37. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
40. *The Guide to Knowledge*, ed. W. Pinnock. Weekly periodical issued 1832. Collected in 2 vols. July 1832 to July 1835.
41. *Ibid.*, "The Advantages of Education", July 7, 1832.
42. S.I.C. Beale, pp. 37,54,143.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
50. *The London Scholastic Journal*, January 1, 1840: "Systems of Mnemomics", p. 122.
51. Advertisement in *The School and the Teacher*, April 1854.
52. *Memories for the Million* by William Hill, 1875 p. 27.
53. S.I.C. Beale, p. 52.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 103 and p. 6.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
64. *Autobiography of Frances Power Cobbe*, 1894, pp. 60-71.

THE POOR SCHOOLS IN PRESTON

● *Sr. M. Andrew Armour, SHCJ*

"Preston stands next, a corporate mayor town. The people are gay here, though not perhaps the richer for that; but it has, on that account, obtained the name of 'Proud Preston'."

Daniel Defoe's *'Tour'*
(Quoted in Hewitson's *History of Preston)*

In 1848 when Mother Connelly and her community were leaving their first home in Derby, two invitations were sent to them—one to go to the "beautiful schools and small convent in Preston," and one to go to St. Leonard's. According to a letter from Emily Bowles to Dr. Newman, both Bishop Wiseman and the chaplain, Dr. Asperti, preferred St. Leonard's, so it was decided that the nuns should go there. But Preston was not forgotten and Mother Connelly wrote at the end of 1852 to the Jesuit Provincial, Father Etheridge, whose priests had built the Preston schools, offering to send some nuns. The Provincial consulted Bishop Grant asking if he could recommend the Holy Child nuns for the work. The Bishop's reply must have been satisfactory for by the 7th February Father Walmsley, S.J., of St. Wilfrid's parish, Preston, was sending details of buildings, salaries, etc., to St. Leonard's, and on the 11th he wrote: "We shall be glad for your community to come at once. The sooner the better. We are quite ready to begin."

And so on the 15th February, 1853, five Holy Child nuns arrived in Preston to begin an apostolate which is still being carried on in the Preston schools today. Their leader was Mother Lucy Woolley, one of Mother Connelly's first companions, and as far as one can judge from the meagre records, the others were Sister Lucy Ignatia Payne, Sister Martha Wilkinson, "who was good at dentistry", Sister Francis Regis Sage, who was still a novice, and Sister Maria Cottam. The last four were in their early twenties. They were dressed as seculars for there was still anti-catholic feeling in England, and on their heads they wore light grey silk bonnets and veils. But these did not last long in the grimy atmosphere of the cotton mills and in 1854 they were exchanged for a large black poke bonnet with a long crêpe or gauze veil—a warm and comfortable though hideous headress which some of the nuns were loath to give up when full religious dress was introduced later on.

By 1853 Preston had become one of the large cotton towns of Lancashire. Eighty-seven mills, some large, some small, in and around the town, provided work for a large proportion of its 72,250 inhabitants.

Although many of the worst features of the Industrial Revolution had improved by the time the nuns went to the North of England, conditions were still very bad. The two or three-roomed houses were huddled together in long dark streets, over which hung the smoke from the factory chimneys which overtopped all other buildings. Some of the main streets were cobbled but many had no drainage and where there were sewers they were badly constructed at different levels. Most of the poorer houses had no pure water supply and only open privies; so at first had the schools. In hot weather the atmosphere of the streets, mills and houses was thoroughly polluted and epidemics of scarlet fever, typhus, cholera and other diseases broke out year after year.

Men, women and children worked in the mills. According to one contemporary estimate an average wage for a worker (male) might be 18/- for the better paid jobs. Spinners might get as much as 29/-, others as little as 9/-. Women and children were paid considerably less. The hot, damp atmosphere of the mills registered 70-100 degrees and was saturated with vapour of oil and cotton dust. Before 1853 the average adult working hours were twelve to fourteen hours a day. Children under nine were not allowed in the mills after 1833 and those from nine to thirteen were limited to nine hours a day, but by working them in shifts, the machines could be kept going and the children kept on the premises, for as long as the men were working. After 1853 a ten-hour day for all adults was gradually accepted. Few children stayed at school after thirteen—the need to earn money was too urgent. Many aged nine to thirteen went to the factories for half the day and to school for the other half. These were known as the half-timers. There was no compulsory school attendance and no attendance officers. If more factories were opened in the town, children would try to get half-time work and the numbers in the schools would drop. If factories closed down, or as frequently happened, were burnt down in accidents, children might come back to school, but some might leave the town for a period to find other work.

