A history of the community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage: foundation and early development 1848-1858

Norton, Sister A. F.

A HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY OF St. MARY THE VIRGIN, WANTAGE:

FOUNDATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT [1848-1858]

SISTER A.F. NORTON

ABSTRACT

The Community of St. Mary the Virgin was founded in 1848 by William Butler Vicar of Wantage, and Miss Elizabeth Lockhart. Sisterhood life began and was established on a regular pattern of work and worship, Archdeacon Manning having the spiritual oversight. Butler wanted an educational Sisterhood, and Sisters taught in a small school which he established before beginning to build up National Schools.

Soon Manning and Miss Lockhart decided to undertake penitentiary work instead, responding to an appeal that the Anglican Church should provide care for necessitous prostitutes. Butler concurred, the first small St. Mary's Home for Penitents being opened in Wantage in 1850, to which women applied voluntarily for admission.

Then Miss Lockhart seceded to the Roman Church. Manning also relinquishing his connexion, Butler guided the Sisterhood with Bishop Wilberforce's advice, until Sister Harriet was elected Superior in 1853. Only seven Sisters joined the Community permanently during its first decade, assistance being given by temporary Sisters and Exterior Sisters. Applications multiplying, a larger Home was built, largely financed by donations. In 1853 the Oxford Penitentiary began to act as a refuge, receiving applicants for a short preliminary stay, and then sending ten of them to Wantage annually for periods of training up to two years, during which they did laundry work and received instruction and care.

In 1855 another educational Sisterhood was inaugurated. This proved unsatisfactory and collapsed within a year. Their work, which included a Middle School, was undertaken by St. Mary's Sisters and others.

In 1853 a Mrs. Trevelyan came to Wantage. She built a house to accommodate her own Industrial School and the local girl pupil-teachers and mistresses, requesting the Sisters to take charge.

Though small, the Community became firmly established, its first Constitutions and Rules receiving episcopal approval in 1855 and 1857.

THE COMMUNITY SEAL 1849

This preliminary study

is humbly offered

to

C.S.M.V.

with love

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EXPLANATORY PREFACE

For the period of years covered in the following work the Community of St. Mary the Virgin possesses no formal records at all. Isolated documents such as a few sermons, some forms of service, two autograph letters and some manuscript notes made by a former pupil of St. Michael's Schools, constitute the sum total of contemporary material in the Community's archives. For some reason not even a set of annual reports of the work of St. Mary's Home remains, and those reports which are quoted in the work have been discovered elsewhere.

The Wantage Community was not alone among Anglican Sisterhoods in not beginning to keep definite records from its foundation, and it has to be remembered that the revival of the religious life in the English Church was in the highest degree experimental. It was only when foundations seemed to be fairly laid and the experiment succeeding that attention was turned to such lesser matters as the keeping of records.

It may be wondered why so much attention has been paid, for example, to Miss Hayes and the works under her charge. The reason for this is that the life and work of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin was woven from many separate strands, and it has been the object of this work to try to discover as many of the strands as possible and to follow them as they were gradually woven together. Both Miss Hayes and Mrs. Trevelyan left behind them works which eventually came into the hands of the Community, and thus far they can be said to have influenced the direction of its life, albeit under the watchful eye of the Vicar.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the violent reactions against monasticism which accompanied the Continental Reform in the sixteenth century, the desire for the consecrated life was never wholly extinguished. In England echoes of the upheaval of monasteries in Europe reverberated in the suppression of religious houses by Henry VIII in 1536. But this move was not approved quite universally in England, and a number of small experiments to revive the religious life were made during the three hundred years which elapsed between the Reformation and the rise of the Oxford Movement in the nineteenth century. The family community established by Nicholas Ferrar at Little Gidding is the best known of these efforts, but none of them survived for very long or achieved many members.

In the minds of most Englishmen, however, the very idea of convents and monasteries smacked of popery and superstitious practices. Many of the more thoughtful people who were influenced by the ideas of the Reformation actually believed manasticism to be wrong, certainly if it implied the taking of vows, because these were considered to be against the teaching of the Gospel. Such ideas prevailed into the nineteenth century. Abhorrence of monasticism was probably exacerbated for English people by the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to those outside it, particularly because of the activities of its missionary orders in sending emissaries secretly to England. The function of these missionaries was not merely to minister to continuing Catholics but also to try and convert the erring and misguided English and bring them back into the "one true fold". These orders were officially banned in England for a long time, and their illegal activities exasperated many English people and fanned a flame of resentment against papal interference which had in fact been burning since long before the actual Reformation itself.

Many factors contributed to English fear and hatred of Romanism, but these will suffice to explain the agitation, and suspicion of 'popery within the ranks' of the Church of England which were aroused by the whole tenor of the Oxford Movement.

The Oxford men were concerned to claim for the Church of England its "catholic" character, and one argument used against this by Roman polemicists was that a "true" church had the capacity to evolve the living of the religious life from within itself. The Tractarians

were fully aware that their claim to "catholicity" was partly compromised in Roman eyes by the lack of religious orders in the Church of England, and indeed they called for some to come forward to live the consecrated life, not primarily of course for polemical purposes but because they recognised the need for a deeper holiness in Anglicanism.

Some time before the actual moment of resurgence of the religious life in England, the social need for societies - particularly of women - which would devote themselves to the alleviation of suffering and the inculcation of moral standards of living, was felt by a number of responsible churchmen and philanthropists. The Poet Laureate Robert Southey gave voice to this feeling in 1829. There was much concern about the appalling conditions of living and consequently of morals, which were being brought about by the so-called Industrial Revolution.

So there were in fact two main influences at work when the religious life was revived. The first was the sense of a call to greater holiness, which it was felt by a number of people could only be fulfilled in a life of complete dedication to prayer and service. The second was the awareness of the crying social needs of the myriad poor, sick and degraded.

The first communities had much to content with: their sheerly experimental nature; the difficulties they encountered through inexperience; the smallness of their membership; the necessity they were under to borrow from Roman Catholic sources; these and many other things were not seen by all as the birth pangs of a new life. Indeed some left to join the Church of Rome because they felt that these things demonstrated the inadequacy of the Church of England to fulfil all the spiritual requirements of her members. Those who fled to Rome did so because they felt that their very salvation was at stake.

But men like John Keble, Edward Bouverie Pusey and William John Butler were convinced that the grace of God operated through the English Church, and spent their lives in working for the spread of holiness among her members. To William John Butler must be owed a great deal of credit for nursing into being a type of religious life distinctly Anglican in ἦθος. It is a religious life compounded of "catholic" beauty of worship; of "evangelical" individual personal relationship

WILLIAM JOHN BUTLER
1846

ı Christ; of English liberty to develop individual methods of
ver; and of many other elements welded together in a corporate
ramental richness in the Eucharist that is offered by the whole
Christ's Church.

ler's community suffered secessions to Rome and opprobrium for
supposed "popishness" from people ignorant of its aims and
attitude to religious devotion. But Butler's own holiness of
e and uncompromising Anglicanism; the ideals he set before the
ters; the undoubted sanctity to which it became clear that it
possible to attain through the following of Jesus Christ in
life of the Community; the scores of souls brought to Christ
ough the prayer and work of the Community; all these surely tell
ir own story of the reality and validity of the religious life
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CHAPTER I 1848 - 1850

FOUNDATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

When William John Butler undertook the cure of souls at Wantage late in 1846, the principle of commitment to the Service of Almighty God in religious communities was one already of interest to and accepted by him.[1] He knew of the experiment which had already been begun at Park Village West in 1845 by a committee of laymen, and which was under the spiritual direction of Dr. Pusey. It is said that on a visit to friends in Devonshire in 1845 William Butler had much conversation upon the subject of religious vocation with the daughter of the house, one who was later to join the Sisterhood at Wantage.[2] Exactly when he himself conceived the idea of forming a Sisterhood is not clear, and he probably perceived how useful such a society might be during his earlier ministries.[3] But however that may be, the fact that such an idea was in his mind was known to his friends well by 1847. Among these friends William Butler came to number John Keble, Charles Marriott, Henry Manning, Edward Pusey and others connected with the Oxford Movement, to some of whom he was introduced during his curacy to the Reverend Charles Dyson at Dogmersfield in Hampshire.

INTENTIONS

The Vicar as we may now call him, hoped to be able to form a Sisterhood whose primary active aim and object was to be educational. From the first he envisaged the Sisters as helping him in the parish with "female" education, but he also wished them to help him by "visiting among the sick poor". He hoped, in due course, that a way would be found to "train Sisters to go out two and two as school-teachers into the villages, and so provide for the education, religious and secular, of the poor in rural districts".[4] A letter dated June of the following year confirms the fixity of these intentions: "Mr. Butler has these objects in view, 1. the teaching the children and visiting the sick here; 2. to send out Schoolmistresses to the neighbouring villages".[5]

The Vicar was also in line with the more advanced thought of his time which was waking up to the importance of providing female education. Also his plan to aid the villages had arisen out of his realization of the difficulty that existed in providing isolated rural areas with teachers at all, let alone teachers who had

themselves achieved any standard of education before they entered upon their task of teaching others. In 1851 he wrote, with reference to Wantage, but surely with the community at large in mind and a sense of the Church's responsibility towards it, "... I am sure that we must look to our schools very much for the future welfare of the Parish."[6]

At the period when William Butler entered upon his work at Wantage, the whole question of education was very much in the melting pot. The Church was having to fight to retain what she believed, still, to be her right to educate the people. Butler foresaw that with the increasing secularization of society the Church schools would have to be prepared to expand their curricula and maintain their rights, as they saw them, by proving their competence in competition with the state. Butler was far from completely disapproving of state provision and interference, and indeed he welcomed the help which was offered, always providing that the Church of England maintained the right to teach her religious opinions. But he was also sufficiently realistic in outlook and knowledgeable enough to realize that the Church would soon lack the necessary financial and other resources to cope with the increasing volume of education being required throughout the country. The state was having to participate from sheer necessity. "From the first [Butler] readily accepted the good part of the system, [i.e. state aid and control such as it was] and did what lay in him to eliminate the bad. While you make the faith of the Church the groundwork of all your teaching, not only of what is called the religious element - while you do this, he would say, do not reject any help offered tending to make any part of your teaching more perfect."[7]

William Butler foresaw that the Church's claim would be contested increasingly as other denominations expressed their points-of-view, growing in confidence as they now were, since the repeal of the disabling acts against them. Also the question had already arisen whether ordinary education should include denominational teaching, and attempts had been made in 1837 and 1839 to separate religious and secular education. Butler did, however, realize that he would both help to provide for the education of many people and also retain a right to continue Church teaching in the curriculum, if those he trained achieved a standard which clearly revealed the Church's serious understanding of the expanding educational needs of the day. His life work took place during a period "at the beginning of which the Department [of Education] came to us, asking us to receive, almost

as a matter of favour to themselves, their money grants and inspection, into a period when that inspection [became] compulsory and their money grants indispensable."[8]

In 1849 William Butler himself became an Inspector of Schools not for the Government but for the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education.

BEGINNING OF THE SISTERHOOD

Sometime in 1847 Henry Edward Manning, Rector of Lavington and Archdeacon of Chichester, in Sussex,[9] told Butler about a Miss Elizabeth Crawford Lockhart whose family was known to him, and who was desirous of finding a way of dedicating her life to the service of God. Three years before this, Miss Lockhart had been introduced to Dr. Pusey as a possible aspirant for the community he hoped to found, but personal circumstances had prevented her from participating in the experiment. Miss Lockhart's half-brother and stepmother had recently become Roman Catholics, and at this period such secessions occasioned a considerable measure of separation, and gave great pain and grief to those from whom they parted. It seems clear that at this period of her life, Archdeacon Manning was instrumental in restraining Miss Lockhart from seceding, herself, and he saw in Butler's plan a way in which Miss Lockhart might both serve and be personally fulfilled.

In view of later developments it is worth noting here that in an address[10] given many years later the Vicar referred to himself as having been "consulted" about the possibility of forming a sisterhood 'young as he was' and 'unworthy as he was'. This confirms the impression that the occasion on which the impetus was given for the founding of the sisterhood, was the introduction to him of Miss Lockhart. There is no evidence that the Vicar had actually put anything in hand in this matter before this time. But as we have seen, his intentions were clear and his determination fixed. There was also a Miss Elizabeth Hayes already working in the schools of the parish of whom he had hopes regarding a sisterhood. In the same address the Vicar said: "There was then but one other sisterhood in existence in the Church of England, and I differed from others, much more worthy than myself, who feared the effect of such an experiment in the unprepared state of the minds of the people in general for such a step ..."

It appears from all accounts, that Miss Lockhart was a very gifted,

devout and cultivated person, with an endearing personality and great potential for leadership. She, too, was friendly with the Kebles and the Dysons. The Vicar, having heard about her, invited her to Wantage, and she spent the Lent season of 1848 at the vicarage.† Plans for a sisterhood were discussed during this visit and the Vicar was much impressed by the qualities he discerned in Miss Lockhart. There seemed no reason to delay the commencement of the work and suitable premises were sought in Wantage. At first no sizable house was available, but they were not to be deterred, and two small adjoining labouring cottages were taken in Wallingford Street. Evidently "one of the cottages had been inhabited before by a working shoemaker"[11] and both abutted directly on to the street. It seems highly probable that the shoemaker in question was one John Lovsey, who remained a staunch friend until his death.[12]

The establishment of the little sisterhood probably took place in April 1848. Miss Lockhart's name appears in the Parish Journal among a list of communicants for the first Sunday after Easter May 2nd, 1848. Although Miss Lockhart must, obviously, have communicated during her Lenten visit, this particular entry lists a group of girls who had come under her care, and the indications are, therefore, that she had begun her 'sisterhood work' as it were. Two names from the list of girls are of interest, those of Eliza Bedford and Ann Herring. Almost certainly these girls came from two families whose association with the sisterhood was to endure on and off into the twentieth century.

The following Sunday, May 9th, 1848, the name "Miss Reid" appears in the Parish Journal. Mary Reid was a friend of Miss Lockhart's and became her companion in founding the little sisterhood. Miss Reid had been, for some years, mistress of a small school founded by the Lockharts at Chichester, and she was evidently on close terms with the family. She was physically in poor health and was unable to go out much, but she assumed the management of the domestic arrangements of the household, and won people's hearts by her kindness and cheerfulness.[13]

There is some evidence that a third likeminded person joined Miss Lockhart and Miss Reid, and that it was she who contributed the 'Reminiscences' which provide details of these very early days. But at the time of writing there is insufficient evidence to identify her with certainty.

† She was then 37 years old.

There were two more members of this first household of the sisterhood, both considerably younger than the others, named Emily Prentiss and Elizabeth Roberts.[14] The plan was that these two "were to make themselves useful in the house, and to be trained to take part in the work with the possibility of some day becoming Sisters."[15] One entry in the Parish Journal mentions Elizabeth Roberts. On Tuesday, December 5th, 1848, the Vicar wrote: "Elizabeth Roberts called to ask me to recommend Prayers. I advised Bishop Andrewes with slight alterations for her. She is a remarkable person, for her natural saintliness of character, and strange and rapid [next word illegible but 'comprehension' is possible] of doctrines of perfection."

At this period any visitor who was willing to take part in the work was not merely permitted to do so, but was warmly welcomed. Also those involved in the experiment canvassed for help and new members among sympathetic friends. Little distinction was drawn between the "regular" members of the little community and helpful visitors, all being called "sister". There was no formal admission of sisters at this stage.

The household arrangements "were of the simplest and most inexpensive kind"[16] and we learn of a little upstairs oratory "blue-washed ... with sloping roof and roughly boarded floor,"[17] the only furniture consisting of two long desks+ with sloping sides made of bare deal" where the little household assembled at regular intervals to say the Offices. The oratory was so small that there was only room for three, or four people at the outside to stand on either side of these two desks, which would have been placed parallel to each other lengthwise so that their occupants faced one another as across a choir. The offices were recited standing.

DAILY LIFE

From the beginning the Sisterhood adopted a monastic pattern of life, worship and work alternating at regular intervals throughout the day. A Rule of some kind was drawn up which was read in small portions day by day throughout the week at Prime. No record of this Rule remains, so far as is known, but there is some reason to think that it was based on the Beatitudes.

+ Another source refers to one long desk with two sloping sides. e.g.  in cross section.

The Vicar paid frequent visits to the house and would sometimes join the Sisters for Offices, and on occasion he would give them an address. Sometimes he took a visitor of his own to the house. There are a few illustrative entries in the Parish Journal:
[July 3rd 1848] "Monday. Prime with Sisterhood ..."

[July 5th 1848] "Wednesday. Lauds with Sisterhood ¼ to 6" : and for both Thursday and Friday in the same week "Lauds with Sisterhood." On July 22nd: "Kept Lauds and Tierce with the Sisterhood and addrest them ..."

April 18th 1849, "Took Mr. Keble* to Prime with Sisterhood."

The Sisterhood used the English edition of "The Day Hours of the Church" which had been prepared by Albany Christie and was published in 1844. At first they said a five-fold Office consisting of Lauds, Prime, Sext, Nones and Compline. Tierce and Vespers seem sometimes to have been replaced by Matins and Evensong in Church. It is possible that on some days both Matins and Evensong and all the Canonical Hours were said. One who visited the house frequently in the early days, or who may even have lived there, was of the opinion in later years that Lauds was not always said,[18] but the little evidence we have indicates its having been included often.

The work of the Sisterhood at this date consisted in teaching and some visiting among the sick. There were no National Schools as yet, although the Vicar was soon to see that they were provided. Very few children received any schooling. But the Vicar had taken two cottages in Mill Street, thrown them into one, and "here Miss Lockhart and her staff taught" daily a small girls' school of twenty-four pupils. Mrs. Butler assisted in the teaching and took the first class, Miss Lockhart took the second, the "Mistress" taught needlework, and Emily Prentiss and Elizabeth Roberts took the little ones. The daily school timetable was: School 9-10 a.m., Matins in Church, School again till 12, then again in the afternoon from 2-4 p.m. Comparatively little parish visiting would have been possible. But that the Sisters did visit is clear from such an entry by the Vicar in his Parish Journal as : "Tuesday [Aug.21, 1848] ... Mrs. Lovegrove called my attention to the very bad state of the drains in Queen's Row. In the evening Miss Lockhart who had been there in the day told me that she was much afraid they would produce fever if not looked to..."

DRESS

At first the Sisters wore plain black dresses, as the Vicar, being afraid of rousing Protestant feeling against them, and also being in favour of inconspicuousness himself, did not wish them to adopt a distinctive habit. He suggested that they should be like "plainly dressed gentlewomen". In the house the Sisters wore net or muslin caps, while for out-of-doors they assumed black straw poke bonnets trimmed with black ribbon, and black shawls. Evidently the Sisters were not confined to black for their shawls as one witness remembered Miss Lockhart wearing a Scottish plaid shawl at a school treat!

THE FIRST REMOVAL

In the summer of 1848, that is, a few months after the Sisterhood began, a large cottage was acquired on the West side of Newbury Street, and the household seems to have moved from Wallingford Street in July. The entry in Parish Journey for July 22nd which has already been quoted continues: "Kept Lauds and Tierce with the Sisterhood and addrest them shortly on their fresh beginning..."; which "beginning" must refer to their taking up life in their new abode;"May He ever bless and prosper their work."

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In this first period of the life of the Sisterhood the spiritual direction of the Sisters was in the care of Archdeacon Manning. Manning had already been directing Miss Lockhart (and perhaps Miss Reid) before she came to Wantage. The Vicar greatly respected the Archdeacon who was in any case, an older and more experienced priest than himself. Manning made occasional visits to Wantage but they appear to have been comparatively infrequent. But he and the Vicar kept up a correspondence and the latter consulted him about such matters as the practice of confession. Definite evidence for Manning's presence at Wantage appears in the Parish Journal on three occasions; August 10th and December 12th 1848 and March 12th, 1849. There were other visits but the nature of them will be indicated in due course. The indications are that Manning visited the Sisterhood three or four times in the year. One visit coincided with the Vicar's absence on holiday, and Manning assisted the parish clergy as well as visiting the Sisters.

From a letter of Archdeacon Manning's to Mrs. Sidney Herbert dated "London 25th August 1848", the following extract is of direct interest: "I went the week before last to Wantage, and found all going on as I could most wish. (i.e. Presumably in his capacity as director as he had no formal ecclesiastical jurisdiction). The parish is an old country town, much neglected in time past, but dissent

weak, and the Church in a passive but recoverable state. The present Vicar is an excellent and most devoted man, and with him he has three equally earnest young men; so that they have strength enough for anything. Miss Lockhart is established in an old small house, with a very pretty strip of garden at the back, most private and quiet. She has two companions with her, and her work is to be found about five hours a day in the school. The rest of her time is ordered on a very even and good rule of employments and devotion. The Vicar is the visitor and guardian of the house, and is most worthy and fit in every way for this Office."[20]

THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT

Less than a month after Manning wrote the above letter, the following entry appears in the Vicar's hand in his Wantage Parish Journal: [Sept.20th, 1848] "Wednesday. A note from Miss L. gave me great sorrow". This brief sentence does in fact indicate the falling of the first of several great blows which were to be dealt to the Vicar in the next few years. It refers to Miss Lockhart's first intimation to the Vicar that she felt herself called, not to teach in schools, but to rescue work. This change of direction may well have been inspired by the publication of an article by the Reverend John Armstrong, Vicar of Tidenham, Gloucestershire, in the "Church Quarterly" for September 1848. The article was on the subject of the appalling problem of widespread prostitution and the inadequacy of the existing provision for the care and reclamation of prostitutes. Armstrong called for a change in the system of care and advocated the basing of it upon a religious foundation. He did not however, at this juncture, mention Sisterhoods.[21]

So far as Miss Lockhart's change of direction is concerned, there are several points to be noted. First it is clear that although William Butler founded the Sisterhood and thought that the was called to create an educational order, nevertheless he evidently felt that he could not allow himself to question the validity of Miss Lockhart's sense of call to a change of direction. Especially, no doubt, since the planning of the move was carried out conjointly with Archdeacon Manning. But Miss Lockhart had, or so it could be thought, delivered herself, at any rate implicitly, to the Vicar's guardianship.

Secondly, the Vicar wrote to Manning at once, and from the answer he received it appears that the Archdeacon and Miss Lockhart had consulted together about a change of work without taking into their

confidence the Vicar in whose Parish they were working, and in whose care Miss Lockhart was. Manning says, in his reply to the Vicar dated "Lavington, Sept. 25, 1848;"

"I have been most sincerely grieved at the thought of having grieved you. And I hardly know what to write. It was thought right towards you that such an idea should not be entertained without your knowledge."[22] But this knowledge was only conveyed after a decision had been taken.

Thirdly: such was the Vicar's deference to the Archdeacon, and such, perhaps, the awkwardness of his position in relation to the team of Manning and Miss Lockhart, that although he could express his disappointment, he could not oppose the change of plan. He had of necessity to accept it and all that it might entail upon himself in the way of loss of Sisters and extra work and worry.

Fourthly, this acceptance speaks volumes for the Vicar's humility and sensitivity to the call of God from whatever direction it might come. It is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that he had a self-assertive side to his character. A strange and slightly incomprehensible note is sounded by Manning in a further letter, whether of slight arrogance on his part or whether from a sense that he had a right to expect that it would be just and fitting for the younger man to submit himself to a directive from a Priest more senior than himself; or again because Butler owed the beginning of his Sisterhood work to Manning, it is hard to judge. Manning says,[23] while again expressing his grief at paining the Vicar: "Though I never for a moment doubted the perfect right and fitness, by the rule of nature and of the spirit of our correspondence, yet I felt that nothing short of a high submission of will ... would suffice to keep from between us a feeling (of) grief arising from contrariety of will. But your letter sets me at rest for ever, and I feel sure that with such a discipline of self, even such a loss as I trust you may not incur would turn into a blessing to your flock and to your own soul."

THE VICAR'S POSITIVE REACTION

William Butler evidently determined - characteristically - to make the best of things. He accepted the fact that Manning and Miss Lockhart were right in feeling that the Church of England had fallen behind the Roman Church and Continental Protestant Churches, in that almost no provision had yet been made for the reception and care of so-called

"fallen women". He prepared himself to divert at any rate some of his resources to what was, undoubtedly, a need as great as that of education. He recorded, two days after the 'sorrowful' entry of 20th September: "A sweet conversation with Sister Elizabeth. Read a Roman tale connected with Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd near Hammersmith for the conversion of penitent prostitutes".[24] And in a letter[25] to John Keble:

"I wanted ... to talk to you about our Sisterhood here, which has, by the blessing of God, sped so fairly. It is exercising daily more influence on our people; and as a washerwoman said to me the other day, "It makes one ashamed of oneself to see Miss L." All classes take to it. But as I think you know, I shall lose a great mainstay, Miss L. for the Penitentiary, and with her at least two will swarm off, leaving in fact, Miss A. alone. Two or three will, however, I expect, join us; but it is most needful to preserve continuity and I am very anxious to keep Miss A. as head of a future Home." No official records remain to give details of all the Sisters who offered themselves before 1850. The "Miss A." mentioned above was Miss Elizabeth Cain Ashington who visited the Sisterhood and took a temporary part in the work. She was unable to offer herself permanently for the first few years.

The foregoing letter shows the measure of the Vicar's readiness to accept the change of plan while yet hoping, if he could, to retain some members of the tiny community in the works already in hand. The following extract from a letter of six months later will illustrate both the extent to which plans had been laid for the foundation of a Penitentiary, and the fact that the Vicar had made known his hopes for continuing a school sisterhood. The letter is from Miss Ashington to Mrs. Keble:[26]

"Wantage, June 14th (1849)

"...Miss Lockhart ... went to London sooner than she intended, in consequence of a summons from Archdeacon Manning, on the matter of a Sisterhood, which himself and Miss L. have very much at heart; sufficient for me to say that this affair in all probability implies Miss Lockhart's leaving before the year is out. Miss Reid and Miss Day are to accompany her. Mr. Butler has set his heart upon continuing a sort of Sisterhood here, and he thinks he has some people in his eye who would be likely to join it, if there was an older one to take Miss Lockhart's place and to keep things together and going on; one a schoolmistress whom he saw in London, and there is a Miss Harriet Coxe he is very desirous to have."

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE SISTERHOOD

It is clear that definite plans for the penitentiary could not be put in hand immediately the decision was taken, and about a year passed during which the Sisterhood at Wantage carried on as it had begun. There was a desire for and a growth in the keeping of the essentials of monasticism and of the elements of a deep and regular spiritual life. Two entries in the Parish Journal kept by Mr. Butler indicate this :

"Dec.4th [1848]. At Sister Elizabeth's request I spoke to the Sisterhood on Silence."
"Feb. 19th [1849]. Spoke to the Sisterhood on Lent."

The Sisterhood's time-table for this period is extant and it includes the recitation of both the seven-fold monastic office and Matins and Evensong in Church. There was also a development of the rule of silence, but flexibility seems to have been preserved as to its observance to allow latitude for the calls for service made upon the Sisters. Since their numbers were small, corporate silence would have had to be maintained when circumstances permitted it.

The daily time-table was as follows :

Rise at	5 a.m.	
Lauds	5.45	
Prime	7.0	
Breakfast	7.30	
Tierce	8.40	
Work	9.0	
Church	10.0	(Matins)
Work until noon in the school, or until		
Sext at	12.45 p.m.	
Dinner	1.0	
Nones	2.30	
Work (school and parish visiting) until		
Vespers at	5.45	
Tea	6.0	
Church	7.30	(Evensong)
Compline	9.0	
Bed	10.0	

Times of recreation and periods of private devotion had also to find their place in this very full schedule, but we do not know how much time was given to each of these. At this period weekly Communion

was the norm, hence no allowance for it in the daily time-table.

At some time during this waiting period, a more distinctively traditional religious dress was adopted, under Miss Lockhart's direction. We have no details to indicate its design.

On July 22nd, 1849, the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, the Vicar gave the Sisters an address which emphasised the intention of establishing the religious life in its fulness :

"Dear Sisters, a year has passed since first we met to set apart, as far as in us lay, this house,[27] and you who were about to dwell here, to the service of Almighty God.

It seems but yesterday since we knelt here together, and yet these twelve months have been able strangely to change the whole current of your lives. You feel yourselves distinctly set apart. I who address you feel it. Others little used to look with a discerning or even friendly eye on the higher aimings of the Christian life feel it, and own it also. Your life has now assumed, so to say, a permanent mould. The ways of the world:- secular arrangements, times, studies, society, things not out of place, nor wrong, would now seem strange and jarring to you. Religious order, regular hours of devotion, the weekly Celebration, involving a daily preparation of a more or less formal kind, seasons of silence, penitence, sorrowing, rejoicing, as the Church appoints, with Christ, have now wound themselves round your very being, edifying and sustaining your souls.

