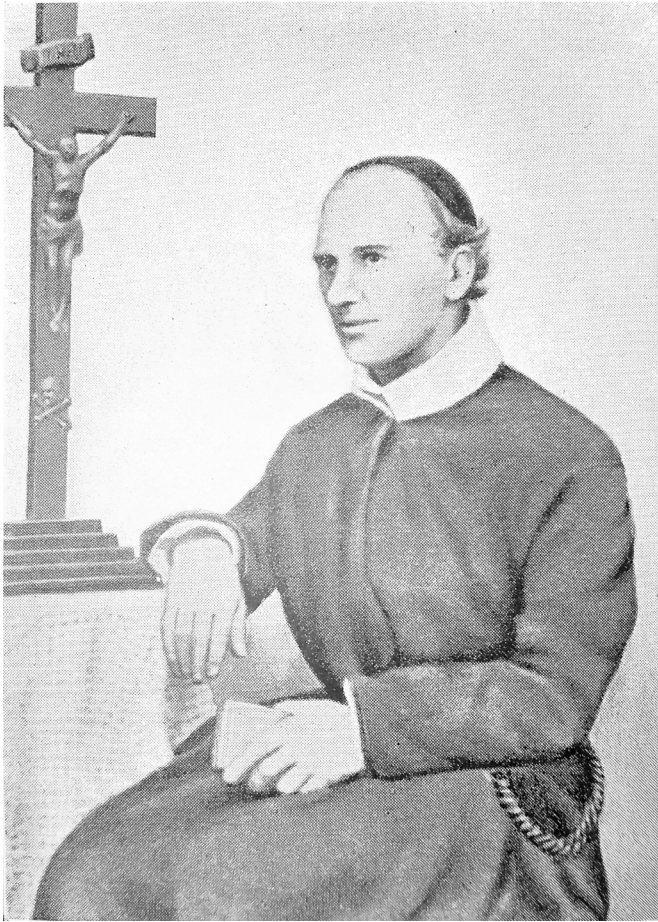


**FATHER FURNISS
AND HIS WORK FOR CHILDREN**



FATHER FURNISS.

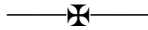
FATHER FURNISS

AND HIS

WORK FOR CHILDREN

BY

THE REV. T. LIVIUS, C.SS.R.



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PREFACE.

THE thought of writing a Memoir of Father Furniss and his work for children was first suggested to me, now many years ago, by the late Right Rev. Monsignor Kershaw. He asked me one day when some Life of our Father Furniss was to appear. On my replying that I was not aware that any such work was in contemplation, he said that he considered it would be very regrettable, should no Redemptorist Father who had personally known Father Furniss and seen his Children's Missions, leave some record of them behind; since his whole system and his labours in these Missions were so marvellously successful, that they had made a complete revolution in priests' method of dealing with Children, as regards their admission to the Sacraments, their assistance at Mass, and the general care and attention bestowed on their spiritual condition in English-speaking countries. All this, he said, was so remarkable, that its record ought to supply materials to the future historian for a special chapter in his history of the Catholic Church in England during the present century. Father Furniss, he continued, had evidently been raised up in God's providence to be the Children's Apostle in these times; his power over them was altogether extraordinary, and not only over them, but also with the people generally, who, especially through means of the children, had come under his influence. He had had, he said, several Missions to Adults in his parish with good results; but the two Children's Missions given by Father Furniss were better remembered, made a greater impression, and produced more lasting effects amongst his people, than all the Adult Missions had done. For two years at least after each of Father Furniss's Missions, the attendance at Mass, the frequentation of the Sacraments, and the general religious tone of the people were quite exceptional, and much better than he had known at any other time. There had, moreover, been several conversions of negligent Catholics brought about through the Children's influence, and these were solid and lasting.

Monsignor Kershaw spoke also of the great good effected by Father Furniss's little books of instruction, of their wide diffusion, the interest they excited amongst the Children, and their general popularity amongst Catholics, on account of their graphic and simple style.

