

EPILOGUE TO THE LIFE OF CARDINAL MANNING

I RECEIVED an amusing letter from a Catholic Layman recently, in which he said that the Holy See must be regarding with nervous apprehension the series of outspoken Lives which were accumulating round the names of the English Cardinals, Wiseman, Newman, and Manning (*bis*). Whether the Holy See approves of sincerity or indiscretion or both in the biographies of her favoured sons, she never speaks. She has other things to think of besides books in these days, though needless to say I would submit to the least whisper of her considered judgment, should she think it worth while to lift an eyelash over anything I happened to write.

In the matter of writing the Lives of Cardinals, one cannot be too careful, though so careful are the biographers of Cardinals abroad that their memory as men is forgotten behind a little cloud of fading incense. The tradition of writing frank and human lives of Cardinals must be an English tradition, and let us hope will remain one. Our Cardinals have been and are men of action and men of genius. I think Ward's *Life of Newman* is the best Life of a Cardinal in any language, but I think that Cardinal Manning left the finest biographical material. How fine it was perhaps few except myself really know. At any rate Mr. Purcell and myself have both crawled up out of Grubb Street, thanks to piles of that splendid collection, the Manning Papers, and I think that several volumes could yet be written out of what remains.

Perhaps I am the best person to say what a number of friends and critics have hinted lately, that the final and all-comprising *Life of Cardinal Manning* remains to be written. There are three volumes on the market packed with the documents. Two more volumes could

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be printed of further documents, out of the Manning Papers alone at Bayswater. Another slight volume might be put together of precious papers, which my hand was often near but which I never touched. I certainly discovered enough for my purposes, but here are some tempting finds for somebody to discover :

- (1) A Diary which the Cardinal kept in 1837, after the death of his wife, disappeared some years ago. It was seen of several but not of Purcell.
- (2) A correspondence which the Cardinal wrote as a Harrow boy to a Mr. Popham, last seen at Littlecote in Wilts.
- (3) A correspondence of a humorous nature which the Cardinal carried on with the Anglican Canon Jenkins, whom he addressed as "Abbot." One of these letters came into the market and is printed in my book. Cardinal Gasquet once read them and described their humour as unique.
- (4) A correspondence with the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VII, last heard of in a shop at Brighton.
- (5) The Cardinal's correspondence with Bishop O'Callaghan, successor of Mgr. Talbot in Rome, of which Archbishop McIntyre could only find the empty labelled box in the English College, Rome, when he went to seek.

These would, I believe, all add considerably to our knowledge of the Cardinal, and I hope that some future biographer will have them before his eyes as well as the mighty mass of printed witness.

There were chapters of Manning's life which were hidden from Purcell entirely, and there are necessarily large gaps in mine. Space consideration left barely room for more than a lean Index, as soon as it became necessary to reduce two volumes to one. I had to be guided by the advice of a prelate who said to me that nobody wished to hear Leslie on Manning, but every-

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body was interested to hear what Manning said on *omnia*. I therefore omitted five chapters, two Anglican and three Roman, mostly of my own fabrication, in order to make room for the vast correspondence, some of which, like the Cardinal Wiseman letters, did not reach me till the book was finished. I may therefore say that a good deal of his Anglican life remains to see the light, based chiefly on the letters of the Anglican Episcopate during the 'forties when High Churchmen were as hungry spiritually as working men were for material food. The Bishops of the time certainly handed them a stony abundance. Two sides to his Catholic career await a fuller development, the hidden, industrious, and mortified life at Bayswater when he began his London Apostolate. Of this there can be no witness left alive except Cardinal Gasquet. A continuation of this was the wonderful Pastoral life to which only too little account was given either in Purcell's book or in mine.

This was the most difficult part of the book, and in deference to the sacredness which Catholics attach to the seal of Confession I well-nigh left it all out; but such a chapter could have been written as has appeared in no clerical biography yet. A priest does not keep a Diary of his trials, adventures, and joys in the Confessional, and I did not feel justified in writing an intimate account of the Cardinal's dealings with fallen and unhappy souls, as shown by stacks of letters and papers which I had not been long reading before realizing that they were not intended for my eye. But how wonderfully they justified the Cardinal! On the Day of Judgment what sorry scarecrows Purcell and Lytton Strachey will appear (presuming they are invited) when they lift up their shrill screeds against Manning and are confronted by the pile of testimony to human shame and agony, human pity and power, which was hidden in the Manning Papers.