Work in the mills began early. At 5 a.m. the 'knocker up' went round the streets knocking with his long stick on the windows of the factory workers, whose clogs were sounding on the cobble stones by 6 a.m. After perhaps two hours work they would have their breakfast of tea and bread and then work till twelve when they returned home for a dinner of potatoes and on some days, even for the poorest, a little meat. Then would follow another five hours work in the mill, and home again at six for a supper of bread, oatmeal and more potatoes. The better paid workers would add more meat to their midday or evening diet. Prestonians were known as good trenchermen and much of their pay went on food, though,

alas, they were, like many English working men, also good drinkers and far too much money was spent, in many cases, on alcohol. A lecturer in 1870 on the trade depression in England, blamed the consumption of drink. ". . .Our navy," he said, "costs us nine million pounds, our beer forty-four millions." The word 'teetotal' is said to have been coined in Preston when Dick Turner, a reformed drunkard, used it while addressing a crowd in the Preston Cockpit—an open garden—in 1831.

Fortunately there was also in Preston, especially among the clergy and the gentry, a strong desire to provide education for the children of these workers. There were no state schools for the poor in England until 1870, only voluntary schools built and supported by voluntary subscriptions and after 1833 by a yearly government grant which was made accessible to catholic schools in 1847. But these two sources of income were insufficient to run the schools and the children were supposed to pay 3d a week each. It was very difficult to raise the money and children would stay away from school because their parents could not or would not pay the pence. In bad times it was impossible to collect it. Charitable societies like that of St. Vincent de Paul paid for some of the poorest, and factory owners paid something for the half-timers. Otherwise the money was raised in the usual way of bazaars, balls and parties. In January 1853, just before the arrival of the nuns, a catholic ball and tea party was held, "where 700 joyous beings were shining, laughing and dancing to raise funds for educating the masses." (*The Preston Guardian* 1853)

The first school in which the nuns began their work was St. Ignatius' school and in 1854 they began in St. Wilfrid's. A few years later, the date is not clear, they went also to St. Walburga's. All three schools were the joy and pride of the Jesuit Fathers who had built them. St. Wilfrid's was the first catholic school in Preston and was built in 1814—in fact it was one of the first catholic poor schools in England. Mother Lucy writing to Mother Connelly in 1856 asking her to send another teacher, "a *good* one," claims that St. Wilfrid's is among "the first in *rank* and *numbers* and ought to have in *name* a first class teacher." (Mother Lucy's underlinings are as abundant as Queen Victoria's). St. Wilfrid's school had been built through the efforts of Father Dunn, S.J.—affectionately known to his people as "Daddy Dunn", who raised the money by constant appeals to catholics and protestants alike all over England and even abroad, so that one gentleman called him, "the best beggar I have ever known." St. Ignatius' school had been opened in 1842 and St. Walburga's after the Holy Child nuns arrived in Preston. Previously it had been used as a church until the present church was finished.

At first the nuns all lived in a house in St. Ignatius' Square but in 1859 those in St. Wilfrid's school moved to a house in Fox Street and those at

St. Walburga's to two houses nearer to the church. In 1863 this community moved to a "beautiful little convent" attached to the school, which had been built from penny weekly subscriptions collected from the people of the parish by the girls' Guild of the Missions. This convent and its chapel still exist though now they are used mainly by the Girl Guides. Each convent had its own oratory though for the most part the nuns went to the churches for daily Mass; and each had its own superior. Mother Lucy Woolley at St. Wilfrid's was responsible in general for the work in each school. She seems to have been a splendid organizer as well as a strict disciplinarian and the success of the schools was very largely due to her efforts. She went from school to school, arranging classes, drawing up time tables, instructing the young pupil teachers, examining the classes in each school at regular intervals and sending in reports with suggestions for further improvements where necessary.

