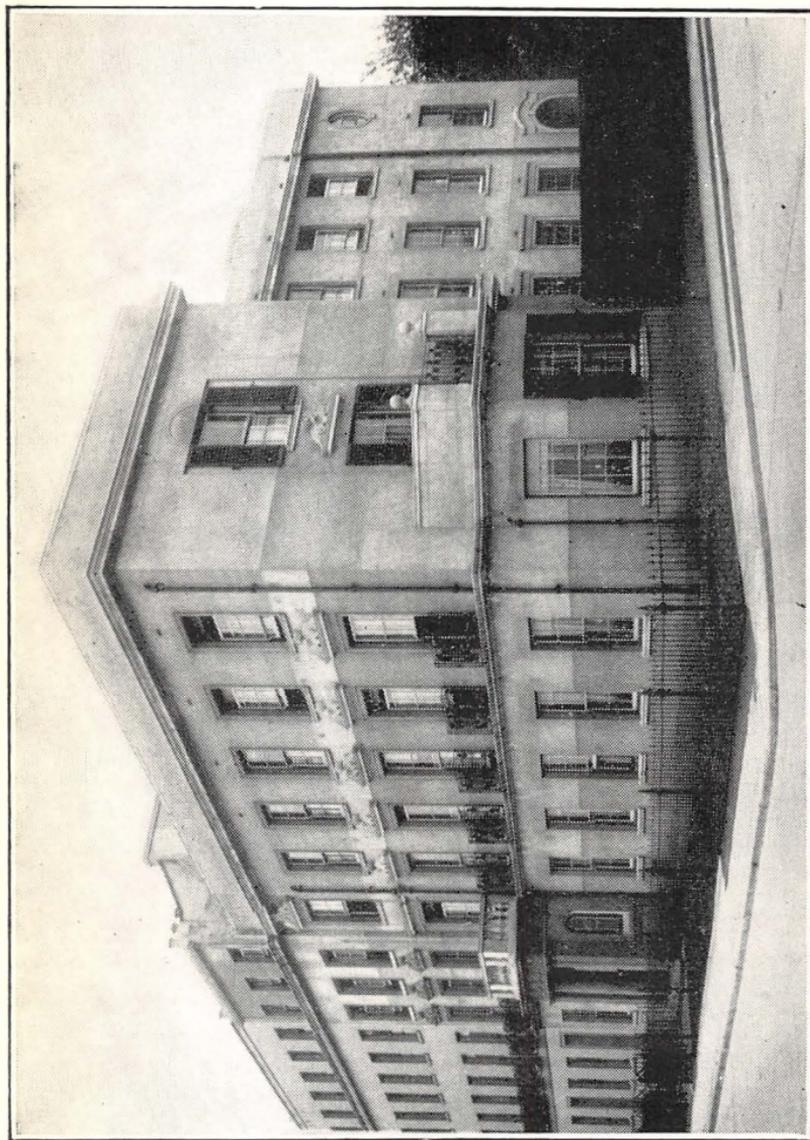
“Simplicity is contagious; it is enough that there is one truly simple soul in a Novitiate, to inspire all the rest instinctively to resemble that soul. The very desire for simplicity supposes a beautiful soul, a good heart. If you already possessed this virtue, I would say at once that you were SAINTS—not little saints, but great saints! Pray to our good Father, St. Francis de Sales, that he may help us all to acquire the spirit of Christian Simplicity.” . . .

MUTUAL ESTEEM AND AFFECTION

A Religious is the Spouse of Christ!—The King of Kings. You can say with reverence and truth, “I am of noble birth!” Act, then, towards one another as befits the daughters of a noble family. Strive to be amiable one towards another; avoid those external faults which offend or cause annoyance to your sister in religion; on the other hand,

learn to endure patiently the faults of character you perceive in others; demand nothing—excuse everything. Saint Francis de Sales calls this modest patience and amiability, “Goodness”—the goodness which gives a special sweetness of countenance to the devout Religious who faithfully practises it. Be always gracious, but not with that affected grace we meet with among worldlings. Yours must be a religious dignity, worthy of the esteem of all who come in contact with you. When a Religious is respected, God Himself is honoured in her; she wins esteem, not for herself, but for her beloved Spouse, Jesus Christ!

As for yourselves, remember that it was Saint Paul himself who exhorted his converts to honour one another, to esteem each other as superior to himself. Between the Sisters there should be cordiality—that exquisite, that delicate charity, which is not only an interior virtue, but is manifested in our conduct, in our outward dealings with our sisters. When these are gracious, gentle and considerate, externs will be edified and drawn towards that religion which inspires such charity and love. If, on the contrary, the Sisters are cold, critical and unloving, how much less will they be able to do for God! You remember, I am sure, what Saint Vincent de Paul said about St. Francis de Sales, “The good God must be exceedingly good, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good!” Only by goodness and charity are souls gained for God. We cannot give what we do not possess ourselves; if you are to sow goodness, it must first be deeply rooted in your own heart.”