But what he considered would be the most enduring monument of Father Furniss's work for Children, was his institution of the Children's Mass; he

laid great stress on the fact that it owed its origin entirely to Father Furniss, having been quite unknown even in name before his Missions; whilst now it was generally looked upon as a necessary part of parochial organisation in the larger and more populous parishes, not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but also in all English-speaking countries.

Much struck with all that Monsignor Kershaw said, I could have wished that some one who had seen and taken part with Father Furniss in his Children's Missions, should have undertaken the task of writing about him. But as this was not to be, I resolved to do it myself. For this end I began to collect information from Redemptorist Fathers who had been his contemporaries, and from many of the clergy in whose churches he had given his Children's Missions.

I found that their testimony entirely agreed with the estimate which Monsignor Kershaw had taken of Father Furniss and his work; and I determined to publish the result of my enquiries. Various circumstances, however, have for several years delayed the execution of my purpose.

My little work is now put forth with the earnest hope that, through the blessing of God, it may serve to stimulate and enkindle anew, in the hearts of all those whose care it is to further the spiritual interests of our Catholic children, a zeal akin to that with which Father Furniss was consumed for the little ones of Jesus Christ.

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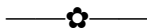
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FATHER FURNISS,

AND HIS WORK FOR CHILDREN.



CHAPTER I.

*Early Years of Father Furniss, until he was
ordained Priest.—(1809-1834.)*

THE late Canon Frith, in answer to a letter which I wrote asking him for some information respecting the early life of Father Furniss, says:* "I have known good Father Furniss since he was a little boy. He was born June 19, 1809, in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, of which town I am also a native. His father—a member of a respectable Derbyshire Catholic family long settled near Hathersage—was a wealthy master-cutler, and resided at Bellevue, a beautiful villa near Sheffield. His mother's name was Curr, sister to the Rev. Joseph Curr, for many years priest at St. Mary's, Mulberry Street, Manchester. He was a learned man, and wrote several works of a polemical character, in answer to the clerical bigots of the day. He also published a translation of Bourdaloue's *Spiritual Retreat*, and of St. Alphonsus' *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*."†

Father John Furniss had two brothers, Albert and Bernard, and one sister, Ellen, who married Mr. Henry Smith, of Drax Abbey, Yorkshire.‡ Bernard became a physician, and died comparatively young. Albert went to Canada.§

* The letter is dated New Brighton, January 1, 1889.

† In 1826 he preached the funeral sermon of Father Broomhead at St. Augustine's, Granby Row, Manchester, who had founded that mission and built the present church. Father Curr died in 1847. See also Gillow's *Bibliographical Dictionary*, "Rev. Father Curr."

‡ Mr. Smith afterwards lived at Eshe Hall, near Ushaw College, Durham, and finally at the Chestnuts, Leamington, where he died in 1891.

§ He married a Canadian lady, established the public waterworks at Montreal, and became a man of wealth and position. His beautiful residence, Trafalgar, was just

Father Furniss received his early education first under the care of the Franciscan Fathers at Baddesley, near Birmingham. He was then sent with one of his brothers to Sedgeley Park School in Staffordshire, where he was a year and a half, and amongst his fellow-scholars was Canon Frith. From Sedgeley Park he was removed to Oscott College, where he remained about two years, and finally in his sixteenth year he went to Ushaw.

One who knew Father Furniss later on in his religious life, writes as follows: "Though no one can now doubt that he was called into being by God for the wonderful work which that God, the lover of little ones, later inspired him to do, yet no one in Father Furniss's earlier years would ever have dreamed of the future that lay before him, no one would have thought he was called to anything extraordinary. He was a good and pious boy, but remarkably timid and shrinking. At school and at college—although he shewed, I believe, no mean talent—he suffered a great deal from his companions, who ridiculed and teased the bashful, awkward child. His sallow complexion caused him to be called 'Black jack,' a nickname which drew many tears from him, and which in his last troubled days he recalled as an evil omen, poor man! He was as sensitive a child as he was a timid one. Some took advantage of his unresisting meekness to add blows to words, and torment him in every ingenious way known to school-boys. To make matters worse, some of those placed over him were harder upon him than even his companions. In his later years he used to relate stories of these early trials, and tell how they had taught him to pity and feel for children's sorrows, and in this way had been a help to him in his work for them."