One tribute to the work of the nuns came from Bishop Brown of Liverpool in December 1853. He wrote: "The sisters of the Holy Child Jesus have been established in the town of Preston about one year. They conduct the schools under their care in an excellent manner; they have an amiable method of training the children to habits of piety; and seeing the valuable fruits of their labours we highly approve of their being in the Diocese of Liverpool." Another was published in the *Preston Guardian* in 1856, when it reported on an examination of pupil teachers and children in front of the clergy and patrons of St. Ignatius' school: ". . .the proficiency which they exhibited and the satisfactory manner in which they responded to questioning. . .elicited marked and unqualified approval. Indeed it was evident to all that both great care and great pains had been taken by their instructors—the nuns of the convent—in the training and education of the children. The subjects embraced . . .were numerous and varied, comprising not only the usual studies pursued at such schools, but physical geography and grammatical analysis, music and singing. A scene from Milton's *Comus* was also acted by the pupil teachers . . ."

The schools consisted generally of two large rooms, one for the girls and one for the infants. These rooms had to accommodate very large numbers of children. St. Walburga's girls' school had accommodation for 286 children but an inspector's report complains that the average attendance is 306 children, "which does not give to each child the prescribed 8 square feet." The situation was the same in the other schools. One record complains that there is not sufficient space in the infants' school for "drilling, marching and other physical exercises which are the life and soul of Infant teaching." Not the modern idea of primary

education but at least the exercise must have helped to warm the infants! The infants' schools were provided with built in steps called the "gallery" for the youngest children who were known as the "gallery babies." All the rooms were unventilated and for the most part unheated, except for a coal fire at one end of the room for which pennies were collected each week. "Daddy" Dunn had had gas lighting put into St. Wilfrid's school—in fact it was he who introduced gas into Preston in the first place, and his picture now hangs in the town gas company's offices. Presumably the other schools had the same, as night schools were held on the same premises during the week. But it seems to have been used sparingly. An entrance in a school log book says that "lessons were suspended for some time in the afternoon because of the great darkness that preceded the thunder storm. The classes were occupied in singing and physical exercises." We know that the nuns in the first convent had no gas; for after a visit from Mother Connelly a few weeks after their arrival, Father Walmsley promised her to have gas put into the convent as soon as possible.

It is difficult to piece together the daily lives and work of the nuns in any detail for no house diaries were kept and the school log books only began in 1863, so that for the first ten years there are practically no records of the work in the schools. Fortunately Mother Lucy drew up timetables for the nuns which were copied into a book which has survived. The day began early in the convent as in the town. The caller was up at 5 a.m. and by 5:30 or 6 had called the nuns and the young pupil teachers who lived with them. Until Mass at 7:30, the nuns were at their meditation and the children—the teachers were only 13 or 14 years old—were studying. After Mass and breakfast there was more time for study and preparation of lessons and then school began. There was a break for dinner and recreation between 12:45 and 2 p.m. and then all were in school again or studying until supper at 5 p.m. During the evening there was some recreation for the pupil teachers but most of the time was given to study and further preparation of lessons, and the nuns overlooked this work and helped with the lesson preparation. On three nights a week some of the nuns went to night school at 7 p.m. At 9:15 everybody had "refection," said their prayers and at 9:50 retired to bed. By 10 p.m. the pupil teachers were to be in bed; the nuns had till 10:30. One wonders when the teachers' ablutions took place. There is a reference in one of Mother Lucy's timetables to, "Monday at 6 p.m. each class in turn goes to the wash." The only explanation seems to be that the children went on Mondays to the public baths and wash houses which had been established in Preston, where people could wash themselves and their clothes, but which, to the disappointment of the local council, were not well

patronized. However it is pleasing to see in the school log books many references to the cleanliness of the children. It seemed to strike the Inspectors as something worthy of special comment.

Work in the night schools lasted from 7 p.m. to about 9 p.m. The work was varied. Children who had been half-timers went to these classes, especially for religious instruction, and many received the sacraments for the first time. Mother Lucy wrote to Mother Connelly in 1856: "We have had 39 First Communicants to day at St. Ignatius's and 37 at St. Walburga's—all from the Night schools." Older girls also went to these classes, some of them up to the age of twenty or twenty-one, for secular instruction was also given. In 1855 the H.M.I. wrote: "The night school [St. Ignatius'] continues to form an important feature of this fine establishment." In 1868 Mother Lucy reproved one of the nuns for occasionally sending away girls from these classes. "You know," she said, "how anxious we are for them to come."