ST. GEORGE'S TERRACE, HERNE BAY

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Love one another—love all with whom you have to deal. Oh, if only you knew the joy you give Our Lord when you do not repulse a soul whom He loves!—whom He loves, perhaps, more than you. Never refuse anyone a service; strive to console your Sister in her distress. Be gentle, be thoughtful for others. The loss of her dear ones by death—the separation from friends and country are true sorrows—I speak of them, because I have felt them myself. I know that you, who have never experienced these painful separations, can never realise the terrible loneliness they leave in the poor heart. If you come across a Sister suffering thus, and you glance coldly upon her, you, as it were, thrust a dagger into that already wounded heart. The Apostle Saint Paul tells us to weep with those who weep—Jesus weeps with the poor bereaved sisters of Lazarus! A kindly smile, a word of gentle sympathy—oh, what good they may do! On the other hand, I would not have you weep with those who, full of self-pity, seek for human comfort in the passing little troubles of our everyday life; we must all bear these patiently, and tell them to our Divine Friend, who will lovingly console us, and give us grace to suffer meritoriously, and in union with His own most Sacred Heart. Surely we must expect to suffer silently and patiently, if we are to be like our Crucified Spouse!

PRAYER AND SELF-DENIAL

Always prefer little prayers to great long ones. Lay your needs before the good God quite simply—there is no need of poetry for that; leave aside all those beautiful outpourings which are full of “Oh”

and "Ah!" I used to have one of those books myself in which there were aspirations which were quite ecstatic, the soul raised up above the earth in sentimental flights! Alas, how few and rare the times, when you or I can sincerely indulge in such ecstatic prayer! There is a book which you will not find in any library, in any shop, on any prie dieu! I mean the book of your own heart. Use that book always; no prayer is real without it. When we are privileged with ecstasies, we shall certainly need no books! Love the prayers of the Church's Liturgy, and the Litanies which have been approved by the Church—especially The Litany of the Sacred Heart.

Have nothing to do with anything which savours of superstition or silliness. I once came across a certain prayer, and it was said that if you carried that prayer about you always, you would not die without having seen the good God, and the Blessed Virgin! I have seen that prayer copied into the notebook of a very pious Sister! Such a claim is not only superstitious—it is more than ridiculous! If you were to speak to a well-disposed Christian of that sort of "faith," what do you think he would say? Surely he would tell you that he could not respect a Church or religion which tolerated such beliefs—then see, my Sister, what harm you do to that soul which might have been won to Christ.—We must avoid everything lacking in common-sense and solid piety. Be careful, too, of the danger of scruples. These are a spiritual malady, very harmful to the soul, and most difficult to cure. They are a form of vanity, and self-love, which a truly humble and simple soul knows nothing about. They

trouble a self-centred soul, which refuses to accept the guidance of her Confessor, which broods alone—and which in the end will become a prey to impiety and to madness!

Speaking at a Ceremony of Reception and Profession, Father Braun often quoted his beloved Saint Francis de Sales. “My dear Daughters, if a grain of wheat, falling to the earth, does not die, it will remain alone; but if it dies; it will bring forth fruit a hundredfold. You who have begged to receive the Holy Habit, and you who are being admitted to Profession, have you sincerely resolved to die to yourself, and to live for God alone? The school of Holy Religion is a school of abnegation and mortification, both exterior and interior. The Novice must know that her Mistress acts, not from caprice nor from malice, but with a view to train her in the practice of virtues and self-discipline, unknown to those not called to the Religious Life. The Mistress of Novices has to test you, to render you supple as a glove, so that you may be fitted to the works which will be given to you, not by your own choice, but by a Superior, to whom you are about to vow your obedience. You are entering the school of self-denial—the Master is your Crucified Spouse!

Sometimes we may hear little murmurings—little echoes of the spirit of the world—what are these but the human resistance of the unmortified will to the painful process of moulding it to the will of another! You have to learn that self-will has no place in a happy Religious Community.

ON THE COMMUNITY RECREATION

To-day I have to speak to you on a very important subject—although at first sight we might be inclined to think it was but a trifling matter—I speak of the community recreation. I consider it, perhaps, one of the most important of our Rules. Saint Thomas Aquinas, “The Angel of the School,” of whom we can say that none was ever wiser, once asked this question: “Can there be sin in constantly missing recreation?” Yes, especially in religious communities. And so it is that the Church has never approved any Congregation which did not include in its Constitutions, a chapter on recreation. Hence, in a community, it can be sinful to absent oneself constantly from recreation.