This feeling of sanctification is exactly that which was needed to enable us to strike root downwards for the present, and by God's blessing hereafter to bear fruit upwards."[28]

The Founder went on to speak of the nature of the life and work of the house:

"Let us on this anniversary take a thought for that picture of united Sisterhood which the history of S. Mary Magdalene brings before us ... No more fitting day could be chosen to commence a work of penitence and seclusion from the World. No history so fitly represents to us the double character which such Institutions

may assume as that of the two holy sisters, the one wrapt in holy meditation at the feet of Jesus, the other busied in making ready to receive Him under her roof ... To serve is Martha's special work, to contemplate, Mary's.[ø] Martha provides that Mary may have leisure to gaze. Mary could not contemplate did not Martha serve. Mary's eye must be off internal things if Martha cared not for external."

The Founder sees the Sisters of the Community as aiming to combine the life of active service with the life of contemplation. He sees the practical tasks as helping in the transition from a "worldly" life to the life of prayer and contemplation, and he calls upon the Sisters to maintain the idea of constant service. Each Sister is to have her times for contemplation and for work. In due course the life of loving service will come to take its character from, and to grow out of, the life of contemplation. This vision of the kind of religious life to be lived has governed the ideas of the Community ever since, and because of it, a very generous allowance of time for private devotion has always been provided for in the rules.

HARRIET DAY AND CHARLOTTE GILBERT

In a letter quoted earlier, the name of "Miss Day" was mentioned. In February 1849 there came to Wantage to join the Sisterhood a Miss Harriet Day. Miss Day was the daughter of a farmer who lived near East Farleigh in Kent. She came to hear of the Sisterhood through the Reverend Henry Wilberforce, youngest brother to the then Bishop of Oxford, and who was Rector of East Farleigh. The Rector had done a very great deal to help Miss Day with her religious problems, and it is said that he had converted her from Socinianism. In the same year, and through the same agency, a Miss Charlotte Gilbert, who was the daughter of a farm labourer and who had been in domestic service, also joined the little band. These two Sisters were the only ones out of those who actually entered on an intending permanent basis before 1850 who remained to end their days as Sisters of the Community.[29] Because of her social status, Charlotte Gilbert was admitted as a probationary "lay" sister, but as we shall see, such a distinction was presently found to be invidious.

In September 1849 Miss Day returned to East Farleigh on a visit of mercy to assist in the nursing of the victims of the terrible cholera epidemic of that year. The Henry Wilberforces were deeply engaged in this work, and on being asked if she wanted to go and help, Miss Day said that she had hardly been able to sleep for thinking of all those involved.[30] The Vicar's entry in the Parish

Journal is typical:

"September 22 [1849] Miss Day ... went to E. Farleigh to nurse those ill with cholera. We should indeed thank God that He has been pleased to raise this high spirit of self-sacrifice among us." Later on outbreaks of cholera and other illnesses in Wantage itself were to engage the energies of the Sisters and to add urgency to the immense work being done by the Vicar as one of the Town Commissioners, in assisting in seeing to the provision of drainage and better sanitation for the town.

"ROMAN RUMBLINGS"

Since such a stir was caused by secessions to the Roman Church, such as that of John Henry Newman in 1845, it is hardly surprising to find hints that uncertainty about their position in the English Church was troubling the minds of some who were connected with the little Sisterhood. William Butler was well aware of the unease and was troubled by it, as is probably indicated - rather obliquely perhaps - by such entries in the Parish Journal as the following:

"Dec.19th [1848] Sister Elizabeth about her young people. They seem strangely yearning for the higher doctrines of the Church". Against this entry is added a note dated November 1849: "Let this be a warning". Again: "March 28th [1849] Mr. Lockhart, lodged at Mrs. W's.,[31] came to the Vicarage. He spoke wisely, quite without controversy." Mr. Lockhart was the brother of Elizabeth who had become a Roman Catholic a little while before she came to Wantage. He later took Orders in the Roman Church.

And again:

"May 16th [1849] Visited the Sisterhood for some time. May God bless their work and give us grace to retain them among us." It is possible that this sentence refers to a difficulty that was being experienced by the Sisterhood in the holding together of diverse elements among those who visited or worked with the Sisterhood. The entry continues: "The chief difficulty lies in combining the two elements which naturally don't pull together, elderly[32] ladies who ask for a religious retreat, and active, energetic like the Reverend Mother,[33] who seem in some sense equal, if not called to higher work." But such difficulties, strange as it may seem, were at this period, of exactly the kind which served to convince certain types of mind that the English Church was invalid as a Church, and could not therefore provide conditions of life for which they were seeking.

It is not at all clear whether the Vicar had the least inkling about the unsettlement in Archdeacon Manning's mind in 1849. In fact the Archdeacon had been struggling with "Roman fever" for some years already, certainly well before he introduced Miss Lockhart to the Vicar. In view of this, and of the all-embracing nature of Manning's own condemnation of the Church of England, it would be easy to accuse him of bad faith in promoting the scheme at Wantage which was so soon to be disordered. But it seems more likely - and it is also more charitable - that it should be assumed that Manning was by no means sure that he himself would feel bound to submit to the Roman obedience, and was casting about in his mind to find what he should do, if anything, about the situation as he saw it. He did not secede until 1851, and he did, apparently, restrain a number of people from doing so, nearly up to the time when he renounced his Anglican Priesthood and abjured the faith of the English Church himself. He seems to have kept his worries from many of his friends for a long while, but it looks as though he relinquished his direct spiritual oversight of the Sisterhood in 1850.

BISHOP WILBERFORCE

Obedient son of the English Church as he was, the Vicar kept Bishop Wilberforce closely informed about his projects for the Sisterhood. The Vicar was fortunate in having Wilberforce for his Bishop. Wilberforce was the most distinguished of the English Diocesan Bishops of the day. He completely altered the image of the episcopate in men's minds and, perhaps more than any other Bishop and despite certain limitations of outlook, had sympathy for Sisterhoods and their work. Archdeacon Manning was brother-in-law to Bishop Wilberforce, their wives now dead, having been sisters. No doubt discussion took place between them on the subject of the Sisterhood. Also, as a frequent visitor to Lavington, the Bishop may have been acquainted with Miss Lockhart before she came to Wantage. The Bishop's views about the Wantage Sisterhood do not seem, however, to be extant for the period before December 1849, when the Vicar evidently consulted him on the subject of the proposed penitentiary sisterhood.

"Cuddesdon Palace
Dec.29. 1849.

"My dear Butler,

The questions you asked me about Miss Lockhart's Establishment were hardly definite enough for me to answer. I should like much to

have a general scheme of the institution, and a general outline of the proposed rules and regulations etc., and then would gladly make any suggestions which occurred to me if they are desired ...

I can quite conceive how beloved Miss Lockhart must be knowing of what sort her labours are. I quite should wish for a domestic chapel in such an Establishment. I have the deepest interest in its welfare and would do anything in my power to aid its progress .

Ever believe me to be affect^{ly} yours
S. Oxon."[34]

Wilberforce's interest in the religious communities which sprang up in his diocese was undoubted and genuine. Although, as we shall see, he held very strong views about certain aspects, he did nevertheless go out of his way to help on the work, and was to prove a brave, wise and helpful friend to the Vicar and to the Community.

In this same letter, the Bishop answers a query about the fitness of the Reverend Thomas Vincent, one of the curates at Wantage, to be Chaplain of the new penitentiary. The Vicar, very wisely, did not undertake the chaplaincy himself, although his guardianship of the Sisterhood gave him contacts as close as those of the Chaplain. Mr. Vincent remained at Wantage for over twenty years and was Chaplain of the penitentiary for most of that time. The Bishop evidently thought it wise of the Vicar not to undertake the Chaplaincy and recorded his thoughts about Vincent and his concern that the post should be carefully filled :

"... Then about Vincent: all my <u>impressions</u> about Vincent are that he <u>would</u> be very helpful in such a post and well fitted for it. But I do not <u>know</u> enough of him to venture a stronger opinion as to a post requiring such peculiar gifts and such various graces for a man's usefulness to others and safety to himself. It needs of course great uprightness, tenderness, judgement, skill in dealing with souls, firmness and patience, and all growing out of ardent love to Christ."[35]

<u>THE PENITENTS' HOME</u>

It appears that although the decision to change to penitentiary work was made in 1848, the delay in beginning the work was due to several things. The Archdeacon felt a need to be certain so far as he could be that the change of work was a calling from God :

"I have so deep a feeling of fear at the thought of attempting, or suffering any for whom I must answer to attempt such a work as has been suggested until 2 conditions, 1. that God calls them to it; and 2. that His Grace has matured them for it, are clearly ascertained, that I feel no anxiety either that you [i.e. Butler] should be called on to yield up what you have for a long time [desired], and that in such an event there should be others left to carry on your House."[36]

Another factor in the delay was the Archdeacon's desire that the Home should be situated in London with Miss Lockhart as its head. This also confirms the impression that the Vicar was in no position to dictate any terms to Manning and Miss Lockhart. The proposal to transfer Miss Lockhart does however, seem strange, in view of the fact that Manning intended to remove her from the very situation in which he had placed her, and which he had assured the Vicar would be as permanent as the latter's incumbency. The following extract gives a little information about the plan for a house in London; Miss Ashington wrote to Mrs. Keble :

"The London (Establishment) will leave this [i.e. the house at Wantage] the furniture and £50 for the first two years, but as the means will be much diminished by the withdrawal of Miss Lockhart's larger means, I suppose things will be on a different scale."[37]

But it was eventually decided that the work should be situated at Wantage, and apparently this decision was largely due to respect for the Vicar's character and gifts. Nevertheless the Archdeacon was not very happy about the situation to begin with, and Mr. Vincent, as future Chaplain to the Home, paid a visit to Lavington to see him and to discuss matters:

"Great Dean's Yard,
Jan.4, 1850.

"My very dear Vicar,

I ought to be very thankful for the two days I have been allowed to spend at Lavington. The Archdeacon was alone, and we talked over all the points I could think of, besides those which he suggested ... I spoke to him on the three points you noted down.

On the 1st, the need for taking a permanent tone, he said he could not advise the Rev. Mother to this; your best plan for retaining the Sisterhood in Wantage would be continuing the gentler watchfulness

over them which you have hitherto exercised; that beginning the work at Wantage was entirely or very much out of personal regard to yourself and estimation of your work; that there was but one opinion among those with whom he was acting, that Wantage from its situation was not a suitable place for the asylum.

In the other two points he entirely concurred with you, that the connection of the Sisterhood with the Parish should be kept up by their Communicating at all Festivals, or even more frequently, at the Mother Church and that the Bishop should be fully acquainted with all our plans of operation, only he would not put the Bishop into the difficult position of publicly assenting to all the details of an untried experiment.

Ever your loving brother,
Thomas Vincent."[38]

The final decision to situate the Penitents' Home at Wantage having been taken, a house was found quite quickly and it was put in order for the reception of Penitents. The house was leased from the Reverend Josiah Burd and his wife, who owned a certain amount of property in Wantage. The house was situated on the opposite side of Newbury Street from the cottage.

Despite the Archdeacon's views as expressed in the above letter, plans for establishing the Community upon a permanent base in Wantage were put in hand. A seal was cut for the Community in 1849 which bore the words SIGILLUM SOCIETATIS SANCTAE MARIAE VIRGINIS APUD WANTAGIAM MDCCCXLIX. In the event, however, the seal was never given any legal significance. Whatever plans Miss Lockhart and Manning had been making with regard to the legal voice of the Sisterhood fell to the ground when they severed their connexion with Wantage. No further steps were taken in this matter until the codification of the first Constitutions in 1854-1855. Trustees were then appointed, in whom was also vested the power of holding the land which the Sisterhood acquired for the purpose of building the permanent House.

Miss Lockhart had to spend some time in London nursing sick relatives of her stepmother's, and the opening of the house was delayed at her wish, from January 25th until February 2nd, 1850. The Vicar must have expressed some of his feelings about the uncertainty of the plans for the home to Miss Lockhart, but he had evidently won his way to her heart, all of

which is apparent from the following letter which she wrote to him from "31 Cadogan Place" on January 14th, 1850:

"Most dear Friend,

It would be presumptuous in me to say that you have no cause to write as you do, for it is not for me to judge of your duties, or of the sensitiveness of your conscience before God. Only I may say this, that I have no thought connected with you but of love and gratitude for all your undeserved kindness and love to me, and of deep reverence to you as my Pastor. I dare not say to you all that I feel of your life of toil and self-sacrifice. Nothing but other and probably more pressing work has ever kept you away from us, and I have never felt petulant about it without being ashamed of myself afterwards.

I am detained in London by the illness of Mr. Jacob and his daughter, and I feel that I ought not to leave them until someone can take my place. I hope this may be soon, but in the uncertainty I have thought it better to delay the opening of the Home till the Feast of the Purification. I find also this day will suit the Archdeacon better than the Conversion of S.Paul. I should say that the women had better assemble on the Tuesday before, that is 29th January ... I have some compensation for being detained here so long against my will in the opportunity it gives me of having a long talk with the Archdeacon,[39] which I hope may indirectly help on our work more than my personal presence at home." The Vicar had evidently been discussing the plans for the Home with the Bishop, for the letter also includes:

"I am very glad to hear of your satisfactory visit to Cuddesdon ..."[40] It is undoubtedly to be taken as an indication of the pressing need for the kind of home about to be opened that a few women had already made application or been recommended for admission. Two were to be present at the inauguration of the work.

The house taken for the Home[41] was of the Queen Anne period, and it was more commodious than the cottage. But the cottage was retained and Sister Mary (Miss Reid) and Miss Emma Ryle[42] occupied it for the time being with one Hannah Stafford "to wait upon them and go messages..."[43]

After all the hesitations and delays the Home was formally opened on February 2nd 1850. This date, the Feast of the Purification, which saw the inauguration of the first permanent work of the Sisterhood was ever afterwards kept by the Vicar and the Sisters as the

anniversary of the founding of the Sisterhood of St. Mary the Virgin.[44]

A service of inauguration was held without the presence of the Bishop, but which was conducted by the Vicar with Archdeacon Manning, the Rev. Henry Wilberforce, the Rev. Thomas Vincent "who had also arranged the Chapel"; three Sisters, presumably Miss Lockhart, Miss Reid and Miss Day, and "two assistant friends," who remain unnamed in the records but were probably Miss Gilbert and Miss Ryle. The service began with the saying of the Benediction "from the Rituale."[45] The Blessing was followed by a Celebration of the Holy Communion, Bishop Wilberforce having licensed a Chapel with a Communion table, for the House.[46] Two of the penitents were also present at the service.

The Vicar recorded that: "... the Service was most thrilling and one could not but rest in faith that God's blessing is upon the work."[47]

Evidently some local prejudices had been roused and a rumour had reached the Vicar's ears that the owners of the house were objecting to the use to which the house was to be put, for later in the day "Vincent called upon the Burds that there might be no jarring element. It had been said that they objected to this use of their house. They quite, as they say, approve of it, and wish the work success. Perhaps it would have been better in this, as in other like cases, to have taken more trouble to inform them on the subject. Yet there would have been much difficulty in explaining matters, and I freely offered,[48] if they really objected, to remove it elsewhere."

The work of the Home was to house and to educate those who came under its care. In the nineteenth century religious instruction and the moral rehabilitation of such unfortunate persons was integrally bound up with ideas of education.

The service of inauguration of 'St. Mary's Home for Penitents' as it was called, probably served yet another purpose. This was to give some kind of blessing to the Sisters for the work. No formal admission service was used prior to 1852. From this day also, although Miss Lockhart had been previously thought of as the "Reverend Mother," she now assumed the title officially, as it were, and signed herself "...Elizabeth (M.S.)," "M.S." to stand for "Mother Superior."

On the evening of the inauguration, Archdeacon Manning addressed the household, which the Vicar termed the "familia."[49] Miss Lockhart's description of the service and of the day appears in a letter addressed to one who evidently intended to join herself to the work :

"Penitents Home"

"... You will have heard from Mrs. Pretyman[50] of the safe arrival of her beautiful scrolls,[51] and the actual beginning of our work. I should like you to have been with us on that morning, nothing could have looked more solemn and bright withal than our little Chapel. The altar with its pure white frontal, ornamented with five gold crosses, candlesticks and altar-plate really befitting an altar, and between the candlesticks and a three-branched light in the centre four vases, very beautiful in themselves, filled with white camellias, and a wreath of flowers resting upon the window-sill above.

We had four priests, the Father Director,[52] Vicar, Chaplain, and H. Wilberforce. The Vicar said the Office for Blessing the House, and then the Archdeacon celebrated, the women being allowed to be present on this occasion. They are not to be so generally, as the Archdeacon does not think it safe for them until they are better prepared. In the evening he preached as nobody but he can, to the whole household, dear Swan, who has permission to come to our Offices being also present..."

Two penitents were already in residence in the house at the opening and two more came almost at once. There were funds in hand sufficient for the maintenance of six penitents and those working in the house. Miss Lockhart herself speaks of the need for at least another £200 a year for the rent and theChaplain's salary. For the present the Chaplain gave his services, but was freed from some parochial duties to do so.

A fortnight later Bishop Wilberforce had his first official connexion with the new House. In the Parish Journal for Saturday February 16th, 1850, it is recorded that "Bishop Wilberforce addressed the Sisters and Penitents of St. Mary's Home." This visit of the Bishop took place at the beginning of the first of the remarkable series of parish missions which he organised throughout his diocese. The Vicar took part in many of these missions.

TROUBLES

The work of the Home having been fairly started and got under way,

another major blow fell upon the Vicar. 1850 was the year in which the Privy Council+ gave its ruling that the Reverend G.C. Gorham should be instituted to the living of Bramford Speke in the diocese of Exeter, contrary to the Bishop of Exeter's desires, and the Council issued letters mandatory to that effect. The question is a complicated one, but the furore raised by the Privy Council ruling was less because of Gorham's views than because churchmen felt that the interpretation of doctrinal matters was at the mercy of a secular court. Many were shaken in their allegiance to the Church of England, feeling strongly about the wrongness of the doctrine of Royal Supremacy, particularly if this kind of thing lay in its power. The Vicar himself was deeply shaken by the Gorham Judgment,[53] and although he never for a moment definitely thought of joining the Church of Rome, he did, nevertheless, feel that his loyalty to the Church of England was strained to breaking point. He resolved things as best he could, in his own mind, however, by consulting that saintly, staunch and loyal Anglican Churchman, John Keble, who had become a very close friend. After talking things over with Keble, the Vicar felt himself bound to be loyal to the Church he loved, and went out of his way to help others in similar distress. Two extracts from letters to Keble will serve in this place to illustrate these movements of Butler's mind, although he was deeply involved in discussions about the matter.

In a letter of March 11th he said:

"... Now that the matter is fairly (or rather unfairly) promulgated, I confess that my heart trembles for the results. And after weighing the matter in such poor way as I am able, I can bring myself to contemplate two alternatives only, and it seems to me that it is my duty either to leave the Establisht Church or to give up life and everything else if needful, to work towards the Restoration. I cannot help feeling that any cause short of one of these must be to the soul's peril. Naturally one clings to the latter. The former seems most awful to me, and I shrink from any condition which it implies, i.e. from 'nonjuring' Scotch Episcopal or Roman Communion. In regard to the first I feel a dread of splitting, Babelising the Church."[54]

The Vicar went on to ask if he might visit Keble to consider with him whether some kind of action might be taken in concert by the clergy. The whole question of the revival of Convocation was raised

+ Judicial Committee.

as a vital issue by the Gorham Judgment, Bishop Wilberforce being one of those most influential in effecting its restoration.

After this visit to Hursley, Butler wrote to Keble:

"I left Hursley yesterday a happier and I hope a wiser and patienter man than when I entered it. I feel peace and confidence in the result of our struggle..."[55]

It is not irrelevant to our present theme to realize what were Butler's own difficulties with regard to the Gorham Judgment. As, shortly after he had fought his own battle on the subject, he was to be assailed by blows from several quarters as a result of the Judgment. Many secessions to Rome took plate, and Butler's Sisterhood was not to be left unscathed. The first intimation of serious trouble occurs in an entry in the Parish Journal barely a month after the correspondence with Keble just quoted:

"April 17th. Archdeacon Manning came. Much interesting though sad talk with him. I fear much trouble here from one quarter. May God in His Mercy avert it and soften the blow." Although this entry gives no specific details, it clearly refers to the possible secession of Miss Lockhart to Rome. It seems that she did not confide in the Vicar, but told Manning, who was after all her spiritual adviser, the direction in which her thoughts were now irresistably tending. No doubt Manning thought it right to warn Butler. Miss Lockhart must have been under very great strain and pressures ever since her brother and stepmother had become Roman Catholics, and the Vicar was clearly not unaware of the possibility of losing one or another of his Sisterhood. The Gorham decision was the last straw for many Anglicans who were near the divide between Romanism and Anglicanism. It seems likely, from the entry to be quoted hereafter, that Manning impressed Butler with his own doubts about the Anglican position, although he did not at this time relinquish his preferment in the English Church. In a letter to Robert Isaac Wilberforce dated 25th of this same month, Manning states his categorical belief that "... the Church of England has no real basis."[56]

The next entry in the Parish Journal concerning Miss Lockhart again includes reference to Archdeacon Manning and it does not occur until two months after the visit of the Archdeacon which occasioned the Vicar such sadness.

"June 12th [1850] Archdeacon Manning came. I heard this day that Miss L. had decided on leaving the Church of England. This is a heavy blow, but not unexpected. Of course there was the strong influence of a mother and brother gone, and the weak support of her spiritual adviser[57] was little able to withstand their weight. So she yielded." Then with characteristic generosity the Vicar continues: "She has been a great help to us in every way, setting before the people the sight of seeking to fulfil our Lord's Counsels of Perfection, and in every way being well-calculated to touch the hearts of rough thoughtless people like ours. May He who sends this grief give us strength to bear it, and save our parish from injury. It seems right to endeavour to carry on the work at any risk. The Penitents have made decided progress and it would not be right to cast them again on the world. There is every disposition on the part of Miss L. and the Archdeacon to help us in this; and I have therefore placed all arrangements in the Bishop's hands."

With the deprivation, at one fell swoop, of Miss Lockhart and the Archdeacon, for it must have been at this period that Manning ceased to direct the Sisterhood, William Butler felt quite at a loss how best to proceed. So he turned to his Bishop, who did not fail him. On 16th June, Vincent, as Chaplain of the Home, went to London to see the Bishop and discuss matters with him. "He returned... with much encouragement."[58] On the day of Vincent's return the Vicar noted that "Barker [the local doctor] to whom I mentioned our position volunteered his professional services gratis if we could continue the work - this is our first ray of light in this troubled sky."

The Vicar had much to do to keep his ship afloat. Miss Mary Reid may have already announced her intention of following Miss Lockhart, for there is a reference to "the two Sisters" being "shaken and frightened."[59] This may refer to Miss Lockhart and Miss Reid, but it seems more likely to be Miss Reid and Miss Day, Sister Mary and Sister Harriet.

The Vicar "spent some time at St. Mary's Home, to try to arrange matters. All being unsatisfactory."[60] Miss Lockhart had not yet left, and the strain in the house must have been considerable, particularly as appearances had to be maintained before the inmates of the Home.

On June 21st 1850, "Miss Lockhart left us, alas, for Rome.+"[61] [i.e. to prepare for reception into the Roman Church]. Those left in charge of the penitents then resident in the Home had "called and looked upon [Miss Lockhart] as their Mother. How was the news to be imparted to them? What would be the effect on their faith and penitence?"[62] One penitent, who had gone to London on business, heard the news and did not return. Another had recently arrived bearing an unsatisfactory reputation and she had been behaving badly. One of Miss Lockhart's last acts was to try to reclaim her, but she insisted upon going. After this the Chaplain saw the remaining "Penitents one by one and told them" he hardly knew "whether with more sorrow or fear, that the Mother had given up the work and why; and which was perhaps harder to the feelings, and harder to explain with due regard for her goodness, the sinfulness of her act."[63] It is interesting to note that Miss Lockhart's act could be regarded as genuinely sinful in English eyes.

In one sense Miss Lockhart's actual departure must have eased the strain in the house, but for several months to come the Vicar had to contend with the troubled minds of the remaining Sisters. That their doubt was severe and caused them much suffering is quite clear. Sister Harriet evidently still turned to Henry Wilberforce for advice. It was not very long before he himself was to secede, and it may be that the two minds in their doubts exacerbated one another's suffering, though in fairness to Henry Wilberforce it must be assumed that he was acting in good faith. The Vicar had also the enormous task of maintaining the work already begun, both with a reduced staff and without a strong leadership in the Sisterhood. He turned to the Bishop and laid before him the doubts assailing the minds of the remaining Sisters, and his need of help in the work. The Bishop's reply is revealing as showing his concern both to help with "souls" and to find workers.

"Reading June 29.1850

"My dear Butler,
I never had a more difficult question to solve than as to your two 'Sisters'. If you repel them you may drive them to Rome. If they hereafter do (go over to Rome) the damage to Wantage is certain. Now this last seems to me on the whole <u>one</u> duty: therefore I am convinced that we should say unless we have an assurance amounting as near as may be to <u>certainty</u> it is better they should <u>go</u> with Miss L: than follow her hereafter. Trying them by this rule; I

+ See Notes.

think, from your estimate of their state (which I assume as a fact) that Miss Day may stay (if she gives up H.W.W. as an adviser,) but that the other Sister[64] had better be encouraged to migrate at once.

I have today heard that from parental objections we must give up the Lady I had hoped for as Miss L's successor: has Vincent heard from Miss Lesson. All under God depends on this choice..."[65]

In spite of this letter containing advice the Vicar must have acted upon, the doubts of the two Sisters were not so easily resolved and the Vicar continued to keep the Bishop informed of the struggles as they went on. A further letter from the Bishop illustrates this:

"Brougham Hall. Sept.27. 1850

"My dear Butler,

... Now as to the Home. I am more and more convinced, that to give it the Church of E. character without which neither you or I will or honestly can have anything to do with it, we must unsparingly exclude everything Romish and cultivate the Church tone of R. Hooker, Bishop Andrewes etc:. Now to do this I am also convinced that with sweeping away the "ora etc:" and ornaments we must make the costlier sacrifice of souls which are really perverted to Rome. We do believe in her abuses and that they endanger souls for which Christ died. We must part the tainted sheep from the untainted, and I therefore am clear that these two Sisters must be put away..."

Miss Reid did join Miss Lockhart but exactly when is not known. Miss Day continued to struggle on for a time and in her case it seems that the Roman Communion in itself was not drawing her. At first she avoided the Vicar, running away at his approach, being a very shy person. A letter from Miss Ryle to Archdeacon Manning illustrates her misery:

"15th Oct. 1850

"... Do you know I can't help being very anxious and unhappy about poor Sister Harriet. I am afraid of her GOING OUT OF HER MIND. She comforts herself by an occasional outpour to me, and I had a letter this morning.

This is what she says of herself in one part. "Oh how I wish I could run away from myself. Sometimes I am obliged to go out, and I walk and run till I feel I can go no farther, then I sit down and cry, then I set off again."

She longs for more "active work" but if she leaves St. Mary's Home she does not know where to go, she says; in short she describes herself as almost beside herself. She says Sister Mary has promised the Vicar never to talk to her or allow her to talk on the subject with her, and I doubt whether this can be good for her, because though she has lost her faith, she says, in the Church of England, yet she never thinks of what she could have faith in,' and resolutely without inquiring into the question determines not to be a Roman Catholic, so that really you see she is allowing her mind to run adrift, and yet perfectly powerless..."[67]

Eventually Sister Harriet's distress of mind was assuaged, largely by the Vicar, and they became fast friends. Sister Harriet had a great future before her, and no doubt her own struggles helped to temper her for the work she was destined to do.

Bishop Wilberforce continued to be concerned for the Home and one letter of late 1850 demonstrates this. It also looks as though the Vicar's immediate problems with the Home abated as the year went on, as the Bishop asks certain questions which seem to indicate that the Vicar had not consulted him on the subject for a time.

"Cuddesdon Palace
Dec.6. 1850

"... The only other matters which occur to me are these:-
1. What is the present condition of the Home. I hope that the directly Romanizing things introduced by Miss Lockhart... are all thoroughly swept away. Else a hard blow might be hit there against both of us...

Then what is the state of the House now as to inmates. I have been for some time meaning to write and ask you..."[68]

The Wantage Sisterhood did indeed have its troubles during 1850, and as we have seen the Vicar kept himself well up to date with events in the Church of England generally. Perhaps a continuation of the entry in the Parish Journal for the day on which Miss Lockhart left for Rome will sum up the feeling of the time and close this first troubled chapter of the life of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin.

June 21st 1850. "In the afternoon the Houblons[69] brought the Bishop of Brechin,[70] who gave a very deplorable account of the state of feeling in London. Men are giving up, without striking a blow, and lapsing into a sullen infidelity,[71] especially in the Belgrave Square and aristocratic neighbourhoods where High Church principles have been widely sown and greedily caught. Now they say "we have nothing to believe". He speaks uncomfortably of the laity in Scotland as indifferent and irreligious, those belonging to the Church.