The names of three of the early sisters in Preston who were set aside for night school work were Mother Martha Wilkinson, Mother Baptista Bond and Sister Scholastica Barrow. Later on the work was shared and the same sisters worked in day and night schools. One well known name in the society whose vocation was nurtured by Mother Martha in the night school, was Sister Claver Broadbent. As the work in Preston grew, especially after the opening of two new schools at St. Mary's, Friargate and at the Martyrs, both in 1871, secular instruction by the nuns in the night schools had to be given up. There were twenty sisters in Preston by 1876 and Mother Connelly had no more to send although the number was barely sufficient to cover all the work in the day schools. On Sundays the nuns also instructed the children in the Sunday schools from after the 9 a.m. Mass until midday and again for part of the afternoon. In the evening some of them went back to the school to meet the Guild Girls and to prepare for the Guild Benediction. As well as all this, the sisters did a good deal of mission work—visiting the poor in their homes, training the girls' choirs, looking after the altar decorations, especially for *Quarant Ore*, and organizing the Christian Doctrine Society.

Not only were the hours spent in the classroom very long, but circumstances made the work very heavy. The school staffs consisted in each case of a certificated teacher who was the headmistress, one or two assistants who might or might not be certificated and a number of young pupil teachers. When the nuns began their work at St. Ignatius' in 1853 there were two certificated teachers, one uncertificated assistant and eight young pupil teachers who also had to be taught, for 320 children, all in

one room. After some years of training and education in the schools, these young teachers might go to a training college to gain their certificates, or they might give up the work altogether. It was uphill work for the nuns who trained them. One entry in the log books speaks of the teachers being so young that they have to be given a lesson first, and then they can reproduce it for their classes. Another entry by Sister Francis Kirby at St. Walburga's infant school deplores the "lack of tact in the teachers and of animation in the children," and she adds sadly, "I have more hopes for the progress of the children than the improvement of the teachers."

In 1861 Robert Lowe's Revised Code was introduced into the schools of England which put the government grant to the voluntary schools on a different basis. Payment was to be based on two things: first, on attendances, and secondly on the results of a yearly examination by Inspectors. These examinations were limited to the three R's—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic. On the whole this new system had very bad effects on the standard of education. Without the grant the schools could not continue and education began to mean that certain limited facts were impressed on the children's minds by constant memory work and the curriculum became limited very largely to the teaching of the three R's. Lowe considered that memory work was sufficient education for the working classes. He agreed with the view that "any attempt to keep the children of the labouring classes under intellectual culture after the earliest age at which they could earn their living, would be as arbitrary and improper as it would be to keep the boys of Eton and Harrow at spade labour." The purpose of education of the lower classes was to prepare them for employment on lower class lines. And, alas, his system was only too successful. Under this system the keeping of log books became obligatory and so more details of school life were made available, although the log books were to give facts only and not comments.

It is evident from these books that a great strain was put upon the teachers both to improve the learning work and to get good attendance at school. Attendance was affected not only by the employment of children in the mills, but also by poverty and even by the weather. There are constant entries stating, "A wet morning—many absent." The fact was that if it rained or if the cold was severe, the children had no extra clothing or clogs to wear and so they stayed at home. Even for those who had better clothing there were no cloakrooms or pegs on which to hang wet garments. Later on one school introduced a clothes basket but it is hard to see how the clothes would dry in this way. Sometimes the nuns visited the parents of absentee children and were given excuses such as sickness or bad weather, but many of these children were found, "playing

in the courts and alleys with hardly anything on their naked limbs." And the book adds, "Sheer laziness on the part of many parents." (Log book, 1871) The hot weather also brought its difficulties. The summer holidays lasted only for three weeks in July and the children were back at school before the end of the month, so that the whole of August was included in the term. Various entries show that the children—and the teachers—were listless, restless and tired. One relates: "August 7th. Children restless . . .I have deprived them of their play for three days, for I must have order." Undoubtedly the harrassed teacher had to have order in her large classroom, but one's heart goes out to the 300 or so young children in one unventilated room in early August. Another record states: "August 1st. Only 97 children in school as many are ill with English cholera . . .The heat is most oppressive."