I assure you the devil sets to work each day, to keep you away from recreation; when your conscience is at rest you enjoy the company of your Sisters; when your inner life is not in harmony with them, you avoid them, and seek the company of another as faulty as yourself. I ask you, are you not more gay, more joyous, as a rule, on the day you come out of a good Retreat, or after you have made a good confession and are resolved to live more perfectly—on that day, do you not go willingly to Recreation? I have noticed that the Jesuits, whose Rules are so perfect, never permit absence from recreation. Each evening they come together for night prayers. They have no other exercise in common during the day except recreation. But from this, no one is ever expected to ask to be dispensed. You need never ask to see a Jesuit Father during the Community recreation. The porter will politely ask

you to wait, but you will have to wait until the recreation is over; then the porter will inform the Father of your visit. He has his orders never to disturb the Community Recreation. In the same way, the most severe Orders, however strict, are bound to allow a certain time each day for the Recreation of all—and the merrier it is, the better.

ON FORMATION OF CHARACTER, AND OF GOOD
MANNERS

Defects of character are corrected nowhere better than in community life. I heard the Bishop of Nimes giving a conference to the young collegians in a school I was directing. He asked them jokingly, "Do you know how marbles are made? I will tell you. Little rough stones are put into a big barrel; the barrel goes round and round, the edges are worn off the little stones, they rub the corners off one another, they become polished, pleasant to handle, easy to manage, and perfectly suitable for their purpose! You can guess that your College is the barrel, your fellow-students are the little stones." So is it also in a Religious Community. Angular characters are smoothed—the rough are polished! Do not get angry in the process; to-day, you roll against another—to-morrow you yourself get rubbed the wrong way; it is all to the good; it takes away asperity of character, and makes you all more perfect instruments in the great work to which God has called you. Exterior faults must be got rid of. We cannot change our features, our figure, the colour of our skin! Nor do they matter much. What we can and must change are the irritating and

disagreeable ways, which repulse the souls we should like to attract to God; we must subdue the harsh, loud tone which betrays a proud, unsympathetic mind; we must check the tendency to rush about, the arms swinging, the head turned this way and that—all so contrary to that religious gravity and moderation which should distinguish us from the people in the world, whose reverence we should strive to deserve.

ON THE VIRTUES OF SUPERIORS

Authority belongs to God alone. He alone can delegate it to whom He wills, that on earth there may be those who rule, those who lead the way; the strong to shield the weak—the shepherd to guard the flock! Listen to The Divine Master, teaching His chosen twelve. “Let him who would be the first among you, be the last. The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.” Before entrusting to Saint Peter the Primacy over the Apostles and the whole Church, Jesus asked him but one thing. “Lovest thou Me more than these?” “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” “Feed My sheep.” Only by love can the Superior win the hearts and the confidence of her subjects. Love alone will inspire her Sisters with the devotion which will prove by heroic service and sacrifice the reality of the sacred title she bears.



REV. MOTHER WINEFRIDE

R.I.P.

SUPERIOR GENERAL

1902—1908

CHAPTER X

Development of the work in England. The Chigwell Nuns

THE Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary of Chigwell, Essex, cling with veneration and love to the memory of the saintly Père Braun, to whom they owe their first humble beginnings in Paris, and their later foundation in England. The story of their early years in Stratford has been told in the Life of Père Braun. To it is now added the following brief account of their origin and development as an independent approved Religious Congregation which, though separated from the parent stem, still retains the first spirit which inspired their holy Founder—"One heart and one soul in God."

Until the year 1873, the little Community at Stratford continued its work amongst the poor, until it became evident that a larger house was necessary if the work was to spread, and their numbers increase. Canon Akers, (then Father Akers), asked the Sisters to help him in his work at Homerton, where they would have great scope for their activities. His offer was accepted, and a suitable property, known as Sydney House, was acquired. Here, Mother Francis de Sales, with her devoted little band of Sisters, threw herself into the work of spreading the knowledge of God's love in one of the poorest parts of London. Ere long, the number of Catholics increased, a beautiful church was built

and consecrated, and spacious schools were provided. Among the Sisters who devoted their lives so zealously to visiting and helping the sick and the afflicted, the names of Mother Thomas and Mother William still live in the minds of all who knew and loved them. Aged people still speak of them with the love that only the poor can show, and also of Sister Laurence, Sister Colette and Sister Georgia whose devotion to the school children remains a sacred memory.

Homerton was the cradle of the Novitiate in England, and for many years it trained its members in that spirit of utter self-sacrifice required by their work in whatever fields of labour awaited them. By 1883, the Sisters had added an Orphanage and a beautiful Convent Chapel to the original building, so that Homerton, the head house in England, and the Novitiate for the English Province, became a flourishing centre of Catholic life.

But the help of the Sisters was being eagerly sought in various parts of England, Scotland and Wales, and many subjects presented themselves to help to extend the works. The Ecclesiastical Authorities recognised that the English Province could carry on more effectively and speedily as a separate Congregation directly under their jurisdiction. Steps were taken for the separation of the English and French Houses, and on the 5th of March, 1903, His Eminence Cardinal Gotti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, sent a letter to Westminster, recognising the new independent Institute. On April 20th, 1903, with the approval of His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan, it was



REV. MOTHER SYLVESTER
SUPERIOR GENERAL
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called "The Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary."