May He who dwelleth on high, in His Mercy hush these winds and lull these waves which rage horribly against His Church!"

Notes : Chapter I

1. cf "Life And Letters of William John Butler" : E.g. Letter to John Keble March 5, 1846.
2. cf "Butler of Wantage: His Inheritance And His Legacy". C.S.M.V. Dacre Press, London 1945, p.33.
3. From what we know of his thoughts I think we can assume this.
4. cf L. & L. p.128.
5. MS letter C.S.M.V. Unpublished Papers. Miss Ashington to Mrs. (John) Keble. Fuller details of this letter will be given in later notes.
6. Parish Journal Friday Sept.12
7. L&L p.53. From the contribution to the memoir by the Ven. Archdeacon Pott.
8. Ibid.
9. The authors of "A Hundred Years of Blessing" and "Butler of Wantage" are in error in stating that Manning was Archdeacon of Buckingham.
10. Quoted in L&L p.129.
11. 'Notes on the Earliest Days of The Community'. Authorship doubtful. Also quoted in L&L p.129.
12. cf Directory for 1847.
13. cf Letter from Miss Ashington to Mrs. Keble. June 1849. MS C.S.M.V. UP.
14. cf 'Notes' op.cit.
15. L&L p.129.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. 'Notes' op. cit.
19. cf Ibid.
20. "Life of Cardinal Manning" E.S. Purcell. Vol.I Ch XXIII p.491.
21. cf F. Warre Cornish "A History of The English Church In The Nineteenth Century", Vol.II p.72.
22. Letter quoted in "A History Of The Foundation, And Development Under Its Founder, Of The Community of St. Mary-The-Virgin, Wantage" 2nd Ed.1902 p.8. Printed for Private Circulation.
23. Ibid. Letter dated Oct.13.1848.
24. P.J. Sept.22.
25. n.d. Quoted in "History of Foundation" p.10.
26. MS in C.S.M.V. archives.
27. i.e. the second house, in Newbury St. (The Cottage)
28. L&L p.134.
29. cf L&L p.131.
30. cf 'Notes' op. cit.
31. Probably Mrs. Wasborough, wife of a man prominent in the affairs of the town.

32. The word "elderly" is probably relative here.
33. i.e. Miss Lockhart. This is the first recorded use of the title.
34. Bodleian M.S. Wilberforce d.33 p.28.
35. Ibid
36. "History of Foundation" p.9.
37. Letter of June 14th 1849 op. cit.
38. "History of Foundation" pp 11-12.
39. Who was much in London even prior to his becoming a Roman Catholic.
40. Letter quoted in "History of Foundation" pp.12,13.
41. This house can still be seen, as it forms the central part of the present St. Mary's School.
42. Miss Ryle was a friend of Miss Lockhart's. Her brother became the first Bishop of Liverpool.
43. "History of Foundation" p.14.
44. cf "A Hundred Years of Blessing" p.24n.
45. P.J. Feb.2 1850.
45. cf. "Life of Wilberforce" Vol.III pp 323-4.
47. P.J. Feb.2.
48. Presumably through Vincent on this visit.
49. P.J. loc. cit.
50. Mrs. Amelia Pretyman later became an Exterior Sister.
51. Possibly decorated strips of paper or panels of some material, with sacred texts upon them, which were placed in the Chapel - perhaps affixed to the walls.
52. Manning.
53. cf L&L p.75. Letter to Keble, March 2.
54. L&L p.77.
55. L&L p.78.
56. Life of Manning, Vol.I Cha.XXVI p.558.
57. i.e. Manning.
58. P.J.
59. P.J. June 19. 1850.
60. Ibid.
61. P.J.
62. Pusey House. Vol.1852. 321-346. No. 323 pp6,7.
63. Ibid.
64. I assume this to be Miss Reid.
65. Bodleian. MS Wilberforce d.33 p.32.
66. Ibid p.34.
67. Quoted in 'Life of Manning' Vo.I p.458.
68. Bodleian MS Wilberforce d.33 p.35.
69. The Rev. H. Archer Houblon, whose son followed Butler as Vicar of Wantage, and whose daughter joined the Community.

70. Alexander Penrose Forbes, a leading figure in the Scottish "High Church" movement.

71. i.e. to the Church of England.

* There are some pleasant little letters quoted in L&L which refer to the gift of a font from "Priests, Deacon and Religious of Wantage" to Mr. Keble for Hursley Church.

ó Some commentators have since questioned whether Mary Magdalene was the Sister of Martha.

+ Miss Lockhart became Mother Mary Elizabeth Lockhart and was foundress of an Order called "Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception," which was under the direct supervision of Manning when he was Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

CHAPTER II 1850-1852

DIFFICULT YEARS

After Miss Lockhart had departed from Wantage, William Butler was left in great difficulties with regard to the Sisterhood of St. Mary's House. He had also to try to resolve these problems while carrying on undiminished the ordinary work of the parish. It is true that he had a staff of curates, but the volume of work to be done and the standards he set demanded the utmost effort on the part of all who worked with him. Now he had both the infant Sisterhood and the burden of the Penitentiary upon his hands as well.

The Sisterhood consisted of Sister Harriet, Miss Charlotte Gilbert, who was on probation as a lay sister, but who filled the post of "Mistress of the Penitents"; and until she followed Miss Lockhart to Rome, which happened very soon afterwards, Sister Mary (Miss Reid). The Vicar had great hopes of Miss Ashington, as was noted in Chapter I,[1] but she was not yet free to give her whole time to the Sisterhood. Also there was no "Superior" to guide the Sisters and the work of the Home. The two younger women, Miss Emily Prentiss and Miss Elizabeth Roberts, had dropped out, probably some time before Miss Lockhart left, but such records as there are do not indicate when. All that remains is a later note in the Vicar's hand in the Parish Journal against the assessment of Elizabeth Roberts quoted in Chapter I, which although it is nearly illegible, indicates that the Vicar came to feel himself mistaken in his first impressions of her.

Application was made to Miss Sellon at Devonport for the loan of a Sister to undertake the charge of the Sisterhood, and enquiries were made among friends, but no one was forthcoming who could fill the position. In a letter to Mr. Keble written in July 1850 the Vicar wrote:

"Now we are in much trouble to keep the work up; we have no one on whom we can rest, indeed the household is a body without a backbone, just standing up and no more. The Bishop kindly offers to do all he can for us. But he is overwrought with so many things. And my hands are indeed so overloaded that I can [hardly] keep what is on them already. Vincent holds up nobly. Can you find anyone for us?"[2]

So far as personnel were concerned one ray of light broke through at some point within the ensuing six months. A Miss Catherine (or Katherine) Hedger offered herself for the work, apparently on hearing

of the urgent need through a friend, but clearly this did not happen at once.

Another major problem concerned the financial upkeep of the Home. The loss of Miss Lockhart's income was a considerable deprivation, and after 1850 the position became very precarious indeed. Miss Lockhart did, however, behave very generously on her withdrawal from the work. She left "all that had been subscribed, which was sufficient for carrying on (the work of the Home) as it was until the anniversary of its opening"; she also "undertook to pay the rent of the house till Lady Day 1851; as well as till the Midsummer following, the rent of [the] second house, which ... belongs to the Sisterhood and was necessary for those Sisters who could not be accommodated in the house."[3] This "second house" was, of course, the cottage which had been the home of the little community since July 1848. These arrangements meant that the financial problem did not become acute at once and the Vicar told Mr. Keble that "We are not at present in want of money, for the heaviest and main expenses are frankt to the end of the year. But the anxiety is boundless."[4]

The Vicar felt himself bound to continue the work of the penitentiary for a number of reasons. There was to be considered, the progress made by the Penitents already committed to the Home, and to whom irreparable harm might be done were they to be cast upon the world again. Again, other than the house recently opened at Clewer under Mrs. Tennant, there was in effect nowhere else to send the poor inmates. There were, it is true, a few penitentiaries and Magdalene homes which had been founded in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but they were only eight in number and their available accommodation was totally inadequate to meet the contemporary need. It was estimated that these few homes provided a total of four hundred and forty-one vacancies, while the number of prostitutes in the streets of London alone ran into thousands.[5] Added to this, the number of applicants who had had, already, to be refused admittance to the Wantage Home because of sheer lack of space told its own tale of the need that existed. In fact all the indications pointed not merely to the necessity that the work should not be relinquished, but rather that it should be enlarged.

I THE EXPERIMENT CONTINUES

(a) SISTER HARRIET AND SISTER CHARLOTTE

With regard to the doubts about the English Church entertained by

Sister Harriet, the Vicar gradually assisted her to lay them to rest. The secession of Henry Wilberforce was a serious blow to her, for she "felt she owed to him her very soul." Surely "the step he had taken must be right, and she would follow him and her friend Miss Lockhart, to whom she had deeply attached herself, into the Church of Rome. Thus she argued, but the Vicar would not let her go without seeking to convince her in calmer moments of her error, and to retain her in the English Church. He invited her to stay at the Vicarage; while there he not only instructed her daily as to the position of the Church of her baptism, but gradually gained the deep affection of her nature, and the visit was the beginning of a friendship which strengthened as the years went on."[6] But as late as July 1851 the Vicar noted that Sister Harriet was still "much tried by H.W.W's attempts to draw her to Rome."[7]

For a number of years Sister Charlotte continued to be known as the "Mistress of the Penitents," but in due course her "lay" status was to be abolished and she was to prepare to enter the Sisterhood on the same "choir" footing as Sister Harriet. This came about partly because in the situation that obtained it was quite unthinkable to try to maintain separate orders of "choir" and "lay" personnel. William Butler took expert advice before he actually made this decision, but it was to be of the utmost significance for the future life of the Community. From this precedent a principle governing the life of the Community was to be derived which was never to be altered or relinquished. No division into "choir" and "lay" has ever occurred since that time, and each Sister has always taken her part, so far as in her lay, in all the duties and domestic chores which would otherwise have been divided between two such orders.

(b) FINANCE

Financial matters were to remain a problem for many years, as will be seen in the course of this study. The upkeep of the Home remained dependent upon regular subscriptions and charitable donations, and later also upon help from the Church Penitentiary Association. In these early days Sisters were required to contribute towards their keep from their personal income, and the principle of accepting Sisters who had no private means was not established until a considerable time had elapsed. Indeed it is difficult to see how the work could have continued without the Sisters' contributions.

(c) GUIDANCE

In the absence of Miss Lockhart and having failed to find a suitable substitute to take her place as Superior of the little Community,

the Vicar himself assumed its guidance for the time being, while praying earnestly that someone would in time be forthcoming, who might fittingly undertake the task.

(d) WORK

For the next decade the work of the Home and the duties undertaken in the parish by the Sisterhood were to be carried on with the help of "Exterior" Sisters, occasional visitors and Sisters who offered themselves for short periods of service. The number of those who gave - or were indeed able to give - themselves permanently to the life of the Sisterhood increased very slowly at Wantage compared with the growth, for example, of the Sisterhood at Clewer. But it should be noticed that the principle of short-term service was an accepted one, and early forms of admission service give explicit recognition of it. But more will be said on these matters in due course.

II BISHOP WILBERFORCE

We must retrace our steps a little, in time, from the end of Chapter I, in order to pick up the strands of the life of the Sisterhood which were not severed with Miss Lockhart's departure and Archdeacon Manning's relinquishment of the direction of the Community. It was noted that in his perplexity the Vicar turned to his Bishop for advice. The Bishop, while deprecating any practices which seemed to savour of "popery", was, nevertheless, very interested in the growth of Sisterhood life in his diocese and did all he could to foster it, albeit with a few reservations in certain matters. He visited the Home to encourage and advise the Sisters. He also advised the Vicar to remove from the Sisterhood and to abolish in the house all "directly Romanizing things" which had "been introduced by Miss Lockhart and borne ... for her sake" although "objected to by me."[8] It is not clear what all these things were but it is probably safe to assume that they included the following :

1. The discontinuance of the use of some Latin devotions and Roman Catholic devotional books, and of ornaments such as crucifixes. In his letter to the Vicar of September 27th 1850, Bishop Wilberforce speaks of "sweeping away the Ora etc:, and ornaments..." Also in a letter of 1854 to an unknown correspondent at Clewer (perhaps Mrs. Monsell herself), the Bishop directs that the Sisters must not be allowed "to wear openly, or exhibit in their rooms, images or representations which the Church of England discourages."[9] This letter can be pressed into service because there is no reason to think that the Bishop had different views at the earlier period.

2. The Bishop may well have required a modification of the rule of Confession, such as it was. It has already been noted that Archdeacon Manning was known as the "Father Director" and that he had visited the Home at intervals, without doubt to give counsel and hear confessions. It will be remembered that Miss Lockhart had been under his direction before she ever came to Wantage. Bishop Wilberforce's views on confession, direction and the use of Roman Catholic devotions so far as Sisterhoods were concerned, were committed to writing and they are of sufficient importance to be quoted in some detail.

"Thus as to the disputed question of Confession, we must make provision that those whose consciences are burdened with any weighty matter may be able, before communicating, to open their grief to some discreet minister of God's Word and Sacraments, that by his ministry they may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice. But we must not provide that what the Church of England so manifestly treats as an occasional remedy for exceptional cases should become the established rule of their ordinary spiritual life. But here I must point out ... what appears to me a most important difference between what we provide and enjoin and what we allow or do not forbid. We must provide and enjoin what we consider to be in strict accordance with the mind of the Church of England; but as one of her leading principles is to leave a large liberty to the individual conscience, we shall be acting according to her teaching if ... we endeavour to lead her children to what we believe to be her mind ..." The Bishop goes on to say that the Church of England cannot provide for the life of Sisters "who would desire and probably have practised constant confession, [i.e. before entry, presumably] who would wish to submit their lives to the direction of a priest, who would crave after books of Roman Catholic devotion, simple or adapted [a dig at Dr. Pusey] and who would probably desire to wear and see crucifixes and the like." Nor did he think that Sisters should be allowed to practise continual confession to, or erect into directors the Warden or Chaplains of (the) house."[10]

Although the Vicar was himself an advocate for the use of Confession seeing it as an aid to greater holiness of life, he disagreed nevertheless with such practices as the "enforcement of fasting Communion", and the "making confession a matter of salvation, or at least a duty for every soul ..."[11] So although in many respects he held more "advanced" Tractarian views than Wilberforce he must have

concurred quite readily in the latter's requirements.

3. The Bishop definitely required a modification of the religious dress worn by the Sisters, and introduced by Miss Lockhart. Wilberforce's views on this subject were of the strongest, as may be illustrated by the following extract from a letter of 1865 to a clergyman who was seeking to restore the Benedictine life to the English Church.

"..(a) your adoption of a dress, never suited to English habits - and now pre-eminently unsuitable is a sacrifice of the kernel to the shell such as I have hardly ever seen equalled.
(b) That in adopting this startling exterior you are acting in direct opposition to the principle on which the Order you have did act. For they took the dress to help the work. You mar the work to have the dress ... you are sacrificing everywhere the great reality for which you have sacrificed yourself to the puerile imitation of a past phase of service which it is ... impossible for you to revive in England..."[12]

The Bishop did not need to use such strong language to William Butler. Indeed the Vicar testified that the Bishop always "enforced his opinions" "most tenderly and delicately".[13] The Vicar had, himself, always wished the Sisters to dress inconspicuously and the nearest contemporary account shows the Sisters as having reverted to "ordinary black dresses with linen collars and cuffs, and muslin or net caps with gophered borders, and tied under the chin."[14] The caps "with gophered borders" may have been a development from the earliest styles.

This extract from Wilberforce's letter also serves as an additional illustration of his idea that religious communities in the Church of England should not be slavish imitations of Roman Catholic orders.

4. There were minor changes in terminology. For example William Butler never assumed the title "Father Director" nor is there any evidence that the Sisters used it of him. Indeed he called himself "Bishop's Commissary", seeing his authority over the Sisterhood as derived from that of the Bishop.

5. Regarding the question of the permanency of residence of the Sisters within the Community. It is not known exactly how Miss

Lockhart had viewed the question of vows but she certainly intended, on first coming to Wantage, to dedicate herself for life, and she may have expressed herself on the subject in terms of "consecration" or "profession". Bishop Wilberforce's attitude was that the implications contained in such terms 'savoured of the worst evils of Rome', and he would not tolerate the idea of vows, nor would he consent to the binding of Sisters to the life by a promise of perpetual fidelity. His views may be illustrated by the following extract from a letter to a priest who consulted him about a young woman who wished to dedicate her life to God.

"My dear M. - It is not possible for me to read the account you have given me of this young person without great interest and a deep sympathy in her religious desires. Gladly would I strengthen by any allowed ministrations of mine such holy purposes and acts. But when you ask me to give her the apostolical benediction on her 'public resolution of chastity and devotion to Christ', you ask me to do what, with my sense of the certain danger and probable unlawfulness of vows which Christ has not appointed, it is quite impossible for me to do. Such a resolution made publicly and in appearance and intention confirmed by a Bishop's act is, whatever distinction may be discovered by an ingenious mind, really, and bona fide, a vow. A secret resolution can only bind a person sub modo. But such a public and official engagement, if it means anything, means that without a like sanction the engagement will not be relaxed. Now even a secret resolution of chastity, etc, is what I should dissuade ...

No one has, without God's express appointment, a right, in my judgment, to bind themselves for the future in such matters. Let them follow the guiding hand of God from day to day and rely for persevering in a course of right or service on His daily gifts of guiding, enlightening, strengthening grace, and not on the strength of any past vow or resolution..."[15]

Bishop Wilberforce maintained these views throughout his episcopate and they applied to all the communities in his diocese with which he had dealings. In 1862 in a debate on Sisterhoods in the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury he stated that in his diocese he had "uniformly made it the condition of [his] connection with these institutions that their statutes shall state explicitly that the inmates are bound only so long as they please to continue in the Society."[16]

A.M. Allchin suggests[17] that the Bishop may have required the relinquishment of contact with Dr. Pusey, drawing this inference from a situation which arose at Clewer at a later date. This may have been the case certainly, but it seems open to doubt on one or two counts. In the first place, although the Vicar knew Dr. Pusey, there is little evidence at present that the latter had been sufficiently concerned in the earliest foundation of the Wantage Sisterhood to warrant such a prohibition. In the second place when further troubles occurred a few years later, the Vicar went and actually had a long talk with Dr. Pusey about Sisterhoods. Unless such an interdict had been temporary, it is inconceivable that Butler would have done this as he was deeply imbued with the Tractarian spirit of submission to episcopal authority, and his loyalty and obedience to Wilberforce are not in question.

Whatever the modifications required however, Bishop Wilberforce did in fact leave the Vicar free to promote the life and work of the Sisterhood in his own way, always holding himself available to help and advise. The Bishop even left the Vicar free to use practices of a more "high" or "advanced" nature than he himself quite approved. This came about because the Bishop had complete faith in Butler's obedience to the Church of England. He had written of Butler in 1848:[18] "He seems to me more to combine the good of the Evangelical Party with the devotion of the High Church than almost any young man I know. His only danger is on the latter side."
Bishop Wilberforce's strong views about the danger of "Romanizing" may seem a little excessive. But in view of the antagonism towards Rome which prevailed in the Church of England and when it is remembered that his brothers and both his brothers-in-law all became Roman Catholics, thus disrupting a very close family unity, a distortion in his views is understandable. Wilberforce was a very affectionate man and a sensitive one in many ways.

III OPPOSITION

The next few years after the secessions were hard and anxious ones for William Butler and the Sisterhood. Accusations of "popery" were made by people ignorant of the motives which governed both the Vicar and the Sisters. The year 1850 also saw the restoration of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and followers of the Oxford Movement were accused of complicity in this act of the Pope. In the parish of Wantage, because of his zeal for "high" doctrine, Butler

had to face local persecution. For example, abusive slogans were chalked on walls and the Sisters went out at night with buckets of water to wash them off.

In this same year pamphlets on the subject of Sisterhoods began to appear. The Bishop of Brechin published a "Plea for Sisterhoods" and extracts from an anonymous and hostile reply to this will demonstrate the kind of opposition which was being aroused against Sisterhoods in general, let alone calumniation of particular ones:

"As the Monastic System (in a modified form) is gradually reviving in England by the formation of the establishments that are termed 'Homes' or 'Sisterhoods' of Mercy, the expediency of this system has become of great importance..."[19]

"Upon the slight and superficial view that is generally taken of the "Sisterhoods", they are calculated to prepossess the mind very strongly in their favour because they appear to be simply, and bona fide asylums for pious women who have no duties to fulfil in the world." The writer goes on to say that it is under this aspect alone that they can be considered with approval by "anyone of right principle." He asserts that a 'Monomania on Sisterhoods is now raging.' But on a closer view Sisterhoods cannot be regarded favourably."

"It is more difficult than is commonly supposed to furnish an establishment of this description with suitable inmates, that is, with desolate and destitute persons, who have no tie of kindred, and no allotted duty, that ought to bind them to their homes; for by the wise ordering of Providence, almost every individual occupies some useful post, however humble, in the social system. At all events, experience teaches that Sisterhoods, whether Romish or Protestant, are never actually composed of unshackled persons alone; but that abuses upon this point creep in as soon as such institutions are formed. It is natural that this should be the case, for the religious character of these Asylums presents a snare to women of enthusiastic imagination, however strictly they may be bound by family ties: they vainly expect to find within the walls of the Convent a sanctity not attainable in the fulfilment of domestic duties, and are thus allowed to quit the path marked out by Providence, for a "via sacra" of their own choice."[20]

The writer objects to the term "Home" having been adopted. "Unless it be to soothe the consciences of the Sisters in the desertion of their natural homes; but it is certainly anti-Scriptural to apply the word "Home" in a religious sense, to any earthly abode."[21]

IV"PRESSING FORWARD"

In the face of such misunderstandings and distortions of fact William Butler put his faith in God and went forward with the work of the Sisterhood, living in faith from day to day. In spite of earlier disappointments he had not given up the hope that he might still be able to build up educational work by means of a school sisterhood. The Penitentiary had to be kept up but he continued to seek ways and means by which his primary educational object might be fulfilled. In a letter to an unknown correspondent dated "26th Sunday after Trinity" 1850, he wrote:

"...You will be glad to hear that by God's mercy the good work is prospering, and that I see my way to that favourite idea of mine in former days, the double sisterhood for Penitents and Schools."[22] This note of hope was imparted by the possibility that a Miss Elizabeth Hayes, who had recently come to work in the parish, might in time prove to be a suitable person to undertake the management of a School Sisterhood. There is some evidence that this lady was recommended to Mr. Butler by Dr. Pusey.[23]

By 1850 the Vicar had already begun to establish National Schools in Wantage, but the overall provision for education in the town was totally inadequate. He wanted the help of a Sisterhood in building up local schools. The rooms not occupied by Sisters in the Cottage in Newbury Street which had been the home of the Sisters before the establishment of the Penitentiary, were taken over for the purpose of housing the teaching staff of the girls' school. Miss Hayes took up her abode in this house and was soon placed in charge of it. For the formation of an actual Sisterhood in connection with the schools, the Vicar was content to wait and observe the inclinations and development of those who joined the staff at the Cottage.

THE "HOME" 1.

Life at the Home in Newbury Street was strenuous because of the fewness of the Sisters and the demands both of the Penitentiary and of the parish. The monastic way of life was maintained, but such

observances as meals taken in silence had not come into force. Sisters and visitors to the house dined and talked together, certainly at mid-day. Sometimes the Vicar would bring his children to visit the Sisters and there would be great hilarity! The dining room was situated to the left of the front door on entry from the street; the room known at the present time as the "Little Drawing Room" where visitors to St. Mary's School are received.

A somewhat prison-like atmosphere was imparted to the Home by the doors being kept locked. Evidently the Sister acting as portress kept the key of the front door attached to her dress, and when visitors had been admitted, the door would instantly be re-locked behind them. Obviously this kind of precaution was necessary because the house abuts directly on to the street, and it was (and remains) easy for intruders to enter, quite apart from the ever-present possibility that penitents might abscond.

2. EXTERIOR SISTERS

A most important move made in 1850 was the formal creation of an order of "Exterior Sisters"[24] to assist in the work and prayer of the Sisterhood. A number of the visiting ladies, who came from time to time and gave periods of assistance to the Sisterhood, became Exterior Sisters. The part played by the Exterior Sisters was quite invaluable, and their importance to the Community is attested by their inclusion as an integral part of the Sisterhood in the earliest Constitutions. Some Exterior Sisters devoted a considerable proportion of their time each year to the Sisterhood when they could, but their basic pledge bound them :- to pray daily for the work; to assist in raising funds, and to help find situations for penitents whose time at the Home came to an end.[25] Any woman of suitable character who was free to do so might become an Exterior Sister, whether she was married or single, and the first name recorded in the roll, under the year 1850, is that of Emma Butler, the indefatigable, devoted and scholarly wife of the Vicar. Among her many services to the Home Mrs. Butler included that of Treasurer to the Penitentiary, a post which she filled for many years. In the same year five others were admitted, including Amelia Pretyman whose connexion with the Sisterhood began in Elizabeth Lockhart's time. Some women who were not free to offer themselves to the regular Sisterhood became Exterior Sisters in the first instance. A number of names upon the roll are of people who achieved much in their own walks of life, not least among whom is that of Charlotte Yonge, for example. (1868).

Most, if not all, of the Sisterhoods which were formed in the Anglican Communion as a result of the Oxford Movement created what might be termed an "outer circle" of people who wished to have a link with Community life. These were known as "Associates." In the Sisterhood at Wantage, however, Exterior Sisters seem to have preceded Associates in time of foundation, although a number of priests early became "Priest-Associates" of the Sisterhood. The Associate rule was a very much simpler one than that of the Exterior Sisters, and the Associates fulfilled a slightly different role. Exterior Sisters committed themselves more deeply than Associates. Many Associates rendered great services, however, but did not feel themselves called, or were unable, to bind themselves by the rule of the Exterior Sisters.

Between the regular Sisterhood and the Exterior Sisters there existed a relationship which brought incalculable mutual enrichment, and in the early days, Exterior Sisters often acted as substitutes in the absences of members of the Community.

THE EARLY RULES FOR EXTERIOR SISTERS[26]

"Their office shall be to assist the Resident Sisters." "Residence" was taken to apply to any house of the Sisterhood as the work expanded, and Exterior Sisters were often used in Branch Houses."

The assistance rendered by the Exterior Sisters was first, by prayer. A form of prayer for the Sisterhood was given to the Exterior Sisters which they were to use daily. By making the first section of the Exterior Rule that of a duty to assist the Sisters by prayer, the religious aim is made primary. This runs parallel to the development of the Rules of the resident Sisterhood, although interestingly enough the purely spiritual object of the life of the Sisterhood itself, is not given a separate section in the earliest constitutions, but is immediately combined with the expression of the practical object of the Home.

Secondly, if it lay in their power, the Exterior Sisters were to assist by their alms, or "by collecting alms from others". They were also to give "personal assistance in case of need, by taking for a time the place of any that are sick, or preparing Penitents for admission to the Home."

Thirdly, Exterior Sisters were to endeavour "to find employment for the Penitents while in the Home, and situations for them when they leave it."

If they desired it, the Exterior Sisters could be admitted as Exterior Sisters "with a special service", and they were also free to use the Home "as a place of Retreat from time to time, and (to) join the Sisters in the Services of the Chapel." The Sisterhood pledged itself to send the Exterior Sisters an annual ..."Report ... of the conditions and prospects of the work."

Finally, it was "considered inexpedient that Exterior Sisters of St.Mary's should become members of other Sisterhoods, (i.e. while they remained Exterior Sisters) or that Exterior or Associate Sisters of other Sisterhoods should connect themselves in the same manner with this."

There is no doubt that many of the earliest Exterior Sisters kept their rules with great fidelity. There are, later on, records of much coming and going of these ladies to and from the Home and other houses of the Community. There is also evidence of their efforts to place Penitents in suitable situations and of alms given in the form of money or gifts.

1851

No formal records were kept by the Community itself of its life and work for more than ten years after its foundation, and the material that exists is very scanty. Such small historical compilations as have been made hitherto have in some degree suffered from the lack of evidence in such matters as correct dating of certain events. A little more material has been found of late and an effort will be made here to present what is yet known as accurately as possible.