On this period of Father Furniss's life Monsignor Croskell, the venerable Provost of Salford, thus writes:*

"I remember the late Father Furniss coming to Ushaw College.† He had commenced his ecclesiastical studies at Oscott, and when he came to Ushaw was placed in the class of Syntax or Poetry. I remember that he used to gain good places in his class at the quarterly 'readings up,'—not the very first, but

outside that city. He died some years ago, leaving a family. One of his daughters became Mrs. Elwes.

* His letter is dated from St. Mary of the Angels and St. Clare, April 8, 1889.

† At the end of August, 1824, *i.e.* at the beginning of the College year 1824-1825. In the year 1825-1826 until 1828-1829, he was successively in the Poetry, Rhetoric, Natural Philosophy, and Moral Philosophy classes; the three following years in Theology; in 1832-33 minor professor of Grammar; the next year minor professor of Poetry. November 15, 1828, he received the Tonsure and four Minor Orders; October 23, 1830, the Subdiaconate; September 24, 1831, the Diaconate, and May 24, 1834, the Priesthood.

second or third. Hence we may conclude that he was of fair ability, and a diligent student.

"To illustrate what indeed appeared through his whole life, that he was naturally of a delicate constitution, I may mention that owing to his sallow and bilious complexion he got the college name of 'Black Jack.' Boys are no respecters of persons, but their random shafts often point to some truth or peculiarity of character.

"To illustrate Father Furniss's love of study, I may mention a simple incident which occurred when he had advanced to the class of Theology. At that time there was no gas in the College, and students had to be supplied with mould candles, calculated to last so many hours of study, and a trifle over for going to bed after the last prayers. A student was appointed to go round from time to time with a supply of candles. It happened that one young school-fellow, Charley Radcliffe, was appointed to that office at the time. He came down one day with what we considered a smart saying of Mr. Furniss, from which we may infer that he exceeded the College hours of daily study in poring over his books. He said to Charley on entering his room with his supply of candles: 'Charles, yours are like angels' visits, few and far between.' He had, no doubt, to spend some of his pocket-money in getting extra candles for extra hours of study.

"From the next anecdote we may perhaps suppose that John was then somewhat of a judge of fine art, and fairly well up in history and biography.

"It was probably before he received Minor Orders that he was balloted to serve in the Militia, and had to go to Newcastle, either to get exempted, or to pay for a man to serve in his place. He went in company of a superior. At that very time Madame Tussaud was first exhibiting her far-famed wax-works, and going from town to town with them. She was then in Newcastle. Mr. Furniss must of course be allowed to visit the Exhibition. Whilst there he stood fixed in admiring wonder, looking at some historic figure. A number of the visitors took him for a part of the show, and were gathering round him to inspect him thoroughly from head to foot, when he dispelled the illusion by quietly moving on. One may construe this incident as a sign of young Furniss's admiration of heroic characters and historic names.

"This my idea of his early taste for literature, history, and the fine arts may gather a shade of confirmation from the character of his native Sheffield, which had the fame of being a literary town, and distinguished by men of letters; and he may in his early years have caught the spirit of his native town."

However this may be, we may well believe that Father Furniss cultivated a taste for literature in his College days from the pure, lucid, and simple style,

as well as the happy use of imagery and graphic illustration, that characterised the little books which later on he wrote for children. When Father Furniss had been at Ushaw one or two years, his former school-fellow Canon Frith rejoined him there, and was with him in the school of Divinity. It is said that he distinguished himself amongst his fellow-students in philosophy and theology, and uniformly edified them by his piety.

Father Furniss was