The new Congregation established its Mother House at Chigwell, Essex, in a lovely old Manor House on the borders of Epping Forest. Here, in 1896, the Sisters had opened an Ophthalmic Hospital for boys. Soon a fine Novitiate was built, and the work of Chigwell began to make steady progress under Reverend Mother Winefride, the first Superior General. Through the inevitable trials of that difficult time she guided the new Institute, gaining the goodwill and confidence of all who had the happiness of knowing her. In 1908, in failing health, Mother Winefride retired to Hillingdon, where she spent tranquilly the few remaining years of her life. She died, surrounded by devoted friends, on November 20th, 1916.

From 1908 until 1927 Reverend Mother Sylvester guided the destiny of the ever-growing Congregation. Of her great work and indomitable courage much has been written in the little book "Chigwell" (by Rev. Fr. Devas, O.F.M.). In 1927, on the occasion of the Chapter held in September, his Eminence Cardinal Gasquet—then Cardinal Protector to the Sisters—wrote:

"Our first duty is the expression of our unbounded gratitude to the venerable Mother-General, whose devotion and services to the Institute are above all praise and possible recognition. Her reign will remain historic in your annals, not only for the daily solicitude she has so generously exercised, but also for the fact that through difficult vicissitudes she has led her Congregation to a definite, permanent, and

noble status in the Church of God as an independent Pontifical Institute, with its own approved Constitutions, with a clear, useful field of work for God and the Church before it."

For the past twelve years (1927—1939), the Congregation has flourished and spread under the capable hands of Reverend Mother Laurence, one of the few Sisters left, who had the privilege of being received by the Reverend Père Braun himself. Our Divine Lord has graciously spared our beloved "Golden Jubilarians" for many years, that, through their humble, but holy influence, the spirit of our venerated Founder and his first helpers may be deep-rooted, strong and undying, in those who shall carry on the glorious works they dreamed of. These were the pioneers of the early struggles in England and Scotland and Wales, the history of which we will now resume.

In 1882, the Sisters took charge of a School and Orphanage in Rothesay, on the Island of Bute. After many years, when the Dowager Marchioness of Bute died, the Orphanage was closed for lack of funds, and the Sisters had to abandon the good works on the Island they had loved and served so well.

A Hospital and School in Old Cumnock, Ayrshire, were built in 1890 by the late Lord Bute, and the Sisters accepted the charge of these. The Hospital is still flourishing; a private Chapel has been erected, and the old School has been replaced by a much larger one, where specially qualified Sisters keep pace with the most modern Scottish Schools.

In 1897, Lord Bute again turned to the Sisters to take charge of the Cathedral Choir Boys' School at Oban. For many years Mother Timothy and her Community trained and cared for the scholars, until, on the death of the founder, the school had to be closed. But good seed had produced much good fruit. Many of the students became zealous Priests, and some rose high in the Church.

Far out in the Atlantic, the Sisters opened the Bute Hospital at Daliburgh, South Uist. Mother Casimir, with other Sisters, went to minister to the sick and poor crofters of the Outer Isles of Scotland. They provided them with medical treatment which, till then, few had been able to obtain. The Sisters visited and brought comfort to them in their own homes. The kindly folk revered them, and turned to the Sisters with simplest confidence for the care and loving kindness which always awaited them. Mother Casimir learnt their language—lived with them—died with them. In the tiny Cemetery of Daliburgh stands a Memorial—the testimony of the gratitude of every home in the Island, of a people who loved and respected that devoted nun.

From the lonely island, we turn to the evils of a big City which the Sisters set out to combat. At Liberton, outside Edinburgh, they opened a Home for poor and friendless girls in the City. Ere long they were surrounded by happy faces and light and grateful hearts, filled with new hope and higher aims. The girls were trained to take their rightful places in the world, as useful members of society and fervent daughters of the Catholic Church. To support the Home, a Laundry was added, where the

girls worked for part of each day. The names of Mother Benignus and Mother Angelina are still cherished by many of the inmates. Through the generosity of a great benefactress, the good work was completed by the addition of a Private Chapel for the use of the Community and girls.

In 1900, Canon O'Reilly of Glasgow asked the Sisters to establish in his Parish of St. Alphonsus a work similar to that of Edinburgh. And so, in a narrow "Close," up a dark flight of stone stairs, Sister Clare began the struggle for the souls of girls in the dangers of the slums. Very soon, Sisters and girls were accommodated in a fine large house with acres of land at Barrhead, by Glasgow. With the help of Canon O'Reilly and a few generous friends, the work went on apace. A Laundry was opened, and the girls were soon happily engaged in farm and laundry, which brought in financial aid, and trained them to earn an honest living. With the assistance of their devoted friend Monsignor O'Reilly, the Sisters were able to build a beautiful and much-needed Chapel. The work still continues there, a memorial to their beloved Father and friend, who, at his death, expressed a desire to be buried in the grounds near the little Chapel that he loved so much. The girls visit his grave every day to ask him still to watch over them as he did when in their midst.