In spite of all the traumatic experience of 1850, William Butler and his little Sisterhood faced the New Year of 1851 with courage and determination. The help of visitors in the work was still forthcoming, often at considerable cost to themselves. The Vicar saw this, and the hopeful fruit beginning to be borne among the penitents, as signs that the Hand of God was upon the work in spite of all seeming evidence to the contrary. He wrote to John Keble on January 9th :

"Many Happy New Years to you and yours and all at Hursley. It seems strange to write so blithely in this day of sorrow, but I think in spite of all there was no harm in wishing and even hoping ... Miss Hedger (Sister Catherine) deserves great consideration, for she came here in the hour of our need without having any kind of

acquaintance with us or our work, merely invited by a mutual friend. She has now given up home and sisters, after a bitter struggle, to uphold our Home, and is moreover able and discreet. Things have prospered under her care beyond our hopes ... It would be an exceeding pleasure to us to shew you "the Home". You know that Miss Ashington is likely to come here again as a permanent Sister; she talks of coming on 20th or 21st."[27]

There is no exact record of Miss Ashington's arrival to join the resident Sisterhood. The earliest register of Sisters seems to be at fault in dating her arrival as late as 1857. She had had to fulfil family duties and to obtain the consent of her brother before she could come. Miss Ashington ended her days in the Community and she was known as "Sister Elizabeth". She was far from robust physically but did what she could. This admission to the Community of people who were not in full physical health has continued whenever it has seemed that such persons are, so far as it can be ascertained by human minds, called by God to the life, and able to sustain it fairly well.

At the beginning of February 1851 the Vicar summed up the happenings of the past year in an entry in the Parish Journal. A little of the cost to himself is revealed too, though in no self-pitying mood :

"Feb.1st This is the day of the week on which at this time last year the Home was opened. It returns our thoughts to the whole course of this sorrowful year, the Gorham decision, the doubts of so many, their falling from us, our own difficulties, the suspicions in which those are held which alone we believe to be in accordance with the revealed Will of God. Then it is sad enough to think of the bright hopefulness with which we received Miss L. among us, the prospect of a long and useful course of work from her, our many conversations, and our deep sympathies, now alas shivered to pieces. Still the Home has flourisht under God's blessing and Vincent's constant work - and our institutions, schools, services, etc., would, I am convinced, flourish also unless for our slackness and want of energy and prayer. O Lord, of Thy Mercy strengthen our feeble knees and sinking hands; let not one sinfulness mar that work which Thou hast begun among us. Make us able to cast all things else aside save the desire to serve Thee. Enable us to bear hardships as good soldiers of Christ, for His Sake Who died and was buried and rose again for us. I preacht this evening at the Home."

And on the following day :

"Feb.2nd. The Anniversary of the opening of the Home. Vicar preacht at the Home. All were present, even Elizabeth, who, as we thought, was dying weeks ago, mustered strength to come down to Service. There was indeed much to cheer hearts somewhat cast out and wearied."

These entries illustrate how, amidst all the normal business of the parish, the Vicar yet found time to preach twice at the Home to sustain and hearten those who lived and worked there, and how his concern extended itself to each poor inmate. Again, in spite of all the pressures the Vicar could write cheerfully to Keble, later in the year:

"We are all very strong and hearty - In the Home are eleven Penitents and five Sisters, and we just keep about £120 between us and jail!" [28]

During 1851 three more intending Sisters offered themselves, probably in the Spring or early Summer, but there is no record of their permanent residence.

The whole enterprise necessitated the exercise of the utmost faith and fortitude. That there should be struggles of one kind or another was inevitable, particularly in so untried a way of life, and it is in many ways remarkable that the experiment continued. An extract from the Parish Journal hints at difficulties :

"July 12. Various troubles at the Home, needing a pacifying hand. This is to be expected. They want (i.e. "lack") variety which produces a morbid state of mind just as one diet produces a morbid state of body."

Later in July the Vicar received a visit which gave a lift to his hopes :

"July 28 ... Two ladies named Watkins from Badby Hall near Daventry, called here this day desirous of (the next words are illegible but probably from the context 'gaining themselves a house in the Parish') for the sake of daily service etc. I shewed them Hart's house and Liddiards. They appear quite religious people, likely if they can, to be very useful." These ladies were two out of a family of five sisters who were later to render outstanding service to the Parish.

They took up residence in Wantage in November 1851.[29]

There appears to have been some liaison with the Penitentiary work at Clewer, by this time proceeding under the direction of Thomas Thellusson Carter, Rector of Clewer. There are a few entries in the Parish Journal which refer to girls or women who had evidently been sent to Clewer, either to the Home there, through lack of space at Wantage, or possibly to service with sympathisers connected with the Home.

THE PUPIL-TEACHER SCHEME

A scheme which was destined to play an important part in the work of the Wantage schools and in connexion with the Sisterhood was initiated in Wantage either in 1850 or 1851. This scheme concerned the introduction of the pupil-teacher and monitor system to Wantage. The girl pupil teachers took up their abode in the Old Cottage in Newbury Street, and were put under Miss Hayes' charge.

The pupil-teacher system had been introduced into the Church of England by Dr. Andrew Bell early in the nineteenth century. Dr. Bell had been an army chaplain in Madras, and as he used the pupil-teacher method there, the scheme was sometimes referred to as the 'Madras' method. In 1846 and 1847 the Government Education Department issued a series of regulations concerning pupil-teachers and their use in government-aided schools.[30]

The pupil-teachers and monitors were drawn from among older school-children and a considerable proportion of their time was spent in instructing those younger than themselves, under the overall supervision of very few masters and mistresses. At a time when trained teachers were few in number the scheme provided a means whereby a good deal of teaching could be done on very little money and with very little adult supervision. Inadequate though the system was, it did fill important gaps at a time when the necessity for general education was beginning to be realized. Some of the pupil teachers made outstanding contributions and the system continued for more than half a century.

PLANS FOR BUILDING

During the course of 1851 the Vicar, the Chaplain and the Sisters themselves, discussed plans for building a permanent home. It was proposed that about three acres of land should be obtained, and a home built, with a Chapel, to accommodate about thirty Penitents and six Sisters. It was also proposed that the grounds should be properly walled in, a paling being considered insufficient, and it

was felt that as much of the building should be done at one time as was possible, because of the "great risk" of having labourers in close proximity to the Penitents.

The cost of the buildings was estimated at about £5000 and an appeal was sent out, addressed to all members of the Church of England, as Penitents were received from different parts of the country. Especially, however, the appeal was addressed "to those in Oxford, for which city and neighbourhood" it could notbut be thought that the Wantage Home "should naturally become the Penitentiary."[31]

APPENDIX I (1851)

"Is It Well to Institute Sisterhoods In The Church Of England For The Care Of Female Penitents?"[32]

In 1851 T.T. Carter of Clewer published a pamphlet with the above title. It is possible that he wrote the pamphlet as a reply to the hostile' "Sisterhoods" considered ...' published in 1850 (v.s.) There are certain points raised in the pamphlet which merit discussion as being relevant to the present study.

After referring to the penitentiary movement which was getting under way at this time, the author states that the care of the Penitents "can be accomplished ... only by the personal service of women of birth, education and refinement." Although in the main penitentiary work was, at this juncture, being carried out by "women of birth," this was largely because they had both the means and the time to devote to such work. Indeed the very idea and growth of the movement had a strong connexion with the fact that in many large families there were unmarried daughters living at home partly employed in housekeeping, but otherwise in trivial pursuits. Many such women were at this period becoming restless for some real work and for opportunities of service to the community at large. There was a very high proportion of unmarried persons of both sexes at this period. Professor J.F.C. Harrison states that "in 1851 almost forty per cent of all women in England and Wales between twenty and forty-four were unmarried."[33]

T.T. Carter also deals with some of the objections currently being raised: "It is feared for example, lest such close intercourse with the fallen should injure the pure." In this context it is not relevant to quibble about the morals of many upper class women of the nineteenth century. The author goes on to say that experience has shown "that the purest and most simple characters are best fitted for the work, and the most certain to remain in it uninjured." He also asserts "that there is far more likelihood of hearing improper expressions and sad details of sin in outdoor visiting among the poor, than within the House of Mercy."

Lastly, the author also refers to the attitude of the Sisters towards the Penitents. There can be little doubt that William Butler and the Wantage Sisters felt in exactly the same way about their

Penitents as the Clewer authorities about theirs.

"The common feeling regarding the Penitents, among the Sisters, is, that their life has begun afresh. The object and bent of their work is to teach and to train for the future, without realizing the past, except that the poor girl has been the child of misery, and probably of neglect and misfortune. Their care and discipline is directed not to the special sin, which has been her wretched claim to such a home, but to the education of the character, the want of which has been the real precursor to her fall. There is in truth a practical unconsciousness of the poor girl's former life in the Sisters' minds, just as in the girl herself there is an instinctive disposition to conceal her own cause of shame ..."

APPENDIX II (1848-1852) THE CHURCH PENITENTIARY ASSOCIATION

It has already been noted that the public conscience was beginning to awake to the widespread problem of prostitution. The Rev. John Armstrong, had brought the subject forward as early as September 1848 when he published an article in the "Quarterly Review". In this article he urged private philanthropic endeavour to remedy the trouble on a religious basis. Mr. Armstrong published further articles, and in 1849 he issued an "Appeal For A Church Penitentiary." He envisaged a two-fold plan: the establishment of penitentiaries in towns as "refuges 'into which sinners from the very streets might at once be gathered'; together with penitentiaries in the country 'to which the more promising cases might be transferred from the refuges, after due testing, for the purpose of a more complete training.'"[34] At first there had been no thought of Sisterhoods in relation to the plan, and indeed in 1848 Sisterhoods were barely beginning. But it came to be felt that the life of Sisterhoods would furnish the best medium for the care of Penitents.

The first penitentiary to be founded under Mr. Armstrong's scheme was the House of Mercy at Bussage in Gloucestershire, established in 1851. This house came into the hands of the Wantage Sisters at a later date, but the home was run at first by a sisterhood formed for the purpose, dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels.

In 1852 a group of churchmen and philanthropists founded the Church Penitentiary Association, in London. In his Parish Journal William Butler noted that the object of the Association "is to gather money and assist the various 'Homes' and 'Houses of Refuge' under the charge of Sisters".[35] The Penitentiaries were to serve women and girls who were either prostitutes already, or who had little chance of avoiding such a life, if they were left to fend for themselves on the streets. That the system met a felt need among the poor women themselves, was shown by the hundreds of voluntary applications for admission received by the early penitentiaries.

1852

The year 1852 saw developments of the work in the parish which the Vicar hoped would eventually be undertaken by sisters. He kept a careful eye upon Miss Hayes and the Misses Watkins while warmly appreciating their work and encouraging them to undertake new ventures. Miss Lucy Watkins was, however, already committed to enter the St. Saviour's Sisterhood in London, so soon as she could be replaced at Wantage.

At some time in these early years life in the cottage in Newbury Street began to assume a monastic pattern, under Miss Hayes' leadership. This development may have begun as early as 1852, but was certainly in force by 1854. From this tentative beginning the Vicar hoped that a school sisterhood might develop.

The Parish Journal for 1852 furnishes some evidence of the events of the year relative to the Sisterhood and the quasi-sisterhood at the Old Cottage. FINANCIAL. A number of money gifts were noted by the Vicar with gratitude as the work of the Home continued to depend upon charity. Likewise a heavy expenditure was recorded resulting from the withdrawal of free service to the Home which had hitherto been given by the local doctor, Mr. Barker:
"We have been much pained this week[36] by an unfortunate disagreement with Mr. B ["arker" crossed out], with whom we have hitherto been on very good terms. He offered very kindly to take 'the Home' gratuitously and we naturally expected, as he placed no limit to his office, that this would extend onwards till we brought it to a close. However to our great surprise, he brought in a bill of 65£ besides private bills to the Sisters and then told us that he had never intended to go on longer than last year ..." Such a sum would have been a substantial drain upon the resources of the Sisterhood. NEW VENTURES. Three important new ventures were embarked upon under the direction of Miss Hayes. The first was the establishment, in February, of a "Workschool for the girls of the parish who are past school age. They are to receive 1s. weekly and their work to be sold. This will be a great thing for them, enabling the Mothers to spare them from that demoralising habit of carrying babies about for 6d. a week ..."[37] More explicitly the Workschool was for the benefit of "girls who have been at least two years in the School and are over 13 years old. They learn needlework and household work ..."[38] Although 13 years seems a low age for school leaving to modern minds, in the mid-nineteenth century it was still

customary for children of poor parents to be withdrawn from school at about ten years of age for the purpose of earning wages to supplement meagre family budgets. So the workschool scheme provided both some education and some money.

The second venture was the establishment of "a Middle School in connection with the Day School". This move seems almost to have been forced upon the Vicar, since he desired to provide educational opportunities for all classes, and the tradesmen were objecting to sending their children to school "with the rest". In those days, before compulsory attendance at school, parents often prevented their children from attending for the most trivial reasons. The Vicar remarked: "I don't like falling in with this. It seems like giving up a principle and assuming the labourers' children must be dirty and ill-behaved, but I cannot avoid my present course." Clearly he had had no intention of creating class distinctions in his schools being impressed with continental educational methods, where "all classes meet in school."[39]

A small room in the Girls' National School was equipped as a class room for the Middle School. A small weekly charge was made; 6d. up to the age of twelve and 1s. thereafter. Miss Lucy Watkins presided over this new branch of the Wantage educational effort. Before long, however, the room became too small for the increasing number of pupils and the Middle School removed to a larger room situated above the outhouses of the Old Cottage in Newbury Street.

The third venture concerned Miss Hayes herself. In the spring of this year she sat the examination for the Government Teacher's Certificate travelling to Clevedon, near Bristol, for this purpose. Miss Hayes was the first member of the Wantage schools establishment to try for this certificate. Such a venture was very much a part of the Vicar's plans for his teachers, and it became henceforth an accepted thing that suitable candidates should enter for this Certificate, which was the only available qualification for teachers at the time. This must have been particularly important for Women, as university education was not yet open to them.[40]

HOLY COMMUNION

In this year the Vicar included a monthly celebration at the Home in a scheme to provide more frequent services of Holy Communion for the parish. When he came to Wantage there was a monthly celebration on the first Sunday in the month at the parish church. Now he

proposed to increase the services, changing the venue each week. The first Sunday continued to be Communion Sunday at the Church. On the second Sunday there was a celebration at the Workhouse Chapel, St. Michael on the Downs. Now there was to be a service at the Home on the third Sunday, and at Charlton on the last. The Workhouse Chapel and Charlton Church were both recently built. This scheme also made it possible for more people to participate, since for example, the Workhouse was too far from the town for elderly people to be able to attend the parish Church without means of conveyance.

MORE OPPOSITION

Although persecution of the Vicar and the Sisters for "Puseyism" had largely died out by this time, certainly from among members of the Church of England, and there was no longer a likelihood that personal violence might be offered to the Vicar; dissenting interests were, however, still quite fiercely antagonistic. During the early part of Butler's incumbency of Wantage there was a ding-dong battle going on between orthodox and dissent for possession of the souls of the Wantage people. Early in 1852 the Wesleyan preacher undertook to 'unmask Puseyism' in three public lectures given in the town. In the last of these Mr. Mayer, the preacher in question, attacked the Home and its Chaplain. But although many Wantage people attended these lectures, it does not appear that any violence was offered to the Sisters as a result, though they may well have had to bear more general opprobrium. The Vicar, however, was strong in his faith that the work so fairly established was of God and would not be hindered. Awkward and painful though these attacks were, he wrote: "I have no fear that he [Mr. Mayer] or anyone else will hinder this work. We ourselves alone can do that. Lack of care or lack of prayer will (deliver us into) the hands of the enemy ..."[41]

CONCERNING THE SISTERS AND THE PENITENTS

Along with his unceasing and increasing toil in the Parish, the Vicar continued to guide the Sisters of St. Mary's Home. He paid them frequent visits, often officiated at Sunday Evensong and preached there. Vincent was, of course, the regular Chaplain and on occasion other members of the staff of curates took duty at the Home. These contacts, together with the work of the Sisters in the parish, helped to establish the idea in peoples' minds that the Sisterhood was an integral part of the parochial machinery.

(i) A FIRST ADMISSION SERVICE

On February 2nd, 1852 the Vicar noted the "anniversary of the commencement of the Home", and for the first time in the life of the Sisterhood there is a reference to a formal service of admission of Sisters as such. Before this we can only assume that some kind of admission took place at the actual opening of the Home in 1850. The entry in the Journal continues: "Vicar addrest the Sisters and prepared a short form of Prayer for their admission as Sisters. It consisted of two questions, askt solemnly and solemnly answered and prayers for grace. The Bishop heartily approved." No copy of this earliest form of admission remains to us, but it may be permitted to conjecture what the questions were likely to have been from later forms of service, in which the Sisters answered more than two questions. The basic questions were probably somewhat as follows :

"Dost thou, solemnly and in the Presence of God desire to devote thyself to His Service?"

And:

"Dost thou solemnly and in the Presence of God, promise that thou wilt endeavour, so long as thou belongest to this Society, and art engaged in this Work, to keep the Rules to the best of thine ability?"

Such formal admission, even though of a very simple kind, represented a distinct step in the development of the monastic life of the Community.

(ii) WORK WITH THE PENITENTS

In this year July 22nd, St. Mary Magdalene's day, was kept as a day of festival and holiday for the inmates of St. Mary's Home. For the next few years the Penitents had a holiday round about this date each year. It made a welcome break in their strict regimen. In 1852 the Penitents were taken up on to the Downs and spent a happy day in the open air. Clearly though, they were still objects of curiosity to the local inhabitants. The Vicar commented : "We managed to escape the gazers who had they known of it would have been on the lookout, and the day past happily and I think profitably. They [the girls] learnt how to be happy and innocent at the same time."[42]

One or two more intimate pictures remain which demonstrate the

personal care given to each penitent and the close involvement of the Vicar with the work. The Vicar recorded in the Journal for June 7th: "A very busy day - chiefly, however, spent at the Home. A Penitent who for nearly a fortnight has been like one possest, proud, calm and callous determined to go, this day by God's great mercy was brought round again. It has been a most anxious case ..." This may have been the girl of whom Mr. Vincent wrote that it had been "advisable to separate from her fellow Penitents one, who, from the effects of former dissipation, could not bear the excitement of numbers; who, in fact under excitement became for the time insane: her we removed to the second house."[43] (i.e. The Cottage). This story may well concern the Penitent for whom three of her colleagues in the Home banded together "to win her by their prayers to remain. They asked permission to be allowed to spend a day in fasting and prayer in behalf of their companion. This was not allowed them, but the Chaplain, having spoken to them collectively and ascertained that all desired to help her, consented to their giving up their breakfast and spending their time in devotion which he himself conducted. Before the day closed they had the joy of having their companion among them, willing and anxious to remain."[44] This incident demonstrates the very real importance of the religious teaching given at the Home, at least to some of the inmates.

One further incident will illustrate the power for good being exerted by the Home. "A Penitent was dying of consumption. Her constant prayer for nearly a year was that a Sister (of her own) whom she knew to be living a life of sin, might be led to repentance. As each newcomer (to the Home) was admitted, she eagerly inquired her name. After many disappointments the poor sufferer had at length the happiness of welcoming the sister for whose salvation she had so earnestly supplicated. The other had heard of her dying condition and had walked all the way from Bristol to see her."[45] Apparently the sister travelled as far as Reading with a man, but she quarrelled with him and went her own way. On reaching Wantage she took lodgings in the town and then went to the Home. "When she knocked at the door she had neither knowledge of, nor desire for, repentance. Her visit ended in her remaining and attending on her sister during the last weeks of her life ..."[46] On the death of the consumptive the sister remained at the Home for her own rehabilitation.

(iii) MISS HEDGER

In the autumn of 1852 the Sisters and the work of the Home sustained a loss. Mr. Vincent wrote: "The lady of whom I spoke in (a) former account, as coming to our assistance after our first great loss, and who has since taken the lead in superintending the work, has been obliged to leave us from ill-health. Suddently, in the autumn, some painful symptoms manifested themselves; and that the disease might not be aggravated, it was evidently necessary that she should give up the work ..." He went on to refer to the debt owed to her by all at the Home.[47] Although in this report anonymity was preserved in reference to this lady, there can be no doubt that it referred to Miss Catherine Hedger. Miss Hedger did, however, remain in touch with the Home as an Exterior Sister.

This event made the lack of a Superior even more painfully felt.

(iv) CHURCH PENITENTIARY ASSOCIATION

In this year the Vicar himself attended the first annual meeting of the Church Penitentiary Association, on behalf of the Home. Later Vincent represented Wantage at these meetings. The Vicar does not seem to have been particularly impressed by the society at first: "They have not begun, I think, very wisely. Their stock of cash is £123 and they have engaged room and clerk to cost £200 per annum. I believe that works of this kind are not to be carried on by Committees and Councils, and the like."[48] But much help was to be given to Wantage in later years and no doubt the Vicar revised his opinion.

(v) HELP FROM CLEWER

In his report for the year 1852 the Chaplain referred to the Clewer Sisterhood. On being appealed to they helped the Wantage Sisterhood both by taking Penitents who could not be accommodated at Wantage, and by sending Sisters to reinforce the little band at the Home. The Clewer Sisterhood grew much more rapidly than the Wantage Sisterhood at this time. The Chaplain wrote:

"To the Sisterhood at Clewer we owe a debt of gratitude. Long tried themselves by the same wants, but now strengthened in their numbers, they have said that we should never fail for want of hands to carry on the work, so long as they had one they could spare. Long and faithfully have they assisted us. Yet it would be as wrong that we should rest content with their assistance, as it is loving and Christian on their part to assist us as they have."[49]

CONCLUSION. (vi) FINANCE AT THE END OF 1852

At the end of 1852 the financial situation of the Home was still precarious. Expenses were of the order of £500 or £600 per annum, of which there was regularly available "little more than £30 of annual subscription, besides the payments of the Sisters,"[50] who still contributed annually from their private incomes. These sums, even together with collections made by Exterior Sisters, had not amounted to more than £250. The rest of the money depended upon donations. In one sense the Wantage authorities recognized that it was good to live from day to day, trusting in God to provide. But with the increasing responsibilities being undertaken by the Sisters at the Home itself let alone works in the parish, some security was really needed in order to allay the constant anxiety which even the most trusting Christians could hardly fail to experience in regard to provision for the care of those in their charge. Even now the work could still collapse from several causes and with the loss of Miss Hedger the small work force was seriously diminished, every pair of hands being of vital importance, and presumably her regular payment became smaller also.

APPENDIX III

The 1852 'Report' and 'Appeal' appended the 'Rules of the Penitents' which obtained at the period treated in this chapter. Those regarding 'Admission, Time of Remaining' etc:, are appended here,others will be treated later. It should be noted that the title "Mother Superior" is used, although no one had been formally appointed as yet. No doubt the rules were drawn up either in Miss Lockhart's time or if later, then with an eye to the future.

"1. On entering the House they (i.e. the Penitents) shall change their own clothes for those provided for them. Their own shall be returned to them on their leaving the House.
2. They shall not retain the use of their family name. But always be called by their Christian names whilst in the Home.
3. The time of their remaining in the Home shall be fixed by the Mother Superior, according to the circumstances of the case.
4. On their departure they shall be returned to their parents, or friends, or placed in some suitable situation.
5. Should any Penitent wish herself to leave the Home, she must, after the first month, give notice of her intention to the Mother Superior, and she will not, unless for some special reason, be allowed to go out until the third day after such notice has been given; but if any one conduct herself in a disrespectful or disobedient manner, or prove in any way a subject of scandal to her companions, she shall be dismissed at the discretion of the Mother Superior, without attending to the above regulations.
6. If any wish always to remain in the Home, they shall be kept, if they have the requisite dispositions of humility, docility and obedience. Those who thus remain in the Home, will observe the Rules and so far as applicable to them, the exercises of the other Penitents, but will also be permitted to keep the hours with the Sisters."[51]

(Clause 6 indicates the beginning of a work which has never up to the present time been entirely relinquished, although the categories of person entering today, and the life they live in the Convent have altered. Their life is less strict. But the full story belongs to a later period).

NOTES : CHAPTER II

1. P. 10.
2. L&L, p.138.
3. Pusey House. Vol.1852 321-346. No.323 p.9.
4. Ibid.
5. L&L, p.138.
6. F. Warre Cornish "History of the English Church In The 19th Century" Vol.II p.72.
7. L&L p.139.
8. P.J. Vol.I July 12, 1851.
9. cf Letter quoted in Ch.I p. and Parish Journal June 12 1850.
10. "Life of Bishop Wilberforce" R.G. Wilberforce. Vol.III Ch.XII p.327.
11. Ibid. p.326.
12. Quoted in Horton Davies "Worship And Theology In England" Vol.IV p.133 (cf L&L).
13. Bodleian MS Wilberforce c.15.44-48.
14. Life of Wilberforce op.cit. p.333.
15. MS C.S.M.V. U.P. Miss Lampet's reminiscences.
16. Life of Wilberforce p.331, letter of Nov.21, 1854.
17. Quoted in "The Guardian" Supplement Feb.19, 1862.
18. In "The Silent Rebellion" p.86.
19. In a letter to Louise Noel, March 1848, quoted in "Life" op.cit. Vol.II p.8.
20. British Museum 4107.d.75. "Sisterhoods considered, With Remarks Upon The Bishop of Brechin's "plea for Sisterhoods"" London 1850.
21. Ibid. p.2.
22. Ibid p.6.
23. L&L, p.82.
24. cf "A Story Of A Diverted Hope" by Sister Geraldine C.S.M.V. Published for Private Circulation 1911.
25. The present day Oblature is the successor to this order.
26. Vide "Rules of The Exterior Sisters of The Sisterhood Of St. Mary the Virgin."
27. Ibid for the following section.
28. Letter quoted in L&L, p.140.
29. Quoted in L&L p.140 n.d.
30. cf Parish Journal Nov.24 1851.
31. cf John Hunt "Education In Evolution" London 1972. p.56.
32. Pusey House Pa.323 op cit.
33. Univ.Dunelm. Bib.Routhiana Mise. Tracts XXVIII.18. Published by Parker, Oxford & London, 1851.
34. J.F.C. Harrison "The Early Victorians" p.26.

35. F. Warre Cornish op.cit. p.72.
36. 29 April 1852.
37. Epiphany Week.
38. P.J. Wed. following 3rd Sunday After Epiphany.
39. P.J. Mon. Feb.24. St. Matthias.
40. P.J. Wed. Oct.6.
41. cf P.J. April 14.
42. P.J. March 14.
43. P.J.
44. Pusey House Pamphlet 323 op.cit.
45. L&L pp 141-2.
46. Ibid. p.141.
47. Ibid.
48. Pusey House Pamphlet 709676 pp.19,20.
49. P.J. Ap.29.
50. P.H. Pa.709676 p.19. The Community of St. John the Baptist at Clewer have no record in their archives of the help they gave to Wantage, and I have been unable to discover either the names of the Sisters they sent or the dates at which they came to our assistance (cf. also "History of the Foundation" p.19).
51. P.H. Pa.709676.
52. Ibid.

CHAPTER III 1853 - 1855

PERSEVERANCE; DEVELOPMENTS AND FRUSTRATIONS

1853

The year 1853 seems to have opened without much incident so far as the work of St. Mary's Home was concerned. No events having any connexion with the Sisters are recorded in the Parish Journal for the month of January. Not even upon February 2nd did the Vicar remark upon the anniversary of the opening of the Home.

THE OLD COTTAGE

On February 3rd there was held the funeral of one of the young girls who had been under Miss Hayes' charge at the Old Cottage in Newbury Street. It is not clear whether the girl had been a pupil-teacher or a member of the Workschool. But "eight of her party from Miss Hayes house joined the funeral, which was altogether very touching and reverent. She had quite attached herself to their Society, and had been much more serious and satisfactory."[1] Evidently the almost monastic pattern of life at the Cottage was beginning to have an effect upon some of the girls who lived or worked there.

Later in this same month Miss Hayes began to enlarge the Cottage in order to make "a larger and more airy workroom for the Workgirls" and "to change the present Workschool with its precincts into a washhouse in which she proposes to employ four foundling girls, lodging, feeding and clothing them. This" says the Vicar "is to cost me nothing. May God prosper this earnest effort to uphold these poor girls". Details of the enlargement are scanty but a slight description of the Cottage circa 1854 gives a little idea of its size. "The Old Cottage ... consisted of about ten rooms, with two small out-houses separated from the rest of the house by a broad passage paved with cobbles, which had evidently been used as a roadway for a pony and cart; a broad doorway opening on to the street at one end, and on the garden at the other.

On the groundfloor there was a very small room, with a glass door opening on to a strip of lawn, the room itself so modern in construction, and so unlike the rest of the house, as to give the impression of having been added much later... Another room adjoining this was used as a dining room, and also as a sitting room."[2] There was also "a schoolroom for the teachers and monitors with a kitchen and laundry..." This "laundry" is probably the "washhouse"

referred to above. We hear no more about this particular scheme of Miss Hayes'.

Life in the Cottage was not all work and no play, in spite of the strict regime, for on Easter Tuesday "Miss Hayes gave a tea party to some 30 children and others dependent on her house."