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As for Purcell it is not for me to condone or condemn. He was tempted to attain literary fame by the well-worn path of sensation, and he succeeded beyond his dreams. How he obtained possession of so many of the Cardinal's confidential papers has always been told in a way reflecting on the carefulness and good faith of Father Butler, the Cardinal's devoted confessor and friend. Fr. Butler's personal friends inform me that I should have told that the papers were obtained partly by means of a trick. When Purcell called, Fr. Butler intended to let him select some souvenir to keep from among the Cardinal's papers. He would have accompanied him to the room where all the papers were lying, but had to catch a train and allowed him to make selection alone. Purcell, under the belief that he had been commissioned to be the biographer, took the opportunity to remove the cabful of documents which he subsequently published in two massive volumes.

Fortunately there were many papers he did not take and was not given a second chance to see, papers whose bulk took me some eleven months to read and sort. A small tithe have appeared in my book. Many were of so sacredly a confidential character that one day I felt I should ask Canon Wyndham, who had given me full leave of access, to read over a certain boxful. It was inconceivable that such papers should have been allowed to survive except that there was abundant support of the Cardinal's action in cases in which he had been both maligned and misjudged. There were terrible matters, too, but affecting Protestant as well as Catholic, which the Cardinal's hand had set straight or assuaged. How well I remember Canon Wyndham destroying paper after paper, striking though the credit they paid to Manning the Friend and Priest. The good Canon is dead and God only knows what was in them all, for I have forgotten.

How a biographer can use such material when it,

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has attained paper record I do not know. I cannot say I attempted to do so, and only bare notes, and in one case the nameless tale of a girl's betrayal by a man and her spirit's gentle deliverance into the next world at Manning's tender hands, have crept into my record of the politics and controversies which really make the most publishable matter in Archbishops' lives. Material, however poignantly interesting, dealing with struggling souls, with unhappy women, with confiding Protestants, with drifting priests, seemed surely to come under the Seal and to be best given to the dust into which the actors had long since fallen. But could these tales be told, reconstructed from the tragic letters and telegrams and memoranda, what insight they would shed on the Cardinal's dealing with hopeless cases.

They were far from being limited to his own flock, and the very reason that Protestants trusted him with their heart's blood is a reason for not disturbing the pathetic traces of the pain of the humble and forgotten dead. How, too, can the tale be told how the Cardinal, when families honoured in the Faith were menaced with scandal and troubles, would be found waiting in Sir George Lewis's room for the advice and legal assistance which Sir George freely and carefully gave whenever he noticed his eminent visitor waiting his turn? There was nobody on whose behalf Manning would not interest himself and ply his influence in the Courts or with officials. He would write to Lord Cross to get a humble person so placed in India so as to be near enough to marry the girl he loved. He would answer an illiterate appeal scrawled from prison and go and bail out some old offender. In the lower ranks of poverty and misfortune it was always remembered that a last appeal lay with " 'Im at Westminster," as he was familiarly called.

The secrets and the troubles of the exalted and titled occupied him no less. I cannot say how often

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women under temptation to throw away their Catholic privilege for some wild love affair made their last appeal to him to find them some way of salvation. He knew what to say and write on these occasions, pitifully begging them to choose between Romance and the Church, but if his entreaty was not sufficient he was not unready to receive back the prodigal at the end. What a strange and vivid scene was enacted when a fair Catholic broke the law of the Church to marry a noble peer against Manning's stern protest, and, dying within the year sent a last message to the Cardinal to come and save her soul. What writer has the right to describe the Cardinal and the Peer kneeling on either side of what became a perfect death-bed, mingling their grief as the Divine Hand set all things straight? That was a side of Cardinal Manning which I allowed to pass out of my pages in any detail or recognizability.

Stranger still were the papers concerning a girl, the adopted child of a great nobleman, whose marriage depended on an assurance as to the nobility of her father. The father's name could not be divulged, but the bridegroom's family were ready to accept an assurance that all was well if it came from the lips of Queen Victoria! In so delicate a matter we can only imagine the Cardinal's tactful part. But the papers in the case were hardly intended for any biographer.

A well-documented book is bound to be top-heavy, and the last word is not with the biographers, but with the far-off literary critic, the final historian. The compiler only heaps the colours on the palette. The artist (in this case we need a Catholic Carlyle) must come and, freed from cumbrous correspondences and appendices, paint the full-length figure with short, unhindered strokes, the figure of the great, human, terrible, lonely, loving and lovable Cardinal who ruled in England for Christ.

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