During recent years, a Holiday House for children was opened at Aberdour, in Fifeshire. The children of the poorest parts of Edinburgh come here each year for a happy holiday by the sea.

Meanwhile, the work in England was spreading

rapidly. The Sisters had taken charge of schools in Poplar, Clapton and other poor localities, and of the larger ones at Homerton and Mile End. These date back to the seventies, when the work of teaching was done under most difficult conditions. Mile End was indeed a happy hunting ground for souls; and with Mile End the memory of Sister Winefride will be always affectionately linked. It was there she revealed those qualities of wisdom, devotion and endurance which marked her out for the heavier task that awaited her as the first Superior General of our Congregation. Soon the school was crowded. Then came generous friends, notably Lady Margaret Howard, and the fine church and schools of the Guardian Angels were built. Later on, at Essex House, more than a hundred children were gathered together and drafted into the school as places became available. A large house in Tredegar Square was taken for a Convent, and there the whole Community of Reverend Mother and Sisters devoted all their spare time to the Guilds and other Religious and social needs of the Parish. It may be mentioned here, that recently the Sisters were asked by the Rector of the neighbouring parish at Bow to come and do similar work there. This has been done, and now, in Tredegar Square, the Sisters combine to work for the souls of the children in the schools and Parishes of the Guardian Angels and Saint Agnes.

In Homerton, the good work in the Orphanage and parish school and on the Mission goes on with its original vigour. The Convent children attend the school, and are encouraged to work for places in Secondary and Continuation Schools. Many have

qualified for training as nurses and teachers, and have obtained very good positions. At Walthamstow, a beautiful school has been provided by the Community and is staffed by the Sisters. In 1933, the Bishop of Brentwood asked for the Sisters to teach in the new school he proposed building at St. Peter's, Dagenham. The Catholic children were at once gathered together in the evenings out of the Council Schools, and the tiny house then temporarily occupied by the Sisters was filled to overflowing. Many happy hours they passed there with simple religious instructions, and the comfort of hot soup when the nights were cold. When the big schools were ready, they could not take all the families that flocked into them. A site was next procured in Goresbrook Road, and a very fine Chapel and Convent erected. Wherever the Schools are, the Sisters take charge of the Sodalities and help the Priest in the Catholic life of the Parish.

In 1903, the charge of St. Mary's School, North Hyde, was undertaken at the request of the Diocesan Authorities. For many years under Rev. Mother Laurence and a generous staff of Sisters and lay-helpers, this great school of hundreds of boys flourished, and became well-known for its fine Band and musical successes, and the many splendid young men it launched into the world. But circumstances, over which the Sisters had no control, caused the number of entries to decrease, so that, at last, the authorities regretfully deemed it unnecessary to keep the school open any longer. The school premises were sold to the Heston Airport, which adjoins the grounds.

At the request of the Archbishops of Liverpool and Southwark, the Sisters took charge of the domestic arrangements at the Diocesan Seminaries of Upholland and Mark Cross.

Another great work of the Congregation has been to open Homes for erring and friendless girls in England. In 1885, at Church Row, Limehouse, the first of these Rescue Homes was opened under the patronage of Saint Pelagia, and with the blessing and encouragement of the great Cardinal Manning. Numbers of poor women, from wandering the streets of London, turned with renewed hopes to the warm-hearted Nuns of Limehouse. This work of salvation went on for many years under trying conditions requiring courage and complete self-sacrifice. Any account of the wonderful conversions and happy deaths which took place there, would fill a large volume. But let it be said that there, as in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, many were the souls snatched from abodes of sin, and prepared by kindly nursing and instruction for the Last Sacraments and a glorious reconciliation before death. After many years the work was transferred to Etloe House, Leyton, which had been once the home of Cardinal Wiseman. To this fine country house, Mother Emerentia, the beloved mother of the poor of Limehouse, brought her staff and girls, and the same work was carried on under brighter, and healthier conditions. Later, the property was purchased by the Community from the Westminster Diocese. Owing to the legal measures concerning the detention and protection of the Mentally Deficient, the work gradually assumed a different character, and was

devoted to the care of mentally deficient girls over sixteen, who, the Authorities desired, should be under the supervision of Nuns. This Home has a splendid laundry, in which the girls who are able, spend some of their time, whilst others are given domestic training, or are taught needlework, or some suitable craft. Great improvements have taken place under the kindly care of Mother Amabilis, whom the girls look up to as their mother and best friend. The character of each girl is carefully studied, and any who are deemed suitable, leave the Home for situations.

An important foundation of another type was the Penitent Home for unmarried mothers at Highgate, in the year 1890. From Bickerton Road it was transferred to a very much larger and healthier house overlooking Hampstead Heath. Here, mother and child enjoy the care of soul and body that alone can bring new hope, and encourage the mother to begin life afresh. After a year or two, she may leave to take up a suitable situation, and the child's welfare is carefully provided for. This Home has proved a haven to many a heart-broken girl whose life and faith were in danger.