Later, in the early summer,[3] an entry in the Parish Journal reveals that Miss Hayes had fallen ill. A note of anxiety is detectable as the Vicar reviews the situation in the schools. "The Schools need some attention, especially the Girls' School, so long, through Miss Hayes' continued illness, bereft of a regular mistress. And I don't think that the average attendance is quite so good as it was last year ... We must watch for children and pick them up at once ..." What is not clear from the very scanty evidence, is whether regular or occasional help in the schools was afforded, at this period, by any of the Sisters from the Home. But it is clear that one or two of the Sisters were still sleeping at the Cottage, because of lack of room at the Home.

In the autumn the Middle School moved from the Cottage to another house in Newbury Street. This freed a room at the Cottage. The new house afforded more commodious quarters for the school, which now numbered twenty three girls. Miss Lucy Watkins continued, for the time, to be in charge of the Middle School.

In his summary of the condition of the works in the Parish made at the end of the year, the Vicar once again expresses his concern about the schools. He concludes the summary by saying:

"And worst of all there is constant anxiety about those in charge of [the schools]'. So far as the Girls are concerned "Miss Hayes from her delicate health and other causes is scarcely to be depended on for long, while Miss Watkins by whose exertions the Middle School is sustained, is absolutely engaged to the S. Saviour's Sisterhood in London, as soon as her place here can be supplied."[4] From this entry the first impression that all was not well with the matters under Miss Hayes' care is received. There are no more indications of difficulty for some time to come, nor do we hear what the "other causes" of concern were.

THE HOME (i) ACCOMMODATION

Applications still poured in for accommodation in the Home. Since

1850 garrets in the roof had been enlarged and a loft turned into a garret in order to fit in more people. The landlord was evidently quite helpful, permitting new windows to be made in the roof, and other changes, although the house was only on lease for a number of years. The need for a larger permanent building was becoming felt even more acutely, and an "Appeal for Help Towards (The) Support And Enlargement" of the accommodation was issued in this year. A building fund had already been begun, but money came in for this purpose more slowly than for current expenses.

The work of the Home was also sorely tried because the Chaplain fell ill and was absent for a very long period. During this time the Vicar undertook most of Mr. Vincent's work at the Home. Otherwise the work in 1853 was "consolidated rather than advanced."[5] The Chaplain commented that the work was "proved by the strain of numbers, practising our Sisters in the management of a larger body of inmates."[6]

(ii) DEFECTIONS

From time to time inmates of the Home left before their time of probation was up either by request, or sometimes by defection. Two separate incidents recorded in 1853 illustrate the kind of thing that could happen. On Thursday in Easter Week "... two of the Penitents climbed over the wall which separates the garden of the Home from the Pumfreys and escaped. Both were unsatisfactory, one had been 21 months, the other about 4 with us. The elder was very deceitful and a bad example in her home as 'hortator scelerans', so that in fact, except for the poor girl's own sake, I am glad to be rid of her ..."[7]

But such an incident was not permitted to remain a domestic concern. Ignoring the fact that the Penitents were voluntary inmates of the Home and could leave if they wished, preferably of course by less dramatic methods than escaping over the garden wall; an anonymous troublemaker chose to make a public issue of the incident. One night soon afterwards pamphlets containing printed verses concerning the escape of the girls from the Home were scattered upon the ground. The Vicar commented, "while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares..."[8] To add to this malicious letters were written to the "Oxford Chronicle" and the "Reading Mercury" Newspapers. Both papers seem to have dealt justly with the matter, although the former was a dissenting paper, much to the Vicar's relief.[9] The "very pertinacious and worrying Wesleyan

preacher at Wantage"[10] who had attacked the Home earlier, was evidently one of the correspondents.

The Vicar went to see the editor of the "Oxford Chronicle" who expressed himself willing to help straighten out the whole affair by publishing an explanatory letter. This editor turned out to be a good churchman in spite of his job in the "enemy camp" and he evinced considerable interest in the Home.[11]

The second defection occurred after Christmas, but it does not seem to have aroused public antagonism:

"St. John's Day. Rachel, one of our Penitents, absconded. She was under punishment for pilfering. The Policemen were very careful and active in the case." County Police forces were at this period, in process of being formed throughout the county.

(iii) A DEATH AT THE HOME

In the summer one of the Penitents fell mortally ill, probably of tuberculosis. The first death at the Home had been that of "Elizabeth" who had evidently come to the Home, at its opening, in a very debilitated condition. The Vicar noted that on Sunday June 19th, he was called out of Evensong at the Home "during the sermon to the deathbed of Louisa Hindes, who had been ill for some weeks past. She died in Sister Harriet's arms choking with blood emitted from her lungs. She had been for a long time one of our most satisfactory, and (I) am indeed thankful that being so, it has pleased God to take her to Himself."[12] Louisa was buried on June 22nd beside Elizabeth "the first called of our little flock of Penitents. The other Penitents and the Sisters made a procession and the bier was borne by John, George, and Henry Kent among others. These Kents probably came from yet another Wantage family whose connexions with the Sisterhood were to continue into the twentieth century.

Sadly, Louisa's funeral drew forth opposition and irreverent behaviour from some men and boys in Mr. Hart's+ employment, and "they set up a derisive laugh or rather demoniacal yell as the poor girls past by."[13]

(iv) A PENITENT GOES ABROAD

It has already been noted that part of the work of the Home was either to find situations to which Penitents might go after they left the Home, or to return them to their families. It is of

+ Charles Hart had established an iron foundry at Wantage.

interest to find that a Penitent even went abroad on her departure from the Home. On December 12th, the Vicar took a Penitent to Southampton to see her off to the Cape of Good Hope travelling in the "screwsteamer" the "Calcutta". Evidently the Bishop of Cape Town was travelling on the same boat and was to take charge of the Penitent on the journey. The Vicar recorded that the "vessel ... was most splendidly and conveniently fitted up" and his anxiety that the Penitent should not be submitted to temptation, while on the voyage, was allayed on finding that the women passengers' berths "were quite removed from the sailors." He thought that with only a little care "there would be no danger of evil".[14]

(v) THE OXFORD PENITENTIARY

An important development of the penitentiary system as it affected St. Mary's Home was set on foot in 1853, in the form of a link between the Oxford Penitentiary and the Home at Wantage. The Chaplain wrote: "We had felt from the first that our true position would be that of the Penitentiary of that city."[15] At the end of November the "Vicar went to Oxford to a meeting of the Committee of the Oxford Penitentiary held at Richard Ley's rooms at Christ Church. Two resolutions had been previously carried (1) that the present Oxford Penitentiary should be changed into a Refuge or Receiving House (2) that negotiations should be entered into with me, that those there received temporarily might be transferred to Wantage for a more permanent stay. Finally they resolved to offer £100 per annum towards the support of St. Mary's Home if we would undertake to provide permanently for ten Oxford girls. To this I gladly acceded and consider that we have gained a great point, in the arrangement."[16] The Vicar went on to refer to the immediate necessity for building, under the circumstances.

There seem to be three main points of interest in this arrangement. First, the liaison with the Oxford Penitentiary was a step towards fulfilling the aim of the Church Penitentiary Association to have refuges in urban areas, from which penitents could be passed for training to homes in more rural settings. Secondly, the arrangement ensured a regular proportion of the income of the Home, thus easing a little of the anxiety engendered by the necessity to raise almost two-thirds of the total income each year by means of charitable donations. Although, at the same time, it should not be forgotten that the number of inmates was increasing.

Thirdly the connexion with the city and University of Oxford brought an increase of interest in the work going forward at Wantage. Many prominent Oxonians contributed to the work.

(vi) SISTER HARRIET

The need for a Superior for the Sisterhood became intensified in this year, not only because of Mr. Vincent's long absence, but also because of Miss Hedger's illness. There had also to be taken into consideration such matters as the increasing size of the household, which now consisted of eighteen Penitents, four Sisters - five including the Mistress of Penitents - and "a lady" who was almost certainly Miss Charlotte Hedger, sister to Catherine and also an Exterior Sister. Quite clearly there was need for a resident Superior to oversee the work and to guide the life of the Sisterhood.

At the end of the summer, or during the autumn of this year, the "election and formal appointment of a Superior"[17] took place. "One Sister had continued with the work from the beginning, and had now experience of three years constant labour in, and, we may almost say, management of it. Indeed it was to her, under God, that we owed, in no small degree, the hopeful condition of the inner work at this time. With the unanimous consent of her fellow-labourers, she was chosen "Superior".[18] The Bishop was to institute her formally a little later on. Although this account preserves reticence about the identity of the Sister, it was in fact Sister Harriet who was elected. Certain accounts of the selection of Sister Harriet for Superior give the impression that the choice was due to the Vicar. But there is no doubt that there was an election and that the discernment of her abilities was quite as much due to the Sisters among whom she lived and worked as to the Vicar.

For the most part those who were endeavouring to found religious communities in the Church of England at this period, tried first, to find "one capable of being a Superior, and then give her freedom to initiate and develop a system of work".[19] Indeed this had been the original plan for Wantage. But now one was raised up who had already the benefit of experience of the life. Sister Harriet must have shrunk inwardly from such a task but her fulfilment of it was to prove of the greatest importance for the development of the Community. No period of office was defined at this time, and Sister Harriet was to rule for over thirty years.

MRS. TREVELYAN

Towards the close of 1853 there came to Wantage a Mrs. Frances Anne Trevelyan. She took rooms at the "Alfred's Head" inn with some of her family. Mrs. Trevelyan's husband had been incumbent of the parish of Stogumber in Somerset, but he had fallen ill and had apparently to be cared for by people other than his wife, at any rate for a time. Mrs. Trevelyan was advised to take up some work which would give her an interest and she had established a school for the training of domestic servants, at Littlemore. She now proposed removing to Wantage. Mrs. Trevelyan was to exercise an influence on the direction of some of the works of philanthropy going forward at Wantage.

1854

THE HOME (1) A NEW SITE

The liaison established with the Oxford Penitentiary promised sufficiently well for William Butler to believe that the time had at last come when it was necessary to carry out the plan to build a new St. Mary's Home. Early in January 1854 the Vicar began negotiations for the purchase of a piece of land on which to build. "Friday. The Epiphany ... I had a long conversation and walk with W. Dixon over Tripps Meadow in Mill Street which, we think, would do well for the Home. He was very kind and hearty about it".[20] Tripps Meadow formed part of an area known as Limburgh or Limborough, situated on a small hill at the West end of Mill Street on the North side of the road leading to the village of Challow. William Dixon was a local farmer and acted on the Town Commission[21] as did the Vicar himself.

On the following day Saturday "... I saw Ormond on the same subject, he too very kind and friendly. He promised, if we could get it, to convey it without charge." Edward Ormond was a solicitor and acted as Clerk to the Town Commissioners.[22] He, also, became a good friend to the Home.

The Vicar set himself to work to boost the contributions to the building fund of the Home and to enlist support for the project. Some entries from the Parish Journal will illustrate his activities:

"Monday (March 6) ... Vicar went to Oxford today, and returned Tuesday. The object of this visit was to persuade Oxford to contribute to the Building Fund of the Home. All appeared very

willing and a paper was drawn up and is to be circulated through the University, which will, if it please God, bring forth some fruits."

"Monday March 20. Vicar at Oxford to make arrangements ("get money" is crossed out and "make arrangements" is written over it) for the Building Fund of the Home. Everyone very kind and warm."

"Wednesday. The Bishop who had called yesterday, met me in the Town, and walkt to the top of the Union Hill with me. He promises a sermon for the Home, at Oxford."[23]

"In a short time £450 was collected and a grant of £300 was voted for us by the Church Penitentiary Association. These together raised our building fund to the sum of £1,950."[24] A piece of ground was purchased on Limborough about two and a half acres in size. The sum paid for this site was £309.[25] Plans were drawn up by the Oxford Diocesan Architect G.E. Street Esq., who did not charge for them, making them his contribution to the work.

The plans were drawn up in three parts: 1. A dwelling house with accommodation for thirty Penitents, eight Sisters and with a laundry, washhouse, and other offices. 2. A Chapel; 3. An infirmary with some separate rooms for the Penitents and a class room for the use of the Chaplain. Although the buildings were designed as inexpensively as possible, the estimated cost of the whole totalled a sum so far beyond the amount already in hand, that it was decided to aim at building the three parts separately, and to direct present efforts towards the first part, i.e. the dwelling house.[26]

(2) INSTITUTION OF SISTER HARRIET

Sister Harriet was formally instituted as Superior of St. Mary's Home by Bishop Wilberforce, on Tuesday, February 21st, 1854. The Vicar described the event: "The Bishop went in the morning to the to the Home, and there instituted Sister Harriet, using an office somewhat modified from, but retaining the main features of the Benedictio [of an abbot or abbess; the word given is illegible] in the Roman Pontifical, into the Office of Superior. This seems a most important step, and probably she is the first ecclesiastically appointed Superior in an English house of the kind, since the Reformation ..."[27]

The form of service used for the institution was therefore a

developed one. But no material was retained in it which could offend Church of England sensibilities. The compilation of the service may well have been made by H.P. Liddon, who was later to contribute to the work of drawing up a form of service for the Profession of Sisters. The Reverend H.P. Liddon served a curacy under the Vicar.

The copies of the service of institution were written out by hand and the pages were fastened together with thread. The Community still possesses the copy used by the Bishop of Oxford at the institution and it is in Liddon's handwriting.[28] The service is too long to be quoted in full but certain points deserve comment. On her acceptance by the Bishop the Superior-elect "kneels and makes the following promise of obedience to him as her ordinary:-

"I.N. elected Superior of St. Mary's Home for Penitents in Wantage, do hereby in the presence of GOD and of this congregation promise and vow all fidelity and due Subjection Obedience and Reverence to my Mother the Church of England, and to thee Samuel Lord Bishop of this diocese."[29]

The first point to be noted is that the Superior is caused explicitly to state her position to be that of 'Superior of St. Mary's Home for Penitents'. There is no mention of the Sisterhood as being in any way distinct from the particular work. The concept of the work is dominant. The second point is related to the first: the Superior 'promises and vows' fidelity to the Church and to the Bishop, but makes no statement, and gives no undertaking to the effect that she will care for the Sisterhood as such in any way at all. Of course the concept is implicit, but in all subsequent forms of service for the institution of the Superiors there is included an uncompromising and explicit statement at least that she will "maintain the Rules and Regulations" of the Community, and that so far as in her lies, she will "provide that all others shall do the same."[30] The title "Mother" was not accorded to the Superior of the Sisterhood until several years later.

(3) CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES

With the election of a Superior to guide the Sisterhood, the task of codifying the "Constitutions and Rules" of the Home was put in hand in this year. This, the earliest document of this particular

Rules of St. Mary's
~~Home Heritage.~~

nature, was given episcopal sanction early in 1855, but the rules contained therein were clearly in force for the Sisterhood during 1854. There are only eight rules in this first document, the first five being concerned with the practical conducting of the work of the Home upon religious lines. Rule VI deals with the annual accounting for receipts and expenditure, and Rule VII makes provision for disposal of the property of the Home if the institution should fail "from want of funds or any other cause".[31]

Reference is made in this document to the "Trustees in whose names the property of the Institution shall be held." On the purchase of the first property properly to belong to the Sisterhood, a trust was formed for its holding, the members of which were to be responsible for the disposal of the same in case of necessity.

The first rule declares the object of "this house, S. Mary's Home," to be "the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially in reclaiming those women who, by since of impurity, have defiled those bodies which should be the Temples of the Holy Ghost." Rule II provides that the work shall be "carried on in the true Christian Faith as it is set forth in the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, under the direction of the Bishop of the Diocese, by women, members of the Church of England, desirous to give themselves to the service of Christ and His Church, who shall be found sufficient in piety, education and other qualifications."

Rule III directs that these women shall be called "Sisters" and that they shall be presided over by a Superior elected from among themselves, subject to the approval of the Bishop. The Superior shall act as "Head of the Family" and as a "Mother to the Penitents". She is therefore to be accorded respectful obedience by both Sisters and Penitents, but she is to exercise "no further control over them than is necessary for the orderly regulation of a family, and the well-doing of the chief work."

Rule IV associates Exterior Sisters in the work and sets out their fourfold undertaking of assistance to the Home in prayer, alms, provision of work for the Penitents, and personal help if possible and when required.

Constitutions and Rules of Saint Mary's Home for Penitents in the Parish of Thatcham in Berkshire and in the Diocese of Oxford

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

It will be seen in these Records shall come. We the several persons whose names are hereunto subscribed and affixed being The Right Reverend Samuel Lord Bishop of Oxford the present Visitor of the said Institution called Saint Mary's Home with the said Samuel Lord Bishop of Oxford The Venerable Edward Burn of Downham in the County of Bucks Archdeacon of Bucks The Venerable Charles Ore Clarke of Milton in the said County of Bucks Archdeacon of Oxfordshire The Reverend Edwards Marriott Vicar of Saint Mary's in the University of Oxford The Reverend William John Butler Vicar of Thatcham aforesaid William Lovell Mastercoop of Thatcham aforesaid Gentleman and Edward Clymond of Thatcham aforesaid Gentleman and The Reverend Thomas Vincent Chaplain of the said Saint Mary's Home Trustees of the said Saint Mary's Home do hereby severally consent and agree and ordain to the Rules here following as the Fundamental Rules or Constitutions of the said Saint Mary's Home

I. The object of this Home Saint Mary's Home shall be the service of our Lord Jesus Christ especially in reclaiming those women who by sins of impurity have defiled those bodies which should be the Temples of the Holy Ghost.

II. The work shall be carried on in the pure Christian faith as it is set forth in the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England under the direction of the Bishop of the Diocese who shall always be considered the Visitor of the Institution by women members of the Church of England desirous to give themselves to the service of Christ and His Church who shall be found superior in piety education and other qualifications.

III. They shall be called Sisters and provided with by one of Ministers who shall be chosen by themselves subject to the approval of the Bishop and shall be called The Superior whose position shall be that of the Head of the Family and whose duty shall be to act as a Mother towards the Penitents training in consequence all unprofitable conduct from them and as a Sister towards her fellow workers exercising no further control over them than is necessary for the orderly regulation of a Family and the well doing of the day work.

IV. Other Sisters properly disposed may be appointed as soon as Sisters who will undertake to use their utmost in certain Stages in Chief have received Alms funds sufficient and evidence to be able to pay the Penitents and good situations for them when fit to leave the Home or sooner if at any time is needed and they are able personal qualifications.

V. There shall be a Chaplain who shall be appointed by the Bishop and whose duties shall be to conduct the Services in the Chapel and to attend to the spiritual care and instruction of the Penitents.

VI. The accounts of the Receipts and Expenditure of the Institution for the preceding year shall be made up and sent to the Bishop for his inspection every year on the third day of February being the day after the Anniversary of the opening of the Institution or should this day happen to be a Sunday on the day following.

VII. If from want of funds or any other cause the Institution shall fail the Trustees in whose names the property of the Institution shall be held on representation of such failure being made to them by the Bishop of the Diocese shall have power by the vote of three fourths of them present or given in writing at each of two successive meetings specially called for that purpose by the said Bishop the second of such meetings being held at an interval of not less than one calendar month nor more than three calendar months from the day on which the first of such meetings shall be held to dissolve the Institution and to order the sale and conversion of the whole of the property and effects belonging to the Institution real and personal and among such of the objects previously specified as shall be deemed most worthy after paying all expenses attending such sale and conversion and all debts and liabilities of the Institution shall be disposed of to such charitable purposes in connection with the Church of England and in such manner and of thought fit in such shares or proportions as the Trustees subject to the consent of the Bishop shall determine at a meeting specially called for that purpose and which shall be held not less than three nor more than six calendar months after the sale shall have been completed.

VIII. The preceding Rules numbered I II III IV V VI VII especially together with this present numbered VIII shall be considered and are hereby declared to be Fundamental and no Institution shall be made in them unless by the consent first of the Superior and three fourths of the Sisters given in writing and then of the Bishop and three fourths of the Trustees given also in writing at a meeting of the Trustees specially called for such purpose by the Bishop of the Diocese.

In Witness whereof we hereunto subscribe our names and affix our seals this thirty first day of January one thousand eight hundred and fifty five.

Samuel Oxford — Edward Burn — Charles O. Clarke — Edwards Marriott — Edward Butler — Edward Clymond — Thos. Vincent

THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES 1855

Rule V treats of the Chaplain who is appointed by the Bishop. His duties consist in conducting the services in the Chapel and in instructing and caring for the Penitents.

The final Rule declares the foregoing plus itself to be fundamental. It provides that no alteration shall be made in the rules without the written consent of three-fourths of the Sisters, the Bishop and three-fourths of the Trustees. The Trustees were mostly clergymen and among them mention must be made of the Reverend Charles Marriott, Vicar of St. Mary's Oxford, and a scholar who had allied himself with the men of the Oxford Movement. He was, within 6 months of the signing of the "Constitutions and Rules", to be stricken with the paralytic condition from which he never recovered.[32]

In the first Constitutions and Rules the object of the life of the Sisterhood is not distinguished from its work. Certainly the climate of opinion in the Church of England at this period was not favourable in general to the establishment of Sisterhoods for the purpose of fulfilling a spiritual vocation. Indeed the idea of vocation to the development of the spiritual life as a good thing in itself was regarded with the utmost dislike and suspicion by many Churchmen. William Butler however, recognized the reality and importance of developing the spiritual life, and urged the Sisters towards its cultivation so that their work should grow out of it. The spiritual life should not be merely an adjunct of the work, but its very source.

(4) THE PENITENTS

At the end of January the Vicar attended a meeting of those connected with the Church Penitentiary Association. Various matters were discussed in connexion with the treatment of Penitents. He commented dryly inthe Journal: "Mainly we agreed."[33]

The inmates of St. Mary's Home lived under a strict regime centred upon certain religious observances. Their days were filled with work, periods of instruction, religious devotions and times for recreation. An existing but undated MS timetable gives an idea of the life of the Penitents as it must have been even at the beginning of the work of St. Mary's Home. They rose at 6.0 a.m. and began work at 6.30. Details are not given but probably this early start betokens a short period of work before breakfast. The working day ended at 7.0 p.m. The Penitents were taught to

spend about five minutes in private prayer both morning and evening; they attended Evensong daily and shortened Offices of Prime and Compline. At some date unspecified Bishop Cosin's compilation of The Divine Office was introduced for the use of the Penitents, and Prime and Compline were drawn from this. Each girl had to learn three lessons "in the week from Catechisms, or Chapters or Psalms" and these were heard at stated times. On Sundays they also had to learn the collect, and a hymn or part of a hymn. Religious instruction included general catechising by the Chaplain, and classes given by the Sisters. Classes in other subjects were also given.

Communicants were expected to be present at Communion every Sunday and non-communicants every other Sunday. But the presence of the latter depended upon good conduct during a nine or ten months stay in the Home. Daily recreational periods consisted of half an hour after dinner, either out of doors or in the class room, and from after Evensong until 8.30 p.m.

If Penitents became "quite unmanageable they [were] placed in solitary confinement, provided with needlework, and allowed no intercourse with any one but the person who [took] their food - but in case of a girl that this might be hurtful to," it was thought "well to let her have some manual work as separate as possible from the others."[34]

In outward conduct the Penitents were expected to observe strict rules, some of which may have been influenced by the monastic pattern of the life of the house: for example, Rule 2. of the code for Outward Conduct which lays it down that when they are reported, "they shall listen humbly to what is said, without interrupting or excusing themselves." Also Rule 6 which commands the Penitents to "strictly observe the appointed hours of silence; and at other times (they) shall refrain from speaking on the stairs, from singing in going from place to place, and generally from all loud talking, and noise, and violence of manner, in the performance of their work."

Other rules were probably dictated by the necessity for extreme care both in the handling of these girls and in seeking to give them a fresh start in life. The rules of anonymity quoted in Appendix III of Chapter II may at times have been difficult to enforce, but shame must sometimes have made the girls glad of them.

Rule 11 of those governing outward conduct enjoins preservation of further anonymity and silence upon certain matters: "They must never mention their family or place of residence; nor speak to one another of their past times, or of their temptations, or of what their Mistress, the Mother Superior or the Chaplain saysto them for their direction. To avoid temptation in this respect, they must not walk nor sit two together at recreation, but always find another to join them."

The religious aim of their training was expressed; for example in Rule 1 of this code:

"They shall pay all respect and obedience to the Mother Superior and Mistress, or Sister under whose care they are placed, as set over them by our Lord and Saviour, and labouring with Him for the salvation of their souls." The Penitents were thus to try to regard those in authority in the Home as instruments given by God for the forwarding of their personal repentance and salvation.

Some of the rules may seem impossibly restrictive today, but it must be remembered that the girls and young women were under corrective discipline and they were at the same time being cared for. There is no doubt at all that the kindness and love with which these first Sisters of the Community endeavoured to help the Penitents made a deep, converting and lasting impression upon many of them. We have already noted instances of real penitence and conversion, and many letters were received from grateful young women and girls who had finished their time in the Home and had gone out to live a new life. Some even came back to spend their holiday periods at the Home, perhaps occasionally out of necessity if they had nowhere else to go, but chiefly from deliberate choice. Of course there were failures, but the overall impression gained is one of utterly worthwhile endeavour on the part of those who ran the work.[35]

(5) BISHOP WILBERFORCE : TWO LETTERS CONCERNING THE SISTERHOOD

(i) William Butler evidently consulted Bishop Wilberforce about the sort of rules to be made for the Sisters to observe during their absences from the Home, for example on the subject of whom they should consult for the purpose of obtaining needful help in spiritual matters. In a letter dated May 14th, 1854, the Bishop wrote of a decision he had recently made:

"My dear Butler ... There is one point at which I have arrived as to Clewer. It is that whilst we admit no strange clergy in the House, we ask no questions as to the spiritual advice the Sisters seek and obtain during their permitted absences from the House, provided it concerns only their own spiritual welfare.

I am ever, my dear Butler
Very affec^tly yours. S. Oxon."[36]

(ii) In this year a letter was published by one Mr. Wratislaw, alleging among other things, the illegal imposition of vows of religion upon the Sisters of St. Mary's Home. The matter is of interest as it illustrates the kind of opposition still being raised against Sisterhoods. Indeed it was to take several years of unremitting, unobtrusive and self-denying toil and service to the community at large before this kind of thing died down. The Bishop wrote to the Vicar:

"I suppose you see that Wratislaw has published his letter to the Bishop of London. I think you should give it an answer: very short and on the one simple point of vows. I should say -

I. That no vow direct or indirect is administered or allowed.
II. That this is known and avowed by every authority, and inmate in the House.
III. That this has been already explained to him and was explained to his sister by you and by the Sisterhood.
IV. That the service on which he grounds his imputation, is no more than praying God to bless and prosper the work in which the Sister is engaging - and there I should leave it. Saying that you have felt it right to answer the tangible charge and decline going into any other matter with one who shows himself so inaccurate.

May God bless you ..."[37]

It is indeed hard to see how such a charge could have been made. The only possible service used by the Sisterhood to date which even contained the word "vow" was that of the institution of Sister Harriet as Superior. But in that service she vowed fidelity to the Church of England, a fact which would seem to call for approbation rather than censure!

(6) A MINOR LITURGICAL DETAIL : AN INFERENCE

In the Parish Journal under Saturday 28th January, there is an entry recording the funeral of Mrs. Trevelyan's nephew Harry

the state of the School arrangements. Nothing been
except the teaching of the boys School is in anything like
sound state. The girl school is affordably ignorant, the
attendance precarious, & the teachers always shifting. Nothing
have we as yet any definite plan for bringing the Repetitions
in the Boys School. Bridget Eliza (Mrs the Infant School)
is in a very weakly state, & the cost of it is, that School
fees have to meet these things without an outlay
I cannot afford. We dare make the least prospect. Rather
I fear we have gone back in the direction during the last
year. It is a grievous to give up the idea of the School
Scripture plan - but I fear that I am precipitating
this. It will not do to risk the children, while we are
waiting for help. School accounts, registers, materials, clothing
bonnets & shawls, &c are continually neglected, & it is
quite impossible to find anyone who can be called
responsible. While I am spending as much as would find

Lumsden, who had died of fever while staying at the "Alfred's Head". At the funeral there was a celebration of the Holy Communion and the Vicar referred to the "Purple Altar vestments from the Home" as having been used. This may well indicate that the Sisters at the Home enjoyed a slightly greater freedom in liturgical matters than was possible at the Parish Church. Presumably the Church did not, as yet, have full sets of seasonal hangings, and even if it had, it is unlikely that the Vicar would have been able to use them without rousing at any rate some opposition at this time. In later years, when the Vicar had won his way, needlework done at the Home was to enrich the ornamentation of the Parish Church.