Epidemics were the main reason for poor attendance and deaths were frequent. One log book records:

Oct. 3rd.	Two of our little children died with scarlet fever. Many ill.
Oct. 6th.	Scarlet fever on the increase.
Oct. 10th.	One of our little ones died.
Jan. 9th.	Heard of the deaths of two of our children of fever.
Feb. 13th.	Death of a little boy.
Feb. 20th.	Little girl died. Her two sisters ill of fever.
Feb. 22nd.	Another child died. Many ill.

Each year there are many similar entries in the log books of all the schools.

The infants' schools presented another problem for the teachers. The "Gallery Babies" were only three and four years old and some were even younger—too young to know how to answer to their names, according to the log books. "Great part of the morning spent in exercising the gallery babies to answer to their names." This was particularly necessary just before the Inspectors' examinations. There was also the difficulty of understanding the Lancashire accent. "The children's dreadful pronunciation made the reading marks not so good." In 1866 one of the schools nearly had its grant reduced by the Privy Council because of failures in the examination. The danger was averted because "the school has for many years enjoyed a high reputation." It was a great help that the priests and nuns were so proud of their schools and worked so closely together. The managers visited the schools daily—sometimes twice in the day; they examined the children in religious knowledge and wrote very appreciative reports: "It is simply doing an act of justice for me to express my sense of the very great care and ability bestowed on the teaching of Religious Knowledge in these schools," wrote Father Swarbrick of St. Ignatius' in 1864. Churches and schools stood side by side and the priests were part of the school ensemble.

There were of course certain 'red letter' days in the course of the year. After the Christmas holidays each school had a tea party. "The children can talk of nothing else but the coming party," says one record. Sometimes an illustrated lecture would be given in the town and the children would go to it. Sometimes there was a circus, sometimes a conjurer, sometimes a town holiday, as when the Duke of Cambridge opened the new town hall in 1866. After all these distractions there were entries such as: "Many children absent because of yesterday." Why they should be absent is not explained. At Whitsuntide there were the famous Guild processions through the town with "brilliant coloured banners, dresses, sashes, music, etc." It was each child's ambition to walk in these processions and money was carefully saved to provide the dresses. Also at Whitsuntide and in the summer, cheap trips would be arranged "to visit the salubrious shores of Lytham, Blackpool and Fleetwood, there to breathe the highly dephlogisticated air so conducive to health and longevity." *(Preston Guardian)*

But life was very insecure in the mid-nineteenth century and from time to time would come periods of great trade depression bringing distress and even starvation to many of the people. The nuns arrived in Preston at one of these bad times. During a previous bad trade period in 1847, wages had been reduced by 10%. By 1853 trade had improved and the mill operatives demanded a 10% rise which was refused. The workers in a number of Lancashire towns, including Preston, then went on strike. The mill owners retaliated with a 'lock-out' and for thirty-six weeks many of the mills were closed. Bread which had been 46/- a quarter in 1853 was 76/- by January 1854, nearly as high as the early corn-law price, when the loaf cost 1/-. Workers in other towns which were not involved sent financial aid to the distressed towns for there was great sympathy and solidarity among the workers. But it was not nearly enough and "typhus fever, that steady follower of famine, again appeared in the town." (*Preston Guardian*) Fortunately there was little violence and Prestonians boasted that in the middle of the distress, the government was able to remove soldiers from Fulwood barracks to send them to the Crimean war.

A more disastrous period was in the early 1860's during the "Cotton Famine" caused by the American Civil War when no cotton was sent to Lancashire from the Southern states. Some of the mills had to close down altogether; others worked for part of the week. A Relief Committee was set up in the town in 1861 which gave financial aid of about 1/8d per head to 4,805 people. By 1862 the numbers had risen to over 22,000 people. The miserable inmates of the workhouses were kept on 10½d a week and some actually died of starvation. Soup kitchens were opened in the town