A similar house was opened at Aigburth, Liverpool, under the direction of Monsignor Nugent. This House of Providence had the usual hard, struggling start at the Dingle, but, through the generosity of benefactors, it was not long before Mother Ethelbert and her devoted Staff were able to transfer the inmates to large premises at Aigburth. There the work is now in a flourishing condition and a beautiful Chapel has been added. Nothing has

been spared that might ensure the health and happiness of mother and child.

At Rotherhithe, in the very heart of London's Dockland, there is still a Home for girls exposed to danger—reminiscent of the original work at Limehouse. Here, in one of the poorest, most hidden parts of London, the Sisters add to their work in the Home, the Religious instruction of children attending Council schools, and visiting the poor. Many times it seemed as if conditions were too bad to carry on; but after years of uphill work, a new Convent has been built, and modern equipment installed. Few will ever know the secret spiritual work for souls that has been done by the Sisters in the narrow byways of the Surrey Docks.

As time went on, the care of Mentally Defective boys and girls in specially chosen surroundings began to engage the attention of Public Authorities. The Sisters met the demand by opening special schools for boys at Dunmow, Buntingford and Ormskirk; for girls at Allerton Priory (Liverpool), and Pield Heath House, Hillingdon; and for senior girls at Sudbury, Lewisham and Carlisle. Pages about each of these could be written, but suffice it to say that the unfortunate mentally and physically afflicted are lovingly watched over; and each receives that type of training and education which is most likely to benefit him. In some cases, so great is the improvement, the patients are able to face the world, and take their places as happy, useful citizens. But above all, their faith is no longer endangered, and they are not regarded as castaways, but as God's very dear children, and, as such, they

respond lovingly to the care and attention that is bestowed on them, and the atmosphere of sympathy and kindness with which they are surrounded.

Again, fresh ground has been broken in the establishing of up-to-date Open Air Schools. The former Ophthalmic Hospital at Chigwell has been greatly enlarged, and transformed into a modern well-equipped Hospital School for convalescent boys and heart cases. Open air class-rooms, rest shelters and balconies, and all that modern science and human kindness could suggest, have been provided for the little patients, while the spiritual needs of the children are well looked after.

The same may be written about St. Dominic's, at Hambledon, high up in the loveliest, healthiest part of the Surrey hills. There, a truly magnificent residence was presented to the Community by the late Mrs. Watney Weguelin. Suitable school and residential buildings have been added, and gardens and grounds laid out for the use of the boys. Visitors are at once impressed by the unusual beauty and dignity of this stately school—surely children should soon get well amidst such perfect surroundings. Nothing is too much for the Sisters to do for their young charges, and happiness reigns supreme.

At St. Patrick's, Hayling Island, delicate little girls and very young boys enjoy the double advantage of a specially equipped Hospital School, and a wide seashore adjoining it, where they can swim and paddle to their hearts' content. For a very few hours each day they are taught, either in their airy dormitories or in open air class-rooms, by Certificated trained Sisters, and every effort is quietly

made to keep them up to a reasonable standard of education, so that neither mind nor body shall be found wanting when they are fit to return to their own homes.

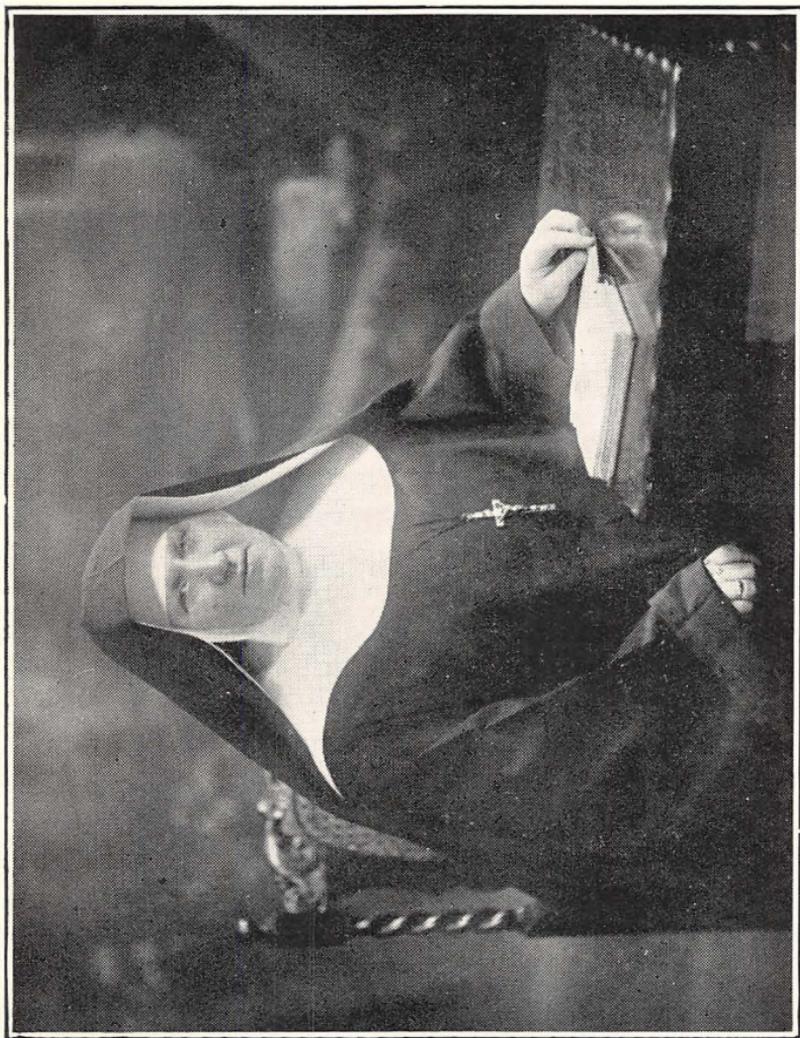
Recently, another residential school of this type has been opened at Rainhill, Lancashire, for girls suffering from heart trouble. At present, the school is in its initial stage, but, judging from its rapid progress in a few months, it will ere long give a good account of itself. It may be here mentioned, that all these schools—Elementary, Mentally Defective, and Open Air Schools—are under the Board of Education.