(7) THE CRIMEAN WAR

In October 1854 it was decided by the Government to send Miss Florence Nightingale, with a band of female nurses, to help the staff of the hospital at Scutari[38] with the nursing of the appalling number of casualties. "Earl Nelson asked Anglican Sisterhoods each to contribute two or more Sisters as nurses in the East." In the event Miss Nightingale "took ten Roman Catholic and fourteen Anglican Sisters."[40] The resident Wantage Sisterhood was far too small to be able to release Sisters for overseas service at this stage. But a Miss P. Osborne, who became an Exterior Sister in that year, went out with Miss Nightingale's party. Miss Osborne later gave a great deal of service to the Sisterhood and her going to Scutari may have caused some hardship at Wantage. But at present we have no actual evidence that she was already deeply engaged in the work at Wantage at this period.

THE OLD COTTAGE.

The Cottage, under Miss Hayes' charge, continued to house the girl pupil teachers and monitors, and the Workschool. There were about ten pupil teachers and monitors, and they assisted in the Girls National School and the Infant School. The Middle School remained under Miss Lucy Watkins' charge until May 3rd, when a Miss Power came to replace her. Miss Power took up her quarters at the Cottage. There was some difficulty in providing enough reasonably skilled help for Miss Power as the number of children attending the Middle School increased. But by the end of the year the school was promising well, and there were now some children attending it as boarders.

At some point Miss Hayes was also joined at the Cottage by a Miss

Puttock, who became chiefly responsible for the instruction of the girl pupil teachers themselves.[41] Miss Puttock was certainly in residence by the end of 1854, but the actual date of her arrival has not, so far, been discovered.

The three ladies, Miss Hayes, Miss Power and Miss Puttock, lived their lives upon a conventual pattern, and the customs of their household were framed accordingly. The other inmates of the Cottage were expected to conform to these customs.[42] The Vicar had hopes that these three ladies would eventually form the nucleus for his long-desired school sisterhood, but as no more ladies had offered themselves by the end of the year,[43] he began to despair of this. In his summary of the state of the parish at the end of the year, he included the following passage in his review of the negative side of the condition of the schools :

"...We don't make the least progress. Rather I fear, we have gone back in all directions during the last year. It would be grievous to give up all idea of the School Sisterhood plan - but I fear that I am gravitating to this. It will not do to risk the children, while we are waiting for help. School accounts, registers, materials, children's bonnets and shawls, etc., are continually neglected, and it is quite impossible to find anyone who can be called responsible. While I am spending as much as would find masters and mistresses of the best ..." But: "The Middle School under Miss Power, is very likely, by God's mercy, to answer well and become an important ingredient in our parochial machinery."

The life at the Cottage cannot have appeared to be particularly attractive and perhaps people who desired to help were discouraged from coming by what they heard of the manner of life. Added to this, the foregoing remarks seem to indicate a slight attitude of irresponsibility on the part of the three ladies. It is certain that the pupil teachers found the regime at the Cottage "rigorous and unnatural,"[44] and the teaching they themselves received seems to have been but desultory.[45]

Miss Lucy Lampet, who began her training as a pupil teacher, aged 13, in 1854, recorded in later years that one of the rooms on the first floor of the Cottage "was fitted up and used as an oratory. It was a low passage room with a window of thick coloured glass looking on to the garden; the walls were hung round with thick red curtains ... the Offices were said in the Oratory and the

pupil teachers attended Lauds, Sext and Compline. To one who like myself, had come straight from a village where going to Church twice on a Sunday had constituted the whole of the religious services to which I had been accustomed, there was something strained and injudicious in these frequent services to which Evensong in Church was also added." But Miss Lampet was large-minded enough to appreciate fragments of the Offices which had remained in her memory afterwards, and she instances the "Bible Songs".

As well as attending these Offices, the teachers spent a quarter of an hour in private prayer in the Oratory before Compline each night; "at the end of which time a little gong was sounded by the person in charge. This was the signal for one to go and summon Miss Hayes, the head of the house, to come up and say the Office. Very frequently it was a long time before she came and one recalls the weary waiting time it was."[46] It is tempting to wonder why Miss Hayes was so frequently delayed, and whether the Vicar was aware that she could be dilatory in her duties and included this among his fears about her suitability for Sisterhood life.

In spite of all the difficulties and the unsatisfactory condition of the educational work in the Vicar's eyes, it remains a fact that the Schools earned considerable money grants from the Government Education Department in this year. The Vicar was able, for the first time, to consider remunerating some of the pupil teachers who were in positions of responsibility. Some remuneration for pupil teachers had, for some time, been accepted in principle as only just and proper.

Evidently the Vicar received an offer of voluntary help for the schools during 1854, and although we have no details of the offer, a quotation remains[47] from a letter written by the Vicar to one of the ladies concerned. In it the female educational work in Wantage is described as consisting "...(1) of a large National School, (2) of an Infant School, (3) of a Middle School for tradesmen's and farmers' daughters, (4) of a small training establishment for Mistresses, and (5) of an Industrial School for girls who have passed through the curriculum of the Girls' School..." (5) refers to the Workschool housed at the Cottage. A School for "young ladies" had not yet been established. The letter continues: "... our present desire is to extend our operations through the Deanery of Wantage, of which I am Rural Dean, and endeavour to

supply the various schools and poor parishes, of which it is composed, with schoolmistresses of a more truly religious character than are, as I find from long experience, at present to be obtained." The last sentence quoted reminds us of the Vicar's early plan for his Sisterhood which included their assistance in training such Mistresses to go out into the villages.

1855

I. THE SISTERHOOD OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN. A

1. A NEW SISTER

On the Feast of the Purification 1855, the anniversary of the opening of the Home, a Miss Elizabeth Frances Emmott was admitted to the resident Sisterhood at the Home. Miss Emmott had been an Exterior Sister since 1852. The Vicar noted: "Miss Emmott as Sister to the Home (elect) till the Bishop can give her formal institution and benediction." It is to be noted here that no probationary period is directly referred to, but it is probably to be inferred. Whether the fact that she had been an Exterior Sister meant that she need not undergo a long probation is not clear, but it seems possible that this was the case. Miss Emmott was known henceforth as "Sister Frances" and she was a welcome addition to the little band.

2. THE NEW BUILDING

The ground having been obtained and the plans drawn up, it needed now a sufficient increase in funds to enable the commencement of the building of the new St. Mary's Home. During the early part of the year donations to the building fund came in so slowly that it began to look as though the work could not be begun for another year. Further delay would have been a serious matter and a meeting was held in Oxford of people interested in the work. The position having been explained to the meeting, certain "friends in Oxford took a generous risk which enabled us to commence, and in June a contract was signed for the erection of the first portion of our new St. Mary's Home."[48] The exact nature of the guarantee given by the friends mentioned above is not known.

The Bishop of London presided at the annual meeting, in London, of the Church Penitentiary Association, which was held in the Spring of this year. During an address to the meeting the Bishop said 'he had found great benefit to result from the operation of the association. There were two houses of refuge or penitentiaries in the diocese - at Clewer and at Wantage. Both needed the

fostering care and kind benevolence of Christian hearts. At Wantage direct pecuniary assistance was most wanted, as the buildings were far too small, and assistance in funds was required to defray the expenses of the new buildings. The Institution had already received a grant of 300L. from this association, which had given its friends new vigour and a new heart ...' Further, the annual report of the Society included a reference 'to the intention on the part of the trustees of St. Mary's Home at Wantage, to place that institution on a more permanent footing. This was now being done, and the council had voted a grant of 300L. which would be paid so soon as a due regard to the rules would allow.'[49]

On Monday June 11th, the Feast of St. Barnabas, the Vicar wrote: "The ground markt out, and work begun of the new St. Mary's Home."[50] The Vicar felt himself to be responsible for the spiritual welfare of the workmen while they were engaged on the building. He continued: "This is an anxious beginning for one considering the number of workmen likely to be accumulated by this and other works in prospect in the Parish. We must devise some simple form of prayer and try to talk to the men collectively and individually."[51]

Meanwhile efforts to increase the building fund continued. For example: "Saturday June 16. Vicar went to Oxford to preach at St. Peter's in the East for St. Mary's Home."[52] He returned on the Monday having collected £25 at St. Peter's.

3. HOPEFUL BEGINNINGS

On Tuesday July 24th the Bishop came to Wantage for a short visit. At six o'clock in the evening he confirmed some Penitents at the Home and then went to the Church for the Parish Confirmation. The following day was to be a momentous one, particularly for the Vicar.

(i) A NEW SISTERHOOD

The first event to take place on July 25th must have seemed to the Vicar as though a dream was beginning to come true. The Bishop went first to the Old Cottage in Newbury Street, and there, at eight o'clock in the morning, he instituted Miss Power, Miss Puttock and Miss Hayes as the Sisters and Superior of a new School-Sisterhood, whose charge should be the training of young children, servants, and governesses."We compiled a service from the Rituale, and concluded with Holy Communion."53 Miss

Hayes was to be known as Sister Elizabeth, Miss Puttock as Sister Mary, and Miss Power as Sister Lucy. This Sisterhood was begun as an enterprise separate from the Sisterhood of St. Mary's Home, but it does not appear to have received any formal title or to have placed itself under any particular patronage. The Vicar had referred, in past time, to a 'double Sisterhood for Penitents and schools', so perhaps he envisaged an eventual organic integration of the school sisterhood with that of St. Mary's Home.

The form of service used for Miss Hayes' institution as Superior was similar to that used for Sister Harriet, but shorter. Again the object of the work of the Sisterhood formed the dominant theme:

"I, Elizabeth, elected Superior of the Sisterhood established in this place for the education and training of children, do hereby, in the Presence of God and of this Congregation, promise and vow all fidelity, and due subjection obedience and reverence to my Mother the Church of GOD in England, and to thee Samuel, Lord Bishop of this diocese, in all matters connected with this work."[54]

The Bishop then gave Sister Elizabeth due authority:

"In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Take thou authority to rule over this Household established for the education and training of children, and to serve its inmates in all things that may promote their temporal and eternal welfare. Be just and righteous in that State of life to which it hath pleased God to call thee, and may He strengthen thee in this undertaking with His Heavenly Grace, Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."[55] Then there followed two Psalms and the Te Deum. The form used for the admission of the Sisters is not extant, but it was probably similar to that used for the Sisters of St. Mary's Home.

THE SISTERHOOD OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN. B

(ii) (a) The second event of the day was the formal admission of two Sisters to the Community at St. Mary's Home. The Vicar referred to this admission service as the giving of the episcopal blessing to the Sisters, but it corresponded to what would later be called "profession". The two Sisters were Sister Charlotte, so long the faithful Mistress of Penitents, her "lay" status now abolished; and Sister Frances, who had come to the Sisterhood in the previous February.

(b) It was probably round about this time that a definite "Form of service for the Admission of Sisters" came into use. The Reverend H.P. Liddon who was serving a curacy at Wantage in 1854 was "commissioned [by the Vicar] ... to assist him in drawing up a form of Profession."[56] Along with other sources Liddon used "Gallican prayers of the eighth century, the earliest in existence, which he found among the records of an Anglo-Saxon nunnery. The prayers and special Preface of the Consecration of a Virgin, translated by him from the Latin into perfect English, have been used in the Community [from that time] until the present day ..."[57] But certain adaptations were made to suit contemporary Anglican requirements.

The Service was entitled "St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, Form of Admission of Sisters." This was an early use of the title of the Community. The word "admission" replaced the word "Profession," although in the prayers a reference to what the Sister had "professed" was retained. No vow was taken, the clauses of request and acceptance being concerned with the blessing of the Sister for the work. The word "devote" however, was used, and it is a fact that quibbles were raised in public discussion on the subject of Sisterhoods about the vow implicit in such a word, used as it was in the context of admission to a Sisterhood. In this early form the Bishop was given implicit freedom, within the context of the service, to refuse to admit the Sister: "The Bishop, if he approve the choice ..." Some few paragraphs from the first part of the service are of sufficient interest to be noted, with further comments.

[Rubric] "The Sister Elect, accompanied by two of the Sisters of the House, shall be presented to the Bishop sitting in his chair before the Altar, with these words:

"Right Reverend Father I present to you <u>this person</u>, elected by the Sisters of this House, to join their Society, who now comes to ask your Blessing." The point to be noticed here is that the Sister or Sisters Elect are presented by two Sisters of the House. It is not specified that one shall be the Superior. In every subsequent form of this service the Elect are presented by a priest. [Rubric] "Then the Bishop, if he approve the choice, shall accept her:

"By the help of our Lord GOD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST, we are ready to accept and bless <u>this person</u> who here <u>offers herself</u> to

His Service."

[Rubric] "Then the Sister Elect, standing before the Bishop, he shall first address her on the subject of the Work which she is about to undertake ..."

Again, in subsequent forms of service the Sister is addressed upon the "subject of her Profession" not her Work, as the idea of the fulfilment of a spiritual vocation becomes more acceptable. Also the work of the Sisters soon extended beyond the Home, and interchange of Sisters between various works took place.

After the word "undertake" in the rubric just quoted is added "and then ask her the following questions;"

"Dost thou solemnly and in the Presence of GOD, desire to devote thyself to His service?"

Ans: "I do".

[Rubric] The Rules of the House and the Rule of Life for Sisters belonging to the Society, shall then be read; and the Bishop shall further ask:

"Dost thou solemnly and in the presence of GOD, promise that thou wilt endeavour, so long as thou belongest to this Society, and art engaged in this Work, to keep these Rules to the best of thine ability; subject to such alterations as the Bishop of the Diocese may, from time to time sanction and appoint?"

Ans: "I do".

"Dost thou desire the Blessing of the Church on this solemn undertaking?"

Ans: "I do".[58]

Three things call for comment here.

1. In no subsequent form of Profession are the Rules actually read out, but the Sisters Elect are required to give an undertaking that they will endeavour to keep the rules of the Community; it being assumed that they have studied them.

2. In this service the principal of individual liberty to withdraw

from the Society, deemed to be so important by the Bishop, is explicit in the phrases "... so long as thou belongest to this society and art engaged in **this Work**". In later years the Bishop sanctioned the omission of these two clauses and the insertion of a clause referring to the offering of her life by the Sister.

3. In spite of the liberty safeguarded for the individual in the method of phrasing the questions asked, a solemn promise of obedience to the rules is made, albeit of a temporary nature.

(iii) The third event to take place on July 25th 1855, was the laying of the foundation stone of the new St. Mary's Home.

"The day began with a storm of rain, which however cleared off by I, when the Bishop, accompanied by the Archdeacon of Berks, Rev. Dr. Wordsworth, R. Milman ... [etc., etc.,] and the Clergy of the Parish, proceeded to lay the Corner Stone of the new St. Mary's Home in the ground purchased from W. Dixon at the top of Mill Street. The Service was adapted from that which was used on a similar occasion at Clewer, and the Choir [i.e. of the Parish Church] sang it extremely well. Many of the Farmers and others were present from the market, and a goodly attendance of our own folk."[59] Notice had been given of the forthcoming event in Church on the previous Sunday:

"Altogether the whole Service was very satisfactory and cheering. May God prosper this work!"[60] The Vicar added: "We must if possible look a little more after the boys and children who get out of sight on these occasions. They chatter and destroy the perfectness of silence and sympathy." Since there were exciting mounds of earth and piles of building materials lying about opportunities for play must have presented themselves irresistably to the children!

Miss Lampet, the former pupil teacher, recorded the impressions she retained of the stone-laying ceremony, and of Bishop Wilberforce and Mr. Liddon: "When the first stone of the present Home was laid by the then Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce) I stood on one of the heaps of soil, that had been thrown up by the diggers, to listen to his words as he stood on a raised space in his Episcopal robes - such a striking figure with a powerful and deeply lined face and a voice and utterance of singular impressiveness. All I remember of this speech was that his own words

would be few since later on, 'his dear 'brother' 'according to the wisdom given him, would speak to his listeners.' The 'dear brother' was Canon Liddon! Of his sermon I only remember that he said in that clear incisive voice that perforce riveted attention what an unspeakable blessing the Home was to the Parish and far beyond its limits, how the very presence of a religious house must leaven the whole neighbourhood, how it raised the standard of holiness, how it affected the Clergy, how intensely it made him wish for higher things!"[61]

"The Bishop addrest the workmen specially and very much to the purpose on the duties and blessedness of labouring in such a work'[62]

Also on this day two more Exterior Sisters were admitted, bringing their numbers up to about seventeen.[63] Each year had seen additions to the number of Exterior Sisters and the growth went on steadily.

SISTERHOOD OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN. C.

THE PENITENTS

Meanwhile work with the Penitents at the Home in Newbury Street went quietly on. During 1854 and 1855 the scheme whereby the Home received inmates regularly from the Oxford Penitentiary and other institutions further afield, after a short probationary period, seems to have been at its most successful. The average time spent by the girls in the houses of first instance was about three months. The time in the refuge served to take off the "rough edge of an unruly life"[64] and to accustom the inmates to some degree of restraint, thus paving "the way to the stricter reforming discipline of the Penitentiary."[65]

In 1855 the Sisters introduced a system of conduct marks for the Penitents. If a girl obtained a good monthly total of marks for satisfactory behaviour, she received a small reward. These rewards were meant to serve as encouragements to the girls. Also, the kind of outfit which a girl received on leaving the Home, when her time was up, in addition to the return of any clothing she may have brought in with her, was made to depend upon the total of good marks obtained during the whole period of her probation. The moral idea behind this system was to try to teach the girls to weigh the 'future consequences of their present actions'. Further, the idea that greater responsibility was required of those who had received fuller instruction was also inculcated.

The girls were divided into classes, and in each higher class so many more marks were obtainable than in a lower one, but equally, more marks could be lost for faults.

In the Vicar's absence on holiday in August 1855 Mr. Mackonochie+ supervised an outing of the girls from the Home. He noted in the Parish Journal: "Wednesday Aug:15. An expedition to the Downs with the Penitents fairly successful."

When Mr. Vincent and the Vicar were both absent at the same time, the other curates on the staff of Wantage Parish Church took duty at the Home difficult though it apparently was, at times, for them to fit it in. For instance Mr. Mackonochie noted: "Friday, Festival of St. Bartholomew ... Vincent absent in the morning which obliged me to go to the Home."[67] But it should be said that the ministrations of all the Clergy were appreciated by the Sisters

MRS. TREVELYAN

Early in 1855 Mrs. Trevelyan obtained a house opposite the "Swan" inn, into which she removed her Industrial School for the training of girls for domestic service, which she had founded at Littlemore. The girls were trained in general household work, and the establishment was run on religious lines. The Vicar took an interest in the work even though it created an additional burden for him. Evidently the girls of the school provided an interesting target for the local boys at first, for an entry in the Parish Journal noted that:

"Mrs. Trevelyan complained that certain of our boys had pelted the Industrial School with dirt" on one Sunday afternoon.[68] The Vicar included the Industrial School in his regular visiting and sometimes took part in the services held in the house. For example: "Saturday June 9. Said Compline with Mrs. Trevelyan's Industrial School..."[69] Mrs. Trevelyan evidently ran her house in a slightly monastic style as had Miss Hayes, but there are few contemporary details available at present, about the regime.

Mrs. Trevelyan had begun her school in the Oxford neighbourhood possibly because she was advised in spiritual matters by Dr. Pusey and wished to be near him. Why she came to Wantage is not clear, but such a move could have been suggested to her by Dr. Pusey who knew of William Butler's work and his interest in educational schemes.

Mrs. Trevelyan wanted to give her school a permanent home in

+ See Notes

Wantage and she offered to build a suitable house.[70] The word "offered" is operative here. She could have bought land and built a house without reference to anyone, but she evidently desired to join her work on to the Vicar's educational establishment and to get him to assume at least some responsibility for it. It is said that the Vicar felt that one more school would ruin him[71] and indeed he deserved sympathy. But he reluctantly accepted the "offer" with the proviso that room might perhaps be found at the new house to accommodate the girl pupil teachers from the Old Cottage. Evidently Mrs. Trevelyan agreed to build the house for a dual purpose, for the very first mention of the house which was to be called "St. Michael's" refers to the "St. Michael's Schools" in the plural, as does the Latin inscription on the foundation stone.[72]

This brief description has been given because St. Michael's was destined in future years to play an important part in the development of certain educational works connected with the Community of St. Mary the Virgin.

A plot of land was obtained in an area of Wantage known as Prior's Hold, and the foundation stone was laid on October 6th, 1855: "Thursday. The Corner Stone of the new St. Michael's Schools laid by Mrs. Trevelyan the founder. We used the same service as on St. James' Day adapted."[73]

THE SCHOOL SISTERHOOD

Only a little over a month after the inauguration strange and slightly disturbing tales concerning the School Sisterhood began to come to the ears of the Vicar. The School Sisterhood had an overall care for the girls and infant school work, though under the direction of the Vicar. The first thing to happen was that the pupil teacher in charge of the infants was instructed to send away all the little boys who attended the school, presumably because they had not attended regularly. No reference had been made to the Vicar and the action seemed to him high-handed. The Vicar, when he heard of the incident, wrote: "Eliza has sent away all the boys that came to the infant school - at the order of the Superior. I had no idea that any of them would be regular in attendance for long, but should have told her to keep to [an] arrangement I made ... [with one of the senior boy pupil teachers] had I known what she was going to do ..."[74] What this arrangement was does not concern us here. In view of the unremitting and strenuous efforts being made by the Vicar and his helpers,

to provide educational opportunities for all the local children, and to encourage them to take advantage of the provision, such an incident must have been peculiarly vexatious.

Next the Vicar received a visit from the Superior of the School Sisters - full of troubles."There is need of help for the Middle School, which is in danger of falling to pieces. Sister Mary is overworked and, I fear, will not pass the Government Examination etc."[75] Sister Mary (Miss Puttock) had been advised by the Government School Inspector, during his visit in the summer, to try for the Government Teachers Certificate, which he felt she had a good chance of obtaining. Sister Elizabeth was in touch with the Vicar again about these troubles in the following week.

The next blow was of a different and more serious nature. One of the curates reported to the Vicar that "the Schools, i.e. the Superior" owed the sum of £318 to a shop in the town. This was a very large debt and the Vicar investigated it at one. The debt seems to have been incurred by a school for "young ladies" recently begun by Sister Elizabeth's own sister, a Mrs. Dynham. The school began its career in a house near the "Blue Boar" inn at the end of Newbury Street nearest the market place i.e. the opposite end of the street from the Old Cottage. The Vicar found that the story of the debt was but "too true. The Ladies School does not answer and must clearly be given up at Christmas."[76]

The need for more funds to help the School Sisterhood therefore became very pressing. Characteristically the Vicar did not repine but set to work at once to find ways and means: "We have resolved to make the small Thursday offering over to the support of the School Sisterhood, and I here invite all the Clergy to gather any the smallest contributions, e.g. pence and halfpence, from all quarters and offer them at this time."[77]

All was not well with the girl pupil teachers either, and two or three of them withdrew from the work within a comparatively short time of one another. It seems most probable that the harassed and unsettled state of the School Sisters was reflected in their management of the household and communicated itself to the girls.

As if these troubles were not enough, illness struck the School Sisters' household:

"Saturday Oct.27. The fever had seized Ann Hogan and Emma Lance two of the young women employed in teaching, and now Sister Mary. This is grievous in every way, but 'Fiat Voluntas Tua'. May it please God to restore to health and usefulness one so truly devoted as Sister Mary to His Service."[78]

A month later:

"Saturday Nov.24. We have a grievous amount of sickness among our girl teachers. Sister Mary and Ann with typhus, Marianne Lowman with swelled legs, Lucy Rogers with scarlet fever and Sarah [Green] with congestion of the lungs ..."[79] Marianne Lowman was one of the pupil teachers who had been wishing to cancel her indentures.

A month later still:

"St. Stephens Day Dec.26... We are much perplexed about the schools. Marianne Lowman, pupil teacher, is the fourth case of Typhus Fever, and it became necessary to send away the whole party from the house. They are summoned again for [next] Saturday, but it is not easy to dispose of them. Sister Lucy is very poorly and Sister Mary of course, yet far from strong."[80]

Quite apart from the temporary decimation of the Wantage Schools female teaching staff, these reports of serious illness illustrate an aspect of Wantage life which was to cause the Vicar concern for many years. Wantage was far from being a salubrious place at this time, and there were recurrent bouts of illness in some of the houses under the Vicar's care over a considerable period. As one of the Town Commissioners the Vicar was himself to be instrumental in remedying evils arising from the poor sanitation of the town.

Then the School Sisterhood began to crumble from the top. A few days after Christmas of this eventful year Sister Elizabeth informed the Vicar "that for lack of means it was absolutely necessary for her to live with Drs. Dynham, and give up all further charge of pupil teachers or others. This leaves a heavy burden on my hands. May God find the way for us to do justice to His Little Ones."[81]

In his summary of conditions in the Parish at the end of the year the Vicar revealed something of the heaviness of his heart and the enormous difficulties he was facing; but his undaunted courage and his complete trust in God's providence also shone through. His own words will most fittingly conclude this eventful chapter:

"... A mistress must be provided for the Girls' School, provision must be made for the pupil teachers, and I do not feel at all assured that there is not a considerable debt remaining behind of Miss Hayeses, which must be paid. At least £42 must be paid for the rent of her house ...

My fears of last year about the School Sisterhood have been sadly realized, and now after much demonstration and talk, after that solemn service and Bishop's address on St. James Day it seems that Miss Hayes is a person far too self-willed and impractical to leave in command. Sister Lucy's health seems very likely to incapacitate her from work, and the young ladys school will be very difficult to teach. Sister Mary is a more vigorous person, and might be most useful, but I fear, that she has not been well managed. But besides all this, the poverty of the household renders it absolutely necessary to make a complete change. I cannot but believe that with proper management and greater openness all might have gone well, but as it is, all falls to pieces and we must be content if we are not buried or damaged in the ruins. There are of course, thanks be to God, subjects of joy and hope. It is a great thing ... to have so good a prospect of carrying on Educational work as Mrs. Trevelyan's new buildings in Tanner Street [now Priory Road] seem likely to afford."[82]

NOTES : CHAPTER III

1. Parish Journal Thursday Feb.3.
2. Miss Lampet's Reminiscences. MS. (Also quoted in "A Story of a Diverted Hope" p.6.
3. P.J. May 23.
4. Ibid. Dec.31.
5. Pusey House Pamphlet 71146, "St. Mary's Home for Penitents..: The First Nine Years..."
6. Ibid.
7. Thus the Vicar in P.J.
8. P.J. Ap.19.
9. cf P.J.
10. P.J. Tues. May 10.
11. cf Ibid.
12. P.J.
13. Ibid June 22.
14. P.J. Dec.12.
15. P.H. Pa.71146 op.cit.
16. P.J. Tuesday after the "Last Sunday After Trinity".
17. P.H. Pa.71146.
18. Ibid.
19. "History of the Foundation..." p.17.
20. P.J. Jan.6.
21. cf Kathleen Philip "Victorian Wantage".
22. Ibid. pp 18, 44.
23. P.J.
24. P.H. Pa.71146.
25. Ibid. (Also Conveyance for the Home).
26. cf Ibid.
27. P.J.
28. C.S.M.V. Unpublished papers.
29. Ibid.
30. cf Community Papers.
31. "Constitutions And Rules". Community Papers.
32. cf e.g. "Lives of Twelve Good Men" J.W. Burgon.
33. Jan.28 1854.
34. MS n.d. C.S.M.V. U.P.
35. For the rules quoted in the foregoing section P.H. Pa.323 Appendix.
36. Bodleian MS Wilberforce d.33. p.43.
37. Ibid. p.46.
38. cf Sir Llewellyn Woodward "The Age of Reform" p.285.

39. Owen Chadwick "The Victorian Church" Part I p.509.
40. Ibid.
41. cf Miss Lampet's 'Reminiscences'.
42. cf Ibid.
43. P.J. Dec.30 or 31.
44. 'Reminiscences'.
45. cf Ibid.
46. 'Reminiscences'.
47. "History of the Foundation" p.28 (see also L&L).
48. P.H. Pa.71146 p.55.
49. "The Guardian" May 2, 1855.
50. P.J.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. P.J. July 25, 1855.
54. MS C.S.M.V. U.P.
55. Ibid.
56. "A Hundred Years of Blessing" p.27.
57. Ibid.
58. "Form of Service for the Admission of Sisters" C.S.M.V. n.d.
59. P.J. July 25.
60. Ibid.
61. Op. cit.
62. P.J. July 25.
63. Vide Roll of Exterior Sisters.
64. P.H. Pa.71146.
65. Ibid.
66. cf Ibid.
67. PJ
68. P.J. June 11.
69. P.J.
70. cf "Story of a Diverted Hope" p.13.
71. Ibid.
72. In majorem Dei Gloriam necnon ad teneras agnas Boni Pastorii in via virtute et obedientiae Instituendas Hujusce Sancti Michaelis Archangeli Scholae quae aedificatur Lapidum Angularum Posuit Francisca Anna Trevelyan Sexta Die Octavanus Sancti M.A. MDCCCLV ...
73. P.J. Oct.6.
74. P.J. Monday Sept.3.
75. P.J. Monday Oct.1.
76. Ibid.
77. P.J. Saturday Oct.13.