and people queued up with old jugs and any available crockery. In one week 5,882 lbs. of meat had been used for soup. The priests had their kitchens too where the nuns helped to distribute the soup, and Mother Connelly sent 10/- a week towards the cost. Various countries sent help including flour from Philadelphia and meat from Canada. A family wholly or partially out of work might get 2/- relief money per head per week. Of this the very poorest would need 4½d a week for rent; others might have to pay anything from 2/- to 3/-. Coal was 6d a cwt.; bread 6d a loaf.* Disease followed again; infant mortality was very high and emigration increased. "The women crouch by their miserable firesides," wrote the newspaper; "they have patiently waited and waited and waited, but the cotton never came. Their fathers, husbands and brothers tramped in lonely silence the muddy highways and byways of our giant towns in the vain search for. employment while the children 'clemmed' at home or attempted to cry themselves to sleep. The most striking sign of their reverses," continues the *Guardian,* "is the naked appearance of their homes," for the furniture had been sold piece by piece. At Christmas the Mayor and Council provided a good Christmas dinner . . ."with a little bit of butcher's meat"—a luxury unknown for months. But the old spirit of 'Proud Preston' was not quelled. Few of the workers sympathised with slavery; members of the government might sympathise with the "gentlemen of the South", but not the cotton operatives whose lives were being disrupted by the war. No wonder the working man was deemed able to vote in 1867, even if he could not always write his name. Nor did all the workers deign to accept the soup tickets. A relief visitor offered tickets to a woman whose husband had not applied for relief. "Aw dare not touch 'em," she said; "ma husband would sauce me so. Aw dare not tak 'em, aw should never yer th'last on it." (*The Lancashire Cotton Famine* by Watts; pub. 1866) And the visitor added; "After what I have seen of them here, I say, 'Let me fall into the hands of the poor'."

In this crisis in Preston the schools played a most important part. New sewing classes were opened for the older girls and the night schools were very active. One Inspector wrote: "Large numbers are deriving great educational value from their enforced cessation from work . . .education is the best way of occupying the minds of the unemployed. The truly admirable way in which the distressed work people behave is notorious and is due to the intellectual and moral results produced by the education of the poor in the last twenty years." Education in Preston was evidently producing more results than just passing examinations in the three R's. No

*Between 1862-63, 1,298,288 6d loaves, weighing 2,300 tons, were given out (Hewitson, *History of Preston*).

wonder that when Father Searle from St. Leonard's visited the Preston schools, he wrote to Mother Connelly in 1865: "I am charmed with my visit to your houses and schools in Preston. What a glorious mission to labour in." From the beginning of her work in England, Mother Connelly's aim as expressed in her rule, had been "the education of all classes," and she had written to Bishop Grant in 1855, "We are devoted to education of all classes, you know, my Lord, but our poor schools greatly exceed the higher schools." She must have been consoled on her frequent visits to Preston when she saw the work that was being done. It is also interesting to see in the log books the names of pupil teachers who later joined the Society and went on with the work after profession—names such as—M.M. St. Edward Melling, M.M. Bernard Hadfield, M. Agatha Gray, M.M. Austin Power, M.M. Ursula D'Arcy, M.M. Hyacinth Kelly and others.

One feature of the educational system in the Preston schools which seems to have charmed everybody was the production of plays. In 1857 the pupil teachers of St. Ignatius' produced extracts from *Comus* and *Fabiola.* The *Guardian* commented very favourably and praised "the good nuns of the convent for catering so well for the amusement of the numerous and respectable audience," which included the Mayor and all the catholic clergy, and, adds Mother Lucy proudly, "all the aristocracy of the town." "The Christmas plays," continues the newspaper, "are quite a novel feature in the schools of the town. They certainly constitute an agreeable method of combining instruction with amusement." Mother Connelly must have rejoiced to see this aspect of her educational ideals so well received in this northern town. And one is glad that some color and excitement were introduced into the drab lives of the children. But in 1866 there came a reprimand from Bishop Goss. The Christmas play in 1865 had included a 'Tableau Vivant'. A few days later a letter arrived from the Bishop addressed to Sister Lucy:

'Live Bambino'.

My dear Sister Superioress,

I am told that for the last two years, perhaps longer, there has been exhibited in the Fox Street schools a live infant lying in a crib to represent the Birth of the Son of God, and that incense was used on the occasion. I wish to know whether this impiety really occurred, or whether I have been cruelly hoaxed by a false statement. I wish therefore to have from you a full and circumstantial account of what took place; if such an account be at variance with what I have heard. I shall feel it my duty to name a Commission to examine into this strange affair . . .