While in England and in Scotland the good works were spreading in all directions, there was much being done in the same way in South Wales. The Sisters worked for many years in the Colliery districts of Merthyr, Aberdare and Mountain Ash, teaching, nursing, and visiting the sick and poor in their own homes. At Cardiff, in 1912, they took charge of the Hospital founded by the late Lady Bute in memory of her son, Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart, who lost his life in the Great War. Many hundreds of patients have passed through the hands of Mother Arsène and her devoted staff of trained Nursing Sisters, and the "Lord Ninian Hospital" became well known throughout all Wales. So great was the demand for beds in the hospital, that it was decided to erect another larger Hospital under the patronage of Saint Winefride. This was done, and opened with great ceremony in 1938. Already "Saint Winefride's" is fulfilling its mission, and many patients are applying there for treatment. A

fully-trained staff of Sisters and lay Nurses; a modern Operating Theatre; an X-ray Room; the attendance and advice of leading Surgeons and Medical Specialists—all is provided in the way of equipment and treatment which modern science can do for the sick and afflicted. Catholic patients can receive Holy Communion daily, as a Convent Chapel is on the premises, where convalescents may attend Mass and Benediction.

North Wales is the latest field for extension. A Holiday Home for the Northern Houses has been acquired at Old Colwyn. This will be for the Sisters in the North what Herne Bay has been for those in the South of England—a house of rest where the Sisters engaged in work all the year, may relax for a short time, and build themselves up bodily and spiritually for the work of the coming year.

Ireland, too, has called the Sisters to come and work for souls in danger and distress. In Cork, in Roscrea and in Castlepollard, Homes and Hospitals for unmarried mothers have been opened. Large sums of money have been granted from the Irish Sweepstakes' Hospital Fund to Cork and Roscrea. At the former, a fine Chapel and a large modern Hospital have been added to the original premises, whilst at Roscrea, too, a beautifully designed Chapel has been built, and also a Nursery—one of the finest in Ireland. It is so situated that it captures for its little people every bit of health-giving sunshine and air; and its tiny baths and dainty equipment are a joy to behold. Castlepollard has been promised similar funds in the near future, and will have the latest improvements before long. Meantime, the



REVEREND MOTHER LAURENCE,
SUPERIOR GENERAL

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skill and untiring watchfulness of the nuns seem to fully compensate for what may yet be lacking in accommodation.

The account of the Sisters' work for others is thus so far completed. There remains to be told what the Church has done for them. Soon after their erection into an Approved Institute, they received from His Eminence Cardinal Bourne a personal letter of Approbation, approving the Constitutions, and blessing the Sisters and their works. That was in 1906. Thirty years later, when they had been well tried, and not found wanting, His Holiness Pope Pius XI, to the intense joy of all the Sisters, graciously deigned to approve definitely and to confirm the Constitutions with certain changes and additions. And in the next year, the Reverend Mother General, with her Assistant and Secretary, visited Rome and had an audience with the Holy Father. They were also received by our Cardinal Protector, His Eminence Cardinal Canali, and had the privilege of assisting at Holy Mass in his Private Chapel. He expressed his sincere and personal interest in all the works of our Sisters and sent them his blessing. From the many Sacred Shrines they visited, the Mothers brought home to each Sister some little pious mementoes. On their way back through Paris, Mother General visited the tomb of our Reverend Father, Père Braun, in the Chapel of the French Mother House at Versailles. There, in the name of the whole Congregation, she prayed with deep devotion that he would obtain every grace for his spiritual children.

While enjoying so many blessings showered upon

the Congregation, the Sisters have always kept in view that the aim of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary should be that of Reparation to and love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Like that of Saint Francis of Sales, its spirit is all simplicity, charity, and submission to the Will of God, with unbounded confidence in His Divine Providence.