78. P.J.
79. P.J.
80. P.J.
81. Ibid for Dec.30.
82. P.J. (Probably Dec.31).

+ The Rev. Alexander Heriot Mackonochie, later to serve at St. Alban's, Holborn. The authors of "A Hundred Years of Blessing" are in error in stating that his brother, James, served as curate to W.J. Butler at Wantage.

CHAPTER IV 1856 - 1858

'ESTABLISHMENT UPON A SURE FOUNDATION'

1856

THE SCHOOL SISTERHOOD

The illness at the Cottage had gained some extra holiday time for the pupil teachers at the end of December 1855 and the beginning of January 1856. In normal years the Vicar had established the practice of keeping the schools running till after the major festivals of the Church were past, and only then allowing them to break up for their holidays. The children were kept at school for the festivals in order to instil into them the great truths of the Faith, commemorated as they are by changes in the liturgy and so on. This practice was continued by the Community of St. Mary the Virgin when it came to have charge of some schools for quite a long time, and until quite recently the girls might be kept at school for Easter if the festival fell early. In England the practice has now died out for a number of reasons.

As the year 1856 opened, matters concerning the School Sisterhood continued to deteriorate and Miss Hayes appears to have acted in a very odd manner.[1] For example, one Sunday in January, the Vicar was "summoned by three Sunday School girls at Miss Hayes' request to take charge of the Sunday class".[2] Hitherto much of the Sunday School work had been under Miss Hayes' superintendence, and this strange incident probably indicates her relinquishment of yet another portion of the work she had undertaken: a move which burdened the Vicar yet more heavily.

About a month later the Vicar confided his worries to the Parish Journal: "... Much anxiety about Miss Hayes and School Sisterhood. After willingly leaving all things in my hands, she now writes, very dictatorially, arranging them in her own way. This of course cannot be permitted and I see nothing but a separation in prospect. May God guide us in this matter, and suffer no human feeling to stand in the way of this Holy Service."[3]

On a visit to Oxford two days later the Vicar went to see Dr. Pusey and had a long talk with him about the School Sisterhood.[4] The Vicar did not however cease to report to and consult the Bishop, and he wrote to him, describing the difficulties and outlining the way in which he felt an English School Sisterhood should be conducted.

It took the Vicar a long time to solve the practical problems raised by the collapse of the School Sisterhood and to overcome personal disappointment at the fading of his long-cherished hopes. It was probably Miss Hayes' behaviour rather than her secession to Rome which grieved him most. Although to change allegiance from the English to the Roman Church was regarded as sinful by the Wantage Clergy and many others of their way of thinking, they could nevertheless, respect conscientious scruples and they certainly accorded Miss Lockhart the benefit of the doubt when she seceded. In Miss Hayes' defence it may be conjectured that she might not have understood fully what she was undertaking when she became a Sister. To create a new Sisterhood while managing school work may, perhaps, have demanded abilities of a higher order than she possessed. Again, it should not be overlooked that, although he had great patience and love, the Vicar was rather exacting and austere, and there may have been some failure in understanding between Miss Hayes and himself.

The Vicar wrote of the School Sisterhood and of his hopes:

"It is very grievous to have been forced to give up a plan which promised so well as that inaugurated on St. James' Day: but the extreme irregularity of the Superior, and her impatience of controul make it hopeless to go on with her aid, and I must now carry on the work in a different fashion. I trust and pray that we may yet gain the assistance we need, and work through the Ladies of the Home an educational system. But at present with the very small numbers and invalided condition of those who are there, it would be quite wrong to build castles. We must struggle on as it were from hand to mouth, and pray for help. The arrangements, as at present, are that Mrs. Dynham should continue the Boarding School which promises fairly, [i.e. the school for Young Ladies] the Middle School is workt from the Home, and Mrs. Light occupies the House and manages the pupil teachers department."[9]

The running of the Workschool was undertaken by Miss Emma Watkins with an assistant, and the work was thus covered. But the Vicar felt insecure, quite justifiably, after so much disappointment: "I feel that all is uncertain, and that everything may in an hour be thrown on my hands. It is a most anxious and critical time, and only God's help can carry us through."[10]

The Bishop, although suffering intense personal grief caused by the death of his eldest son Herbert on the previous day, nevertheless wrote encouragingly to the Vicar on February 29th:

"My dear Butler,

I entirely approve and agree absolutely in your view of what a Sisterhood must be to succeed in our Church. May God give you good success in dealing with this difficult case ..."; [5] and the Bishop went on to share his own grief with the Vicar whom he regarded as a friend.

Within the next few months the School Sisterhood collapsed completely. Miss Hayes[+] apparently left Wantage, and before very long both she and Miss Puttock (the former "Sister Mary") became Roman Catholics. Miss Power also left, but fell ill and died soon afterwards.

When Miss Hayes severed her connexions with Wantage apparently she left belongings of her own which she had brought to the Cottage, to her sister Mrs. Dynham, for her use. Whether with or without warning, we do not know, Mrs. Dynham went to the Cottage and carted away "a great many things probably personal property - leaving [the household] without necessary things for use." [6] Mrs. Dynham continued to run her School in Wantage, assisted by her daughter Mary, and she took her part in such things as helping the teachers from the other schools at the annual feast of the combined schools in the summer months. It does not appear that her relations with the Vicar were particularly overstrained.

With the departure of the furniture and other household utensils, Mrs. Trevelyan and the Sisters from St. Mary's Home came to the rescue. The Vicar wrote: "We have had much trouble about the Cottage, but now all seems nearly settled. Mrs. Trevelyan has most kindly lent us much furniture, cooking apparatus etc:" [7] The St. Mary's Sisters also assisted by lending some furniture, by feeding the pupil teachers, at any rate for the mid-day meal, and by providing some supervision for them.

For a time there was no adult sleeping in the Cottage to care for the pupil teachers, but they were evidently fairly responsible and some of them were, in any case, in their late 'teens. The Sisters of St. Mary's Home who had lodged at the Cottage in earlier days must have moved out either on the arrival of Miss Power and Miss Puttock

+ See Notes

or when alterations to their own house provided accommodation for all the Sisters. The Sisters at the Home were still few, and apparently the demands of their own work made it impossible for them to provide a Sister for the Cottage immediately the former School Sisters left. But as soon as it was possible Sister Frances was sent to care for the inmates of the Cottage. The pupil teachers had to do some of their own housekeeping during the interim, and the Vicar used this as an opportunity for teaching them something about household management. He himself kept a vigilant eye upon them. There are anecdotes about how he went, himself, to see that the pupil teachers at the Cottage got up betimes in the morning, and if they were late he would say "No butter for breakfast and be in my study by eight o'clock"! But if they were disciplined and alert he would sometimes show his pleasure by buying them newly-baked hot rolls from the bakery nearby, and perhaps eggs, for their breakfast!

The pupil teachers were very bewildered by the somewhat precipitate and irresponsible departure of the adults who had been placed over them. Miss Lampet recorded that: "None of us knew exactly what had happened till the Vicar told us about it himself and said that if any of us received a letter from Miss Hayes or Miss Puttock we were not to open it but to take it straight to him. Gradually all the teachers dispersed to their respective homes except those that were actually apprenticed and whose indentures had been signed."[8]

But it was not only the pupil teachers themselves who suffered from the defections. The Schools which had been under Miss Hayes' and her companions' care were thrown into a disorganised state through having no head teachers. The pupil teachers carried on as best they could with what help the Clergy could give them, and with help from the Sisters, until a new Mistress arrived, by name Mrs. Light, both to take charge of the Girls' School and to manage the household at the Cottage.

At this time the Vicar had tentative hopes that eventually the St. Mary's Sisters might undertake educational work in addition to the rescue work in which they were already engaged. The Middle School came temporarily into the Sisters' care at this time of crisis and they may have continued to assist both there and at the National Schools during the period for which few records are available. The Vicar continued to be most tenacious of the idea that Sisters should be employed in local works of education.

THE SISTERHOOD OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN : 1. SCHOOL WORK.

When the St. Mary's Sisterhood first began its members assisted in the National Schools as they grew up in the town as well as in the little school in Mill Street, although this school was probably given up when larger accommodation became available. With the change to Penitentiary work, however, most if not all the Sisters' help in local education had perforce to be withdrawn, with the possible exception of Sunday School work. Of course they did instruct the Penitents but their effective help in the education of the town was no longer available. Now however, the Sisters were being drawn, by the exigencies of the moment, back into the schools, and this crisis really saw the beginning of the Sisterhood's proper involvement in education, small though their part in it was at first. Also the collapse of the School Sisterhood was the occasion for the commencement of that change of direction which was to bring all the work done in the town by Sisters, into the hands of the one Sisterhood.

The School Sisterhood left behind it a legacy of troubles. For example the St. Mary's Sisters were hard put to it to restore order and balance in the Middle School. When the School broke up for the summer holidays the Vicar commented: "The Middle School broke up for five weeks holiday. I trust that this may succeed. Miss Hayes and her irregularities have shaken its prestige thoroughly and I have my doubts about the future of it. Nothing but expense and obvious advantages will induce ... middle folk to send their children elsewhere than to the old and useless schools to which they are accustomed."[11] But by the end of the year the Vicar was feeling less pessimistic:

"Dec.23 ... Middle School had an Examination and a Festival. There are only twelve children and I know of no additions likely to come, but certainly the School has never been so well taught or so regular as during the last 9 months. It seemed strange to hear the little Blandys and Toslands repeating French quite fluently ..."[12]

In late June of this year the Mistress of the Infant School, Eliza Lidens, told the Vicar that she wished to leave. The Vicar wrote: "She has been a good girl in many ways, and has kept her school up satisfactorily. I think that Miss Hayes indulged her and that she never quite lost the effects of this."[13] Eliza left within three days and thus the Infant School was left uncared for. It is not quite clear who took charge of the school for the next few months, but it was probably another of the pupil teachers.

The Vicar wrote sadly on St. James' Day, still regretting the loss of the School Sisterhood: "One cannot help recalling St. James of last year and mourning over the failure of that which seemed so hopeful. God grant that such failures may make us more careful and prayerful also."[14]

One further extraordinary and unexpected incident left the Vicar and the Sisters with more financial difficulties. On October 2nd the Vicar recorded that "This day was the sale of the furniture, chiefly purchased by the Miss Watkinses for the schools. Miss Hayes had given a bill of sale upon them to Miss Whittell who claimed her money, and as I had no means of proving that they did not belong to Miss H., but to the Church, there was nothing for it but to let them go."[15] Miss Lucy Watkins had, for example, seen to the furnishing of the Middle School, now in the hands of the Sisters, and some funds must have been diverted to make good this new loss. Since at this period the Vicar was also engaged upon the repair and restoration of the Parish Church, for which purpose also funds had to be raised, it speaks volumes for the strength of his character and his faith in God that all these blows did not utterly crush him.

2. THE PENITENTS

The work of the Penitentiary went steadily forward and there is not very much to relate in this connexion for the year 1956. Evidently at a meeting in Oxford for Penitentiary business there was some kind of an attempt on the part of a few people to alter the existing arrangement between the Wantage Home and the Oxford Penitentiary Association. We do not know what changes were proposed[16] but the designs of the "small cabal" as the Vicar called it, were defeated.

A penitent ran away from the Home in June. She had recently arrived from Oxford and had not, perhaps, been able to settle down. The local Police Superintendent was asked to trace her. The Vicar remarked upon the advantages afforded by the new "systematic arrangement" of police forces, which in this case enabled the Superintendent to track the girl "quite through Berks." and to pass "his intelligence on through Oxfordshire."[17]

One day in August "the Home gave an entertainment to the Infants with apparent satisfaction to all parties"! The infants were probably members of the regular day and Sunday Schools and some may have received their teaching from the Sisters. The entertainment

was, no doubt, got up by the Penitents under the watchful eyes and with the help, of the Sisters, and it may perhaps be permitted to draw the inference that this occasion was a healthy sign of the good feeling generally prevailing in the Home.

At about this time the pressure of applications for admission to the refuges in large towns began to force some of the receiving houses to act as Penitentiaries as well. The system by which a Penitent was passed on from refuge to penitentiary, after a few months in the former, began to break down simply because existing penitentiaries had not enough vacancies to cope with the numbers. This meant that excess numbers had to be housed for longer periods in the refuges and some form of penitentiary-style training devised for them. The situation then arose that penitents were passed on to the penitentiaries after very varying periods in the houses of first instance. Some received vacancies after only a few weeks at a refuge, and others only after very many months. This inevitably led to uncertainty and a sense of insecurity among the girls themselves, and naturally rendered them less amenable. The work done among them became less successful.

The Wantage Home authorities came to feel that either the refuges should try to regulate their numbers to match the vacancies available quarterly at the receiving penitentiaries, or that the penitentiaries should become refuges as well by providing probationary wards entirely separate from the penitentiary areas. At Wantage it came to be hoped that in time sufficient money would be forthcoming to enable probationary wards to be built into the new St. Mary's Home.[18]

During 1856 fifteen girls left the Home, eleven of them having finished their probation and two because of illness.[19]

3. THE NEW HOME

While all the troubles connected with the School Sisterhood were coming to a head and then having to be cleared up, the work of building the new St. Mary's Home was going forward. It had been hoped that the home would be ready for occupation during the course of the summer of 1856, but owing to delays connected with the building, it was not possible to remove from Newbury Street until September. As it was, workmen were still busied about the site when the move was made. The Vicar, the Chaplain and the Sisters, knowing their charges, had all felt that it would be desirable for

the workmen to have left before the girls were moved into the Home. But the agreement under which the Newbury Street house was held terminated at this time and the household was them obliged to move before all was ready.* The Chaplain wrote: "This was a trouble to us in two respects. It interfered, in the first place, very much with the discipline of the house, giving our Sisters much extra trouble in keeping watch over their charge; and in the second, the season was so far advanced before all was ready, that we were unable to invite our friends to a formal opening of the house, and to rejoice with us on the happy accomplishment of so much of our undertaking."[20]

The steadiness and fidelity with which Thomas Vincent fulfilled his duties to the Home are transparently clear in the few records which remain, and perhaps one small entry in the Parish Journal illustrates this a little. On Sunday September 14th the Vicar wrote: "... Vincent preached in Church this evening after an interval of 3½ years."

On the following day, Monday September 15th, 1856 the move from Newbury Street to the new building began. The Vicar noted: "... The new St. Mary's Home entered."[21] The move appears to have been completed by the Friday of the same week and all the inmates safely installed. The Vicar attended the first service to be held. "Service at the Home on entering it and using the Chapel room for the first time." This room or Oratory as it was called, was situated on the first floor of the Home in the South Wing. Although the room has long been used for other purposes, some of the original glass remains in the upper lights of the windows. The glass is opaque and mostly uncoloured but there are some patterns of stained glass which include the "IHC" symbol repeated several times.

The new St. Mary's Home "began in a very small way. The entrance from the road was through red wooden gates from which a rather untidy gravel path sloped up to the Front Door. The porch was much as we know it now." There were two small carved wooden angels one on either side of the door "and two small benches." The angels are still there and look as though they were carved before the nineteenth century, but proof of this is not extant. The benches are no longer there, but otherwise the porch is the same today. "The main block consisted of the Centre and South Wing only." These two wings formed an L. Among the rooms on the ground floor was a Dining Hall where all the members of the household fed together;

"... the girls used to sit on benches built into the walls, while the Sisters and Visitors and Exterior Sisters sat on chairs in the centre of the room." There was also a classroom, a workroom, kitchen and laundry, and a small room which was used by the Founder. The girls slept in a long dormitory on the first floor, and Sisters who were not on dormitory duty slept in separate cells on the other side of the same passage.[22]

About this time the Sisters asked the Vicar to talk to them on the subject of the life they were beginning in their new house. The address was largely devotional but at the beginning it touched upon the trials they had undergone, and what they had gained through that experience which would be of practical use in their life of prayer and service. The Vicar also taught them that their new surroundings could help them to form new resolutions as they went forward in the spiritual life.

"Dear Disters, you wish me to address you in a few words of warning and exhortation now, while the impressions are yet new to you of this your new abode, this which if it pleases God, may be the last abode of at least some of you.

You have accomplished a change, slight indeed as regards place, but surely not slight in its influence on your life. That cannot be a slight change when what was temporary becomes permanent, when we know that we have reached an end, and that there is nothing more ... you know well that an occasion like the present in such a life and in such a work as yours, may not be lost.

You have been enabled to try your strength and your weakness, you have had some experience of the peculiar temptations incidental to a Religious life; you have learned somewhat of what God demands of those who seek a place among the Household Servants of Him, and the help which he offers to them. You have known some of the peculiar blessedness attached to this condition, and some of its sorrows: you have passed as it were, the Novitiate of that life which with a fixed purpose you chose before and now, with the knowledge gained and hearts purified by self-examination and confession, you would fain gain somewhat of help from the fresh combination of outward and visible objects to help a new set of resolutions and a firm '<u>teaching</u>' in the spiritual life..."
The Vicar went on to speak of the blessedness of the life the Sisters had undertaken and of the inevitable struggles and

sufferings to come as they strove to go forward in God's service.

One further extract will serve to illustrate something of the Founder's vision for the Sisterhood as they settled down into their new home:

"Let this House be to you a sort of Church; it is a holy place - a house of prayer wherein seven times each day the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, penitence and intercession shall rise to Almighty God. Feel as in a Church the constant presence of God modifying and checking you in thought, word, deed, movement and look."[23]

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOLS

Late in November, the main part of the new buildings sponsored by Mrs. Trevelyan was ready for habitation. Mrs. Trevelyan moved in to prepare for the reception of the Schools which were to occupy the house. There was as yet no chapel. The building was arranged in three wings. The east wing was to be the dwelling for Mrs. Trevelyan herself, her husband and his man-servant. "The centre and west wing were adapted for the training schools."[24]

The Vicar's own summing up will serve to conclude the account of the vicissitudes experienced in 1856. On January 1st 1857 he wrote, in a spirit of thankfulness and hope, yet without excusing himself for his own errors of judgment, that the year "... began in much trouble and anxiety. Miss Hayes and her doings, the sickness of the household, the difficulty of carrying on the various educational works of which she had the management, the great doubt as to her future position, and the heavy debt which she had incurred through her wilfulness - all combined to alarm me very much for the future welfare of our Girls. Now, thanks be to God, these difficulties have materially subsided, and everything has continued as before, only in a far healthier and more hopeful condition. Miss Hayes and her history ought to be a great warning to us all, and it should teach us the great danger of letting a beautiful Idea [i.e. for a School Sisterhood] take hold of the mind and numb the perceptive powers. I ought to have understood long before that she was not trustworthy, and so to have brought matters to a point. Many notes in this book [i.e. Parish Journal] record my doubts and fears. But I lived on in the hope, of at last settling her down... May He who has begun the good work complete it till the day of Jesus Christ. He only can, and to Him we must constantly and earnestly pray for our people, individually

and collectively offering to Him again and again each one of our works, our Church, our Services, the Home, our Schools, and all the success in each which He vouchsafes to give us."[25]

1857

FINANCIAL MATTERS CONCERNING THE NEW HOME

During 1856 little money had been donated specifically to the building fund. Subscriptions and donations came in in sufficient quantities to defray general expenditure, but the beginning of 1857 found the Home in debt for the buildings to the sum of £400. Not only had the alms been small, but as the Chaplain wrote; "experience gained between the drawing of the plans and the completion of the first portion led [those concerned] to see the necessity of enlarging and slightly altering the laundry and its adjacent departments. This with some contingent expenses, and fitting the whole building with gas-lights, amounted to nearly £500 more than the original contract."[26] But the Church Penitentiary Association assisted with a grant of £100, "and donations enabled the paying of £200 more."[27]

The general fund began to benefit from money earned by the laundry work done by the Penitents. They did not earn the whole cost of their keep because they were not kept solidly at work all the week. Time was spent in receiving instruction and in devotional exercises. But the laundry work "seemed to promise a fair proportion towards the cost of their support."[28]

On March 26th a Church Vestry meeting was held, and the Vicar brought forward the subject of payment of rate as it concerned the Home. He represented the Home as having a claim to exemption from payment because it was a charitable institution. "The point was contested by those present and left undecided, though the onus probandi will fall on us." He commented: "It is strange to see how little sympathy the sort of people who attend Vestries have for any good work. They don't or can't believe in self-denial nor the abstract love of others scarcely in the fact that sin is fearful and they [the next word is illegible but 'regard' will fit the context] such works as the Home as a mere whim or luxury..."[29]

On April 9th a further Vestry was held for Church Rate and at the same meeting the rating of St. Mary's Home was settled. "All went off smoothly. It was agreed that St. Mary's Home should be rated for poor rate on this ground alone, [i.e. presumably poverty] and at 40£ for lighting, paving etc..."30

From time to time the Vicar noted in the Journal donations that were made to the Home, for example: "April 7. Tuesday in Holy Week ... Letter from Mrs. Hubbard enclosing £25 for the Home, and promising a yearly repetition of the same ..." For many years the Home remained dependent upon this kind of generosity simply to keep it running from day to day. But the Vicar and the Chaplain knew that the Home was helping to fulfil a crying social need, let alone a moral one, and they did not hesitate to send appeals for support to such people as those who had sent girls to the Home, and the Exterior Sisters, in order that they might get up local collections in their parishes. In a wider field they hoped they might sound their appeals in the ears of the men who had made, or might have made, victims of the girls and young women being cared for in the various Homes now established.

That the financial situation was still very hand-to-mouth is illustrated by a note the Vicar made some time in 1857: "Some money is really needful, only about £3 in the last fortnight. I must try some other plan."[31]

GENERAL REFLECTIONS

Despite the excellence of the work being done by the penitentiaries it is certainly open to question whether their establishment tended - paradoxically - to dull people's awareness of the double standard which was accentuated by their very existence. A girl who came into one of these Homes was labelled a "penitent", and if she was unfortunate, she might carry the stigma of immorality which this implied and a burden of shame for much of her life. But the men who had been concerned in bringing her to such a plight, more often than not extricated themselves completely from the relationship, and left her to suffer the consequences of social ostracism. If a man had a conscience it is possible that, if he knew that a girl whom he had seduced had gone into a penitentiary, his sense of guilt might be salved because she was being cared for, and he could send a donation accordingly if he wished.

In the eyes of society the girl usually carried the burden of blame, while the part played by the man was often regarded with tolerance. For example, a young man had to 'sow his wild oats', it was quite natural; or he had to 'gain experience' and some poor domestic servant might be seduced for this. This is not to say that there were not cases of willingness on the part of the girl, but all too often a resident servant was forced into

immorality, being defenceless in the house of her master or perhaps against the sheer strength of his son or some male servant. It may be asked whether Churchmen were sufficiently aware of what the existence of refuges and penitentiaries implied, at this period. It would seem that they were not, on the whole, for although the founding of penitentiaries represented an effort by Churchmen to deal with the problem of prostitution; yet there was no widespread attempt by the Church, at this time, to deal with the double standards, or to force society to recognize the inequality of treatment of those convicted of immoral behaviour, between the sexes.

MORE SISTERS

The year 1857 saw the addition of two more Sisters to the Community. On February 3rd Miss Mary Pennell, who had been an Exterior Sister since the previous year, arrived to join the resident Sisterhood, brought over to Wantage by her father. During April a Miss Elizabeth Carter also came to swell the numbers. These two were to be known as "Sister Mary" and "Sister Eliza" and both were to remain in the Community for the rest of their lives.

Two other domestic events occurred which concerned the Exterior Sisters. In this year Emma Watkins, now Emma Mackonochie, as she had married the Rev. A.H. Mackonochie's brother, James, in 1856, became an Exterior Sister. Another of the Watkins sisters, Dora, who had been an Exterior Sister since 1852, married Thomas Vincent, Chaplain to St. Mary's Home in 1857. The help of the Exterior Sisters continued to be of essential value to the Home.

RULES RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE HOME

It was noted earlier that the first Constitutions and Rules for St. Mary's Home were drawn up and approved in 1854 and 1855. The autumn of 1857 saw episcopal approval of a set of "Rules Relating To The Internal Conduct Of The Work." This code is headed "The Sisterhood of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage," as distinct from the title given in the earlier document which simply refers to "St. Mary's Home for Penitents," although it governed the Sisterhood itself as well as the Sisters' relation to the Home.

This second set of rules did not in any way supersede the original one, but rather supplemented it. For the first time regulations for admission to the Sisterhood were set out. The

first rule corresponds to the service for the Admission of Sisters discussed in the last chapter with regard to the promise of obedience "so long as [a Sister] shall continue an inmate ...," the individual liberty to leave at will thus being implicitly preserved:

"1. Any person admitted to be a Sister shall be required to give a promise of obedience to the Rules and Regulations of the Home so long as she shall continue an inmate thereof."

It is also laid down that a definite period of probation shall be undergone by the intending Sister. There was still no use of the title "Novice", though it is possible that this was used domestically in the Home for some time before it found a place in official documents. "No new Sister shall be admitted until after residence, and observance of the Rules for the space of two years, and by the consent of a majority of the Sisters." As we have seen "Admission" corresponded to "Profession". A further clause provides that "no Sister shall be admitted whose parents are living without their written consent first obtained." This clause produces a corresponding requirement in the next form of admission service, in which, if the Bishop think it necessary, he shall question those about to be admitted "whether, in offering themselves to this life, they have the consent of those to whom they owe obedience." It is not clear how long this requirement was in force, but presumably it was dropped as the movement for the emancipation of women gained force and recognition. Florence Nightingale's independent behaviour gave a strong impetus to the movement during this period.

The move towards the monastic ideal of relinquishment of personal property was given explicit expression in this set of rules. Relinquishment could not be absolute because of the non-permanent conception of Sisterhood life expressed in the clauses preserving individual liberty to withdraw. The rules stated that "No Sister can retain any money or goods actually in her possession in the Home;" but it provided that she might retain property elsewhere,presumably against the time when she might leave the Sisterhood, or as a source of income from which her payments to the Sisterhood for her maintenance might be drawn. It was also enjoined that the Sisters should have "all things in common as far as may be"; i.e. Community of goods within the houses of the Sisterhood.

These rules gave the Superior authority to order the work of the Sisters and to decide matters concerning the Community. The impression that the Sisters were ruled autocratically by the Superior might be gained from a perusal of this code. But in fact, although she did have ultimate authority, it is fairly certain that the Superior's government of the Community was carried on in consultation with those Sisters who had been formally "admitted". In earlier days no doubt all the Sisters took part in discussions, particularly when there was no Superior. The rules actually provide that alterations of them could only be made with the consent of a majority of the Sisters, as in the first document, the only difference being that the size of the majority is not specified.

It was further provided that the Vicar, or "Bishop's Commissary" as he was called, should act as counsellor to the Superior in regard to matters concerning the Sisters, should she require assistance; and that the Chaplain should act in a similar capacity towards her for the Penitents. In both cases final reference could be made to the Bishop in case of need.

The development of the monastic way of life is reflected in these rules. For the first time the length of time to be given daily in private devotion was specified, in addition to the recitation of the Canonical Hours which had been said in common ever since the foundation of the Community. Each day was to begin and close with prayer. Also the hours and times during which silence was to be kept were defined. These hours and times were as follows :- "In going to and from Church; from Evening Prayers (Compline) till after Matins" on the following day; from nine o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock "except on those days on which Holy Communion [was] celebrated at an early hour." Freedom to alter the rule of silence "to suit the work" was given to the Superior "under the direction of the Commissary." Also a simple rule of fasting was given, not very austere, presumably having regard to the delicate health of some of the Sisters.

The Sisters dress was to be uniform and neat and the Sisters were to regard certain modes of behaviour as religious duties: i.e. "personal neatness, punctuality, a due regard to the interests of the house, a general order, a gentle recollected manner, coupled with habitual courtesy, both among themselves and towards strangers ..."

The Sisters were at liberty to visit their parents and friends occasionally, or when "necessity or sickness require[d] it."[32]

THE SISTERS AND THE PARISH

The Sisterhood, although its new home was at a little further distance from the Parish Church, nevertheless maintained a close relationship with the Parish. Regarding the Church itself a few homely details are left to us which illustrate this. For example the Sisters lent "Altar hangings" and a litany desk as their contribution to the great service which was held to mark the completion of the restoration of the Church, a work which had been very close to the Vicar's heart. Again there are references to the assistance of the Sisters in decorating the Parish Church for festivals. In the abovementioned code of rules it was provided that "Those Sisters, whose services can be spared, shall attend the daily services of the Parish Church." i.e. they attended Matins and Evensong at Church.

The Sisters' work in the Parish was also governed by the rules quoted above. "If any Parochial or Educational work be entrusted to any Sister, the actual time to be allowed to it shall be fixed by the Superior; and the work itself, so far as it regards the Parish, shall be appointed and the Sister regulated in it by the Parish Priest. Provided that the Superior shall always limit such work in the Parish so that it hinder not the necessary work of the Home, or prevent the needful recreation of the Sisters, and that never less than two Sisters remain in the house together."