Alexander Goss

Another strange—to us— letter was sent to Mother Lucy in May of the same year, referring apparently to a statue of the Holy Child in the church or more likely in the nuns' oratory. It is headed: "One God shalt thou adore;" and it proceeds: "Our Lord says that the first commandment of all is 'The Lord thy God is *one* God.' Now if it be that there is only one God, you must make your choice between the statue of the Holy Child and Jesus Christ, whose Body and Blood, soul and divinity are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. You cannot set up both for adoration . . ." Probably the statue was removed. Certainly there was no *Tableau Vivant* of the nativity in the next year's plays.

As well as the girls' and infants' schools of St. Wilfrid's, the nuns in 1855 also took over a Select School for Girls which had been begun earlier by secular mistresses. In the circular which they issued in that year the school was advertised as "A Day School for Young Ladies, where the course of Instruction comprises all the usual branches of a solid English Education, with French and Drawing. Music is extra." It then goes on to give the terms. This school prospered and was the nucleus of the school later established at Winckley Square.

In 1875 the three small convents were closed and the communities were amalgamated into one at Winckley Square. At first some of the priests opposed this move as they thought the links with the schools would be relaxed. The sisters of St. Ignatius' school had to withdraw for a time, but Father Walker found he could not manage his school without them and asked them to return, which they did, "to the no small joy of the people. The sisters had worked among them for twenty-two years and they were devoted to 'their nuns', as they called them." So wrote Mother Anastasia Riley many years later, who had lived through these experiences in Preston. She continues: "The Sunday school was re-opened on Low Sunday 1876, and the girls said it ought to be called 'High Sunday' because they had got the nuns back."

Mother Mary Anastasia has given us other reminiscences. "There was great love and reverence for the sisters," she writes, "and they were the life and soul of the missions. The Jesuit Fathers fully appreciated their labours. The sisters were poor but always cheerful and their spirit of Poverty and Obedience and their love of labour were their chief characteristics. They had many friends, not only among the well-to-do but also among the tradesmen. Mr. Cuerdon, for example, did all the carpenter's work and only charged for materials. Mr. Seed after he left his work at the iron foundry worked in the garden and kept it in flower . . .Dr. Spencer, a Protestant, attended the nuns. He was often asked to send in his bill and at last he sent in a receipted one."

Inspectors, too, thought highly of the nuns' work and very safisfactory reports were issued each year, including, of course, some suggestions for further improvements. In 1870 Mr. Stokes, Inspector for the schools of Northern England, wrote: "The Holy Child Nuns teach three large schools in Preston and I am not acquainted with three schools conducted with better results."

An appreciative and amusing account of the nuns is given in a book written in 1869 by 'Atticus' (A. Hewitson) on *Our Churches and Chapels, their Parsons, Priests and Congregations.* 'Atticus' is not very accurate about the name of the Society but he is evidently sincere when he describes the nuns. Describing the people coming into St. Wilfrid's church on Sunday mornings, he writes:

> "Towards the last you have about six sisters of Mercy [sic] belonging to St. Wilfrid's Convent, who pass through the formality in a calm, easy and finished manner .There is no religious shoddy among these persons. They may look solemn, yet some of them have finely moulded features; they may dress strangely and gloomily, yet . . .they give indications of serene spirits . . .They keep one of the best schools in the town, and they teach children manners—a thing which many parents cannot manage. They also make themselves useful in visiting. All these sisters are accomplished. They are clever in the head, know how to play music, to paint and to sew, can cook well if they like, and it's a pity they are not married. But they are doing more good single than lots of women are accomplishing in the married state and we had better leave them alone."

He describes St. Ignatius' in the same terms. "It is in fact," he writes, "one of the best schools in the country." Of St. Walburga's he says:

> We saw 350 babies the other day. The utmost order prevailed among them . . .One little pleasant-looking nun [Sister Lucy Ignatia Casserley] had charge of the whole confraternity, and she could make them as mute as mice with the mere lifting of a finger and turn them into all sorts of merry moods by a similar motion in a second. If this little nun could by some means convey her secret of managing children to about nineteen-twentieths of the mothers in the kingdom, who find it a dreadful business to regulate one or two . . .she would confer a lasting benefit on the householders of britain. There are five nuns at St. Walburga's . . .and like the rest of their class they work hard every day, and sacrifice much of their own pleasure for the sake of that of other people . . ."

Let us leave the last word with 'Atticus'.

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