In conclusion, may we not hope and trust that our Holy Father Founder will ever watch over the Congregation he loved so well. May his blessing and prayers draw many generous souls to work in God's vineyard in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. And may that favourite prayer of his be ever on our lips and in our hearts—
 "May the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary be everywhere loved!"

PRAYER

for the Beatification of the Rev. Father Victor Braun

O Lord Jesus who inspired Father Victor Braun to found a religious Congregation intended to propagate devotion to your Sacred Heart, be mindful of the admirable and fruitful works set on foot by this holy Priest under the impulse of your grace.

Deign, O Good Jesus to honour this pious and ardent apostle of devotion to your Divine Heart, and to hasten the happy day when Holy Church, recognising his merits and his sanctity, will vouchsafe to glorify him by raising him to her altars.

We beg this of you by the intercession of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, of your intimate servant Saint Margaret Mary and of all those Saints whom the venerable founder chose as Patrons of his religious family.

COR JESU SACRATISSIMUM
 MISERERE NOBIS

Imprimatur:

✠ *Arthurus*

Epus Brentwoodensis,

Sie 12th Novembris, 1928.

APPENDIX

The Houses and chief Works of the Congregation of
the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Chigwell

<i>Convent</i>	<i>Diocese</i>
The Mother House and Novitiate, Chigwell, Essex.	Brentwood.
<hr/>	
<i>Public Elementary Schools:</i>	
Our Lady and St. Dominic's, Homerton.	Westminster.
Guardian Angels', Mile End.	,,
St. Agnes', Bow.	,,
St. Patrick's, Walthamstow.	Brentwood.
St. Peter's, Dagenham.	,,
St. Joseph's, Sudbury (Suffolk)	Northampton.
St. John's, Cumnock.	Galloway.
<hr/>	
<i>Open Air Residential Schools, (B. of E.):</i>	
St. John Baptist's, Chigwell.	Brentwood.
St. Joseph's, Rainhill.	Liverpool.
St. Dominic's, Mount Olivet, Surrey.	Southwark.
St. Patrick's, Hayling Island.	Portsmouth.
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<i>Mentally Defective Schools, (B. of E.):</i>	
St. Joseph's, Bigod's Hall, Dunmow (boys).	Brentwood.
Field Heath House, Hillingdon (girls).	Westminster.
Hillside, Buntingford (boys).	,,

<i>Convent</i>	<i>Diocese</i>
Pontville, Ormskirk (boys).	Liverpool.
Allerton Priory (girls).	„
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<i>Holiday Homes:</i>	
St. Peter's, Herne Bay.	Southwark.
St. Teresa's, Aberdour.	Edinburgh.
St. Augustine's, Old Colwyn.	Menevia.
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<i>Colleges:</i>	
Upholland.	Liverpool.
Mark Cross.	Southwark.
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<i>Rescue Work:</i>	
West Hill, Highgate.	Westminster.
Kelton, Liverpool.	Liverpool.
Rotherhithe.	Southwark.
St. Mary's, Barrhead.	Glasgow.
Bessboro', Cork.	Cork.
Sean Ross, Roscrea.	Killaloe.
Manor House, Castlepollard.	Meath.
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<i>Hospitals:</i>	
Daliburgh, South Uist.	Argyll & the Isles.
Cumnock.	Galloway.
The Lord Ninian, Cardiff.	Cardiff.
Saint Winefride's.	„
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<i>Homes for Mentally Defective Women, (Board of Control)</i>	
Etloe House, Leyton.	Brentwood.
Durran Hill, Carlisle.	Lancaster.
St. Teresa's, Lewisham.	Southwark.
St. Joseph's, Sudbury, Suffolk.	Northampton.

FOUNDATIONS SINCE THE PRINTING
OF THIS BOOK

Elementary Schools:

St. Anselm's, Southall, Middlesex
Our Lady's Assumption, Bethnal Green
St. Anthony's Annexe, Chingford, Essex
St. Anthony's Annexe, Hainault, Essex.

Home Office School for Girls:

St. Laurence School, Frant, Sussex

Mentally Defective Schools:

St. Joseph's, Wyphurst, Cranleigh
St. Anne's Annexe, Hillingdon

Houses for M.D. over School Age:

St. Teresa's, Dockenfield, Surrey
Lemington Hall, Alnwick, Northumberland

Maternity Homes:

St. Joseph's, Highgate
Sacred Heart, Kendal, Westmorland
Mount Carmel, Houghley Lane, Leeds

Convents:

St. Andrew's, Trap's Hill, Loughton, Essex
Sacred Heart Convent, Harlow, Essex
Sacred Heart Convent, Pembroke Dock,
Pembrokeshire, Wales.

Foreign Missions:

St. Anthony's, Atwater, California, U.S.A.
Sacred Heart Convent, Turlock, California,
U.S.A.

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