The Sisters assisted when they could in the nursing of the sick in the town during outbreaks of serious illness, as there was in the summer of 1859. Every effort was made to integrate the Sisters in the Parochial machinery.

The Bishop continued to include the Home in his itinerary whenever he visited the town. For example on Friday November 13th of this year the Vicar wrote: "Bishop's Visitation. We all received the H[oly] C[ommunion] at the Home in the early morning."[33] This Celebration was probably the only Communion Service in the Parish on that day.

WORK WITH THE PENITENTS

The work among the Penitents continued to make progress. It was found necessary, however, to increase the strictness of the discipline imposed upon them, perhaps partly because of the

unruly elements being passed on from refuges where there was a mixture of receiving house methods and penitentiary training. The Chaplain wrote that the stricter discipline included an entire lack of hesitation in sending away any inmate who "after sufficient probation, evidently does more harm to others by her bad example than we can hope to balance by good done to herself through our forebearance."[34] The Chaplain, writing in 1859, instanced the fact that after nine years of the life of the Home eight inmates had been sent away in the last two years as compared with only six during the whole of the previous seven years.[35]

The work of preparing candidates from among the Penitents for the Sacraments produced considerable fruits. There were candidates for Confirmation nearly every year and there were some baptisms. At this period there was usually a Confirmation held at the Home each year, separate from that held at the Parish Church. There was a baptism in 1857, about which the Vicar evidently consulted the Bishop as to its venue. The Bishop wrote: "I quite agree with you that it will be best to have the baptism privately at the Home."[36] But it could be conjectured that this baptism was of some person in contact with the Home who was not an inmate, or even perhaps of an illegitimate child.

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOLS

The new buildings for the St. Michael's Schools having been sufficiently completed, Mrs. Trevelyan's Industrial School for the training of girls for domestic service took up its abode there. For some reason Mrs. Trevelyan wished the Sisters to take charge of the school. Such a charge would have been a heavy burden on the resources of the Sisterhood, but presumably Mrs. Trevelyan had very good reasons for her request. Possibly they concerned her husband's condition. It is not clear whether Mrs. Trevelyan wanted to be relieved of the charge altogether at this time, or only for a temporary period. Certainly the Community was to take full charge of the house, before very long. The arrangement that was made for the present, however, was described by the Vicar; perhaps it was for a trial run, as it were. On Friday January 23rd "The Superior of St. Mary's and the Vicar held a meeting with Mrs. Trevelyan on the subject of the arrangements for St. Michael's Industrial Schools. We arrived at the following conclusion, viz: that the Superior would undertake the charge of them for six months on condition

(1) that the Clergy would give at least weekly religious instruction (2) that during that period Mrs. Trevelyan should be responsible for the expense (3) that there should be no intercourse without permission specially given between the inmates of the two portions of the building. I find that Mrs. Trevelyan expected me to be responsible for any expenses over the sum which she proposed to appropriate and is rather vexed with me for declining the Charge. To have accepted it would have been simple dishonesty on my part, and I cannot accuse myself of having at any time encouraged her to expect that I would do so. It is fortunate therefore that this has been laid down and understood."[37]

Clause (3) of this arrangement gives the impression that if the Sisters were to undertake the Charge of the School, they wanted a free hand to run it as they saw fit. From Clause (2) it seems likely that Mrs. Trevelyan misunderstood the Vicar when she first discussed with him the idea of building the house. Presumably she thought that if she built the house in the Parish the Parish would benefit from it, and so naturally the Vicar would assist in financing the work for that very reason. She cannot have weighed the fact that the Vicar could not have prevented her from building the house even had he wanted to do so, and she herself seems to have been very keen on the project. In his hopes that in time room might be found for the pupil teachers at St. Michaels - an as yet unaccomplished fact - the Vicar had not, indeed he could not have, agreed to undertake to assist her particular venture with the Industrial School. At this present time the pupil teachers were still at the Old Cottage, and their move was not yet in view. In the event Mrs. Trevelyan appropriated £3000 from personal sources to endow her work.

The Chapel of Mrs. Trevelyan's house was completed by April. The Vicar noted: "Friday April 17. I opened the Chapel of Mrs. Trevelyan's new House with a short service and an address..."[38] For the time being, however, the Industrial School Girls attended the Parish Church for the main services, in particular Holy Communion. No communion table appears to have been licensed at St. Michael's at this time.

During 1857 the Bishop held an Ordination at the Parish Church, and the pre-Ordination retreat and examination were also held

at Wantage. The use of some rooms and the Chapel in St. Michael's was requested from Mrs. Trevelyan and readily granted. The Misses Watkins assisted Mrs. Trevelyan in lodging the twelve candidates. The Ordination was of Cuddesdon men, the Reverend H.P. Liddon, formerly curate at Wantage, being Vice-Principal of the College at this time.

THE VICAR'S CLASSES

One of the features of William Butler's work which contributed so largely to his success in bringing his flock to Christ, was his habit of giving regular classes of instruction in the Faith to as many sections of the populace as he could. This was a mammoth task as he contrived to draw hundreds of people to the classes. He gave classes in preparation for Confirmation; in preparation for Holy Communion; post-Confirmation classes and regular classes throughout the year to certain folk.[39] He ran classes for young men, for maid servants, and in connexion with the various educational works now established in the town. He drew into his scheme each new work as it came under his care. The Parish Journal contains constant references to this class work. In connexion with the works being discussed here, he mentions classes for the Workgirls, i.e. members of the Workschool established at the Old Cottage; for Mrs. Trevelyan's Industrial Girls, for teachers, and for tradesmens' daughters etc.[40]

PLANS FOR THE PUPIL TEACHERS

In the autumn of 1857 the Vicar, having been in doubt for some while about the suitability of Mrs. Light for her post as Mistress of the Girls' School, and as charged with the care of the Pupil teachers at the Cottage, finally decided to give her notice of dismissal. There do not seem to have been any hard feelings on either side, and the notice did not terminate until the end of the year. Mrs. Light was an uncertificated teacher, and evidently her standards of work and of the behaviour to be required of her charges were not high enough.

At about the same time the question of housing the pupil teachers and school mistresses at St. Michael's was raised again. The Vicar wrote:

"Tuesday Oct.20... Conversation with Mrs. Trevelyan which leads me to hope that the long talked of amalgamation of schools may be brought about."[42] On the following day the Vicar interviewed

a possible successor for Mrs. Light's post: "Visit from Miss Salisbury, whom we hope to have as Mistress of the National School in place of Mrs. Light ... from the Salisbury T.S. She pleased me much,talked very satisfactorily of wearing caps etc., otherwise falling in with our sumptuary theories, and seemed to relish the prospect of living at St. Michael's Institution."[43]

Plans for the move began to be made: "Dec.5. Conversation with Sister Mary respecting the lodgment etc. of our pupil teachers and others in St. Michael's. I agreed to pay £5 towards providing(?) books (?) [words illegible] and other necessaries. Mrs. Trevelyan will make other needful arrangements ..."[44]Evidently Sister Mary had for some time being helping to care for the pupil teachers while they were at the Cottage, and she was to continue to do so when the move had been accomplished. The pupil teachers themselves, in spite of the difficulties through which some of them had passed, were gaining successes in government examinations, and the work with them seemed fairly established.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

On returning home after her period of service with Miss Nightingale's force of nurses in the Crimea, Miss Osborne the Exterior Sister returned to Wantage. She was given the charge of the Middle School, perhaps with continuing help from the Sisters. The Vicar noted that "the School which was falling to pieces under the careless regime of Miss Hayes, has, under Miss Osborne, steadily gone on recovering itself, and is now in a very fair state of subordination and intelligence. They muster some 23 ..."[45]

THEFT

Although many problems concerning the Cottage became, in 1857, in a fair way to being solved, the Vicar and Sisters were caused some anxiety by an outbreak of petty thieving. In the Parish Journal for Monday September 7th, the Vicar recorded that Sister Mary had told him that the house had been broken into during the previous night. Entry had been effected through the kitchen window from which a diamond pane had been removed and a hand inserted to open the window. Some loose money and some silver spoons were all that was taken. The Police Superintendent was sent for but there was no clue which would help to identify the thief. There was indeed a small footprint and some fingermarks, but the foot had been swathed in order

to leave no identifiable print, and in the days before finger-printing little could be deduced from the fingermarks. At the same time some money had been stolen from the Workschool. A little later some money disappeared from the Infant School, but there was a possibility of a mistake having been made in this case.

A month later there were some further thefts at the Cottage, and suspicion began to fall upon the girls themselves. But after the Police Superintendent had visited the Cottage and had spoken to the next-door neighbour, an article was mysteriously restored. The Vicar received evidence which made him believe that the girls could be exculpated, but that it was possible that the next-door neighbour was guilty. But the Vicar found that "very careless ways as to money ... prevailed at the Cottage," and he felt constrained to address Mrs. Light on the subject.[46]

1858

At the beginning of January 1858 the Vicar reviewed the year just closed and surveyed the prospects for the year now beginning. In his summary the Vicar did not mention the Home or the Sisters directly, from which it can probably be assumed that he was satisfied with the way things were going. But he looked with some anxiety at the girls' educational work. "... our Schools are not so satisfactory as in Jan.1857. The Girls' School does not improve, and the attendance of infants is very slack. I trust that the coming of Miss Salisbury will tend to remedy this, and that the removal of the pupil teachers and others from the Cottage to St. Michael's Training Institutions will give a tone of regularity and vigour to the Girls' School staff. Mrs. Light has, I believe, done her best, but she is sadly lacking in precision and the self-denying habits by which alone any work can succeed...

The Workschool under Miss Milsum, and the Middle School under Miss Osborne have answered remarkably well. The latter seems gradually to be drawing to itself all the daughters of the tradesmen etc., and if only we could get a fit building, of which there seems to be some hope, we might see the Middle Class girl education of the Town as well managed as that of the boys in the Grammar School..." Perhaps it should be remarked here that the Vicar had also been responsible for building up the boys' grammar school (King Alfred's).

ST. MICHAEL'S

On Thursday January 7th, Miss Salisbury arrived to take up her post as Mistress of the Girls' National School. She took up her abode at St. Michael's. On the same day the pupil teachers moved from the Old Cottage in Newbury Street to St. Michael's. The Workschool, whose members had gone daily to attend in their room at the Cottage, were also given room at St. Michael's. The Vicar was away and the Reverend A.H. Mackonochie noted in the Parish Journal that St. Michael's was "very comfortable" and "a great improvement upon the old place ..."

I THE PUPIL TEACHERS

The pupil teachers seem to have settled down well at St. Michael's. Sister Mary accompanied them and she probably shared the charge of them with Miss Salisbury. It is possible that she may have done the housekeeping for a time at the Old Cottage, and then at St. Michael's, but this is only conjecture. Mrs. Light had departed at Christmas.

Obviously at times there were failures in the pupil-teacher work. From time to time one of them would leave of her own accord before her time was up, or be dismissed for one reason or another. For example one girl was dismissed in 1858 for bad behaviour, and another, a local girl, left of her own accord and at her parents' desire. The latter "spoke very nicely to Sister Mary, and very gratefully." It was to be hoped that the impression gained at St. Michael's might remain.[48] Some local girls attended St. Michael's by the day, while others from further afield were full-time boarders.

(a) ELIZA WEDDING

There came to St. Michael's at the beginning of this year, from her home in Northamptonshire, a young pupil teacher named Eliza Wedding. Eliza was a highly intelligent and well-educated girl of 15 years of age, and she showed great promise. She was destined, in years to come, to join the Community, and as "Sister Bessy" she was to contribute to the development of the work at St. Michael's in a quite outstanding way.[49] Meanwhile she rapidly proved herself a most able pupil teacher, and by the end of the year the Vicar had put her in charge of the Infant School.

(b) TRAINING COLLEGES; THE QUEEN'S SCHOLARSHIPS

The pupil teachers of Wantage, both boys and girls, began to achieve standards which augured well for their future as

teachers. After they had finished their time at the Wantage Schools, many of them went on to more senior training institutions such as those at Salisbury and Bristol, and St. Mark's,London. As students at these colleges they received full-time training. Their early practical experience in the classroom frequently stood them in very good stead, and the colleges afforded them the opportunities they required to build up their theoretical knowledge, and to enable them to master their particular subjects more thoroughly. In this way many students from Wantage achieved quite outstanding results.

In 1846-1847 when the Government Education Department issued regulations for the pupil-teacher system, it had also inaugurated what were known as Queen's Scholarships for which candidates competed by examination. Successful candidates were enabled to go on to the senior training colleges. The Educational Department, "by altering the number and value of Scholarships and adjusting the standards of proficiency it expected from the teachers ..." was enabled "to regulate the supply of qualified personnel to meet changes in demand."[50]

The Vicar frequently noted in the Parish Journal, occasions when pupil teachers went in for these examinations, and their results, whether successful or otherwise. For example on December 29th 1858 he commented, not without a note of anxiety "Sarah Jane Hale - pupil-teacher - left us today having finished her time and gone in for the Examination for Queen's Scholarship. On the whole I hope well for her. She is affectionate and has a fairly good spirit for work. But the irregularity of the days of Miss Hayes and Mrs. Light told for evil on her. Intellectually she was carried to a higher pitch than I had expected." And in the summary for the year: "Sarah Jane Hale leaves us for a training school ..." Sarah Jane went on to the college at Fishponds, Bristol.[51]

II THE WORKSCHOOL

Unfortunately the life of the Workschool did not proceed very smoothly during 1858. The superintendence of the School was in the hands of a Miss Milsum perhaps with help from the Sisters, but we cannot be certain of that. William Butler's son, in writing the memoir of his father, treated of the Workschool in his chapter on the Sisterhood, so perhaps we may assume a continuing connexion of some kind with the Sisters.

During 1858 unruly behaviour began to manifest itself in the school:

"Miss Milsum complains of some of the elder Workgirls - that they are inclined to be rude. This is an important matter, for hitherto these girls have gone on very fairly. The present head girls are rather below the average, and their example is not edifying. Yet I believe that there is no real harm in any of them" : thus the Vicar.[53] The girls were reprimanded and there was a temporary improvement. But two months later it began to appear that the trouble lay with Miss Milsum herself: "I foresee difficulties in the Workschool. Miss Milsum, who has carried it so long and so satisfactorily, is, I think, tired of it, and if this be so, we cannot expect her to give her energies to it."[54]

The Vicar went away for his holiday and Mackonochie had to endeavour to deal with further difficulties which arose: "Tuesday Aug.5. Went to speak to Miss Milsum at the Workschool. Found complaints of the children making a great disturbance during Miss M's absence. Miss Coleman went in and remonstrated, but the noise did not abate. They were singing songs of the common street kind. I did not ask with what degree of impropriety. Spoke to them and said their week's money must be stopped. Afterwards saw the two eldest separately."

The stoppage of the week's money was perhaps, bound to produce a violent reaction from girls in such a mood, particularly since the raison d'etre of the school was partly to provide a means of earning money for girls in very poor circumstances. At any rate a few days later: "The Workgirls have agreed upon a strike ..."[55] Drastic action was called for and as a result some girls left the school; whereby order was restored. Miss Milsum did not carry on for much longer, and by the end of the year a new superintendent had replaced her: "The Workschool has lost Miss Milsum, and gained Mrs. Page as Superintendent. As yet it prospers thoroughly under her care. We must not lose time in adding more girls. She so contrives that it is entirely at present self-supporting."[56]

THE HOME : (1) THE PENITENTIARY

It was noted earlier that since some refuges had become penitentiaries as well due to pressure of applications, one

way of remedying the imbalance caused in the former two-stage system of training might be the addition of receiving house accommodation at the penitentiaries themselves. During 1858, although no new accommodation had as yet been provided, girls in need of care began to enter the Wantage Home direct. This step may have been forced upon the Vicar and the other authorities of the Home by the immoral conditions prevailing in the town, for some local girls were admitted in this year. One girl came from Letcombe Basset, brought to the Vicar by the doctor, Mr. Barker. This poor girl had been seduced while in service in London, probably by her master, who frequently committed adultery with her - a by no means unusual occurrence in nineteenth century London - and then she fell, by what agency it is not known, into a life of prostitution. She caught a disease and had to be brought home. The Vicar described the girl as "simple and willing to be guided" and it is not too far-fetched to conjecture that it was her very simplicity which enabled others to lead her astray.

It is possible, from the evidence, that this girl was one to whom Mr. Barker's assistant had been making advances while attending her at Letcombe, and who entered the Home in 1858. This assistant of Mr. Barker's died suddenly less than a month after the entry in the Journal concerning this matter. He had not long been married and an entry in Mr. Mackonochie's hand records that the man's wife "(of 10 weeks' standing) seems to be a religious person, and told me that she should like to enter the Home as a Sister. It would be very remarkable if this painful train of circumstances brought this about." There is, however, no evidence that this poor woman entered the Community, unless perhaps she reverted to her maiden name for anonymity's sake.

A second instance of a local girl being encouraged to enter the Home occurs in the Journal for October 28th: "... I spoke to J-- about entering the Home as a Penitent, and I hope by God's mercy to bring about this."

(2) BISHOP WILBERFORCE

(a) Five more Penitents were confirmed at the Home on December 10th 1858.

(b) As well as visiting the Home for Confirmations the Bishop continued to take a personal interest in the Sisters.

William Butler, then Canon of Worcester, wrote of Bishop Wilberforce after the latter's death that "Nothing could be kinder, wiser or more large hearted than the line which he adopted; and it is certainly not too much to assert, that to him our English Sisterhoods owe their present position of usefulness and acceptance. Instead of standing apart and waiting till they had made their way, he, with his characteristic determination to be the real ἐπίσκοπος or overseer of all religious movements in his diocese, took the matter into his own hands without in the least quenching or thwarting the zeal and the ideas of those who gave the first impulse. At least once every year he visited the Sisters, considered their rules, sometimes spoke to each separately, weighed difficult cases, and received into the Community those who had been elected..."

(3) SISTER SARAH

On January 5th 1858 Miss Sarah Watkins entered the Community. The earliest register of Sisters gives her date of entry as January 5th 1857, but other evidence points to this as a mistake. The earliest register was perhaps compiled either: from an earlier document which contained the names of those Sisters who seceded to the Roman Church or who only remained Sisters for a short time: or it was compiled some very considerable time after the Community had been established and only incomplete details about the Sisters were available. There are several discrepant dates in the roll of Sisters for these early years, but those whose names are recorded all, with very few exceptions, spent the remainder of their lives in the Community.

There remains a sermon of the Founder's preached by him on the occasion of Sister Sarah's acceptance for training. The date on which this sermon was preached was January 5th, 1858. In the sermon the Vicar took stock of the present state of the Sisterhood, and briefly reviewed the difficulties of the past years and the success which had been granted. He saw the Hand of God in all that had occurred, and his words form a fitting conclusion to the ten years of Sisterhood life which have formed the central theme of this study. It should be noted, however, that the Founder regarded the date of the opening of the first St. Mary's Home as the date of the Foundation of the Society.

"On an occasion like the present when we meet together to add, if it please GOD, another to our little band of fellow-workers, it seems natural to pause for a few minutes that we may review the past and take counsel for the future.

We have now, by the mercy of GOD, all but completed the eighth year of our existence as a Society. The history of our fortunes and trials, the hopes and fears, the difficulties and the marvellous reliefs, the encouragements and mercies, of that octave of years, would indeed take long to tell. When I look back to our small beginning, when I think of the fearful shock, which in its tender growth our Society received, when I consider the just suspicion which then lighted upon us, the difficulty, nay, as it seemed, the almost impossibility of supporting even the three or four Penitents and the three Sisters engaged in their education, our fruitless endeavours to find anyone to whom we could fitly confide the Charge of the household, and our total inexperience in this kind of work, I do indeed bless GOD for the bounteousness with which He has heard our prayer and supplied us with exactly the help we needed and granted us to much absolute success. Especially my Sisters, I would thank Him for this, that while He has given us what we needed He has never given us more. In His great love and boundless wisdom He has thought fit hitherto even so to deal with us, that we have ever had a little anxiety and our way, humanly speaking, has been even somewhat hidden from us."

The Founder goes on to look forward. He considers the desirability of completing the next two portions of the building, and in glancing at the unfinished state of things, even gives us a glimpse of what the garden was like at the time!

"Take for instance this house on which we dwell, we should naturally wish to see it altogether complete; We long to have our services in a building more fit for holy purposes than this in which we are; our natural fastidiousness and good taste are somewhat shocked at the roughness of our entrance, our imperfectly cultivated and planted ground, our rough unfurnished walls.

An infirmary separate from the main walls seems an absolute necessity where so many are met together, we fear lest fever or some infectious disorder should break out among us." He then refers obliquely to the rapid growth of other Sisterhoods: "Perhaps we feel this regret a little more keenly when we hear that others are enabled successfully to carry out that wherein we ourselves are lacking."

The Founder glances at the precariousness of the whole venture and shows how little of the structure needed to be knocked away for the whole edifice to collapse, even now: "... when we consider the list of those who engage to assist our work by their contributions, we find it far below the needful expenditure of each year, and we are left to trust to general, and as it would seem, chance sympathy, which while indeed it has never failed to prove sufficient for our needs, yet leaves us still in some degree anxious and in suspense. And so above all, with the fellow-workers in this little household, no one who understands such work and considers the other calls which naturally press upon a house like this, but must see how very inadequate our small number of Sisters has ever been and even now is, to give any real security, that we might not, at any time whatever, break down and come to an end. An illness, a clear call of GOD to some other line of duty, a failure in earnest perseverance, or weakness in faith and love on the part of any would, so far as human foresight can discern, cause inevitable ruin. A few more Sisters would remove this anxiety, but as yet those few are not found, and yet throughout the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil have never failed us."

The Founder goes on to draw out the lessons to be learnt by looking at the seeming failure of Jesus' own life. He takes heart from small beginnings: "You will find even the same story of small beginnings, with very slight indications of support, and yet sufficient for the faithful heart to feel that the still small voice was in the small indications..." He then refers to the greater sureness and strength which comes from slow and steady growth, a vision which he retained for the Community all his life: "Then again, is this great advantage in all such beginnings that that work becomes solid and steady, and that what you do is at least sure. And

this above all, as it seems to me, is what in a generation like the present we especially require. We cannot blind our eyes to it, dear Sisters, that a mighty work is doing within this our Mother, the Church of England." The Founder looks with wonder and gratitude at the rise of the religious life for women in England: "The whole idea of religious houses where women should devote themselves in common labour and common love and sympathy to the service of GOD, is something altogether new and startling. Twenty years since, and not the smallest whisper of such a project had reached our ears. Doubtless individual souls here and there had felt the longing for singleminded union with the Lord Jesus, but the idea would have been scouted as Popish and un-English; and little by little deeper doctrine, truer perception of the old paths, more earnest contemplation of the life of Jesus, deeper yearnings for spiritual things, grew up among us, the idea was not only freely mentioned but actually reduced to practice, and now we find in several parts of the country Sisterhoods of holy women, as earnest and true, as devoted and intensely loving, as in the very best days of old."

The Founder warns the Sisters that the novelty and seeming romance, the desire for quiet, for security of maintenance and other like motives are drawing people to seek to undertake the religious life. But such motives will inevitably lead to failure. The life cannot be lived on that level. The objects to be sought are the love and service of Jesus Christ. The Founder prints out the responsibility the Sisters have both to the Community and to the Church. If they live by the wrong motives they will fall, and their fall will "in no small degree disorder and shake the whole." He ends by prophesying that if the Sisters truly cleave to the Lord, He will, in His own good time, 'perfectly stablish, strengthen and settle them'. "He shall give [you] the consolation of a manifold blessing, yea the Lord shall increase you more and more you and your children."[58] This confidence that the Lord would give the increase never left the Founder and he lived to see his prophecy abundantly fulfilled and to receive a manifold reward for his faith.

More than a century after the foregoing address was given, we may, in conclusion, look back and pin-point some of the principles by which William Butler lived and by which he guided the Community; and also very briefly survey the history of the fulfilment of his hopes.

Primarily William Butler taught the Sisters to hold fast to, and to persevere and grow in the life of prayer. Certainly he required that they should make due allowance for the demands of charity and for the exigencies of the work which God called upon them to engage in alongside their life of prayer. But he taught them that they should strive to be uncompromisingly faithful in their life of prayer because it ought to become the fount from whence their work flowed, and by which its quality was determined. Only by an unremitting life of prayer could their work become permeated by that love from God which gave it its value and effectiveness. The Founder taught the Sisters to make use of all means by which their work might be made more effective, more perfect, but he did not allow them to use these means in order to seek ease for themselves, and he never tolerated slackness either in observances of prayer, or in work. He was content to wait until he had reasonably sufficient resources before he would permit the undertaking of anything new. But he had faith enough and he was realistic enough not to attempt to wait until conditions were as nearly ideal as possible. He knew that God would give the increase to any work undertaken in the belief that He was calling for it to be done, and that nothing would be accomplished if ventures were not made in faith and trust. The Founder would not, if he could help it, willingly allow resources to be so strained that there was a danger of sacrificing thoroughness and quality to quantity and haste. Sensitive man though he was, the Founder would never sacrifice the truth as he saw it to the allurements and demands of public opinion dressed as an angel of light; he would rather bear opprobrium and misunderstanding. Finally the Founder showed by his example how a life lived by the Gospel precepts and open to the guidance of God, would be abundantly blessed with the strength necessary for the accomplishment of all the demands made upon it by God.

The Century which has passed has seen the Community grow in numbers and initiate new works, or accept and further

develop works already in progress. Invitations to 'come over and help us' occasioned the expansion abroad and the establishment of provincial houses in India and South Africa. Old works have been relinquished as their usefulness has seemed to come to an end, and other, different and apparently more relevant works have been taken up. Through it all has continued the life of prayer so firmly established from the very beginning of the Community's life. All this has happened until the present time when retrenchment and reappraisal have become necessary, and like many Anglican Communities the Community of St. Mary the Virgin is seeking to discover what new ventures God is calling upon it to undertake. The Community is learning a lesson from the directives of Vatican II to Roman Catholic Religious Orders. It is seeking to absorb the spirit of its Founder by studying his message, by sifting from it the elements which are eternally relevant, and combining them with new insights, it seeks also to renew its vigour and recapture the freshness of its first love while travelling in whatever new directions God may appoint.

NOTES : CHAPTER IV

1. Though it must be said, in fairness to Miss Hayes, that we have no record of her feelings or of what prompted her to behave as she did.
2. P.J. Sunday Jan.13 1856.
3. P.J. Feb.17.
4. cf P.J.
5. Bodleian. MS Wilberforce d.33 p.53.
6. Miss Lampet's 'Reminiscences'.
7. P.J. April 3.
8. 'Reminiscences'.
9. P.J. Sat. April 12.
10. Ibid.
11. P.J. June 19.
12. P.J.
13. P.J. June 21.
14. P.J.
15. P.J.
16. Further research may furnish more information.
17. P.J. June 28.
18. cf P.H. Pa. 71146.
19. Ibid.
20. P.H. Pa. 71146.
21. P.J.
22. I am indebted for much of the material in the foregoing paragraph to a document compiled comparatively recently by two members of the Community, recording their findings, on research into the subject of the development of the Convent buildings. They too were hampered by lack of records. C.S.M.V. U.P.
23. MS C.S.M.V. U.P.
24. 'Story of A Diverted Hope' p.13.
25. P.J.
26. P.H. Pa. 71146.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. P.J.
30. P.J.
31. Quoted in 'History of Foundation'; source not known - possibly a letter to Sister Harriet.
32. Rules preserved among Community Papers.
33. P.J.
34. P.H. Pa. 71146.
35. cf Ibid.
36. Bodleian MS Wilberforce d.33 pp 64-5 July 14.

37. P.J.
38. P.J.
39. P.J. Passim*.
40. cf Ibid.
41. P.J. Sept.26.
42. P.J.
43. P.J.
44. P.J.
45. P.J. July 4.
46. cf P.J. Oct.16, Nov.16, Nov.21, Nov.22.
48. P.J. Sept.14.
49. cf George Longridge C.R. "Sister Bessy : A. Memoir".
50. John Hurt "Education In Evolution" p.86.
51. cf P.J. Oct.3. 1859.
52. P.J. Summary for 1858.
53. P.J. May 5. 1858.
54. P.J. July 10.
55. P.J. Aug.9.
56. P.J. Summary for 1858.
57. For the "Life" - R.G. Wilberforce Vol.III p.334.
58. M.S. C.S.M.V. cf also "L & L".

* It is of interest that Roman coins were found on the site when the Home was built. Limborough was probably a Roman permanent camp. Coins are occasionally found even today.

+ It seems likely that Miss Hayes joined Miss Lockhart and became the Sister Mary Ignatius Hayes who later founded an Order known as "Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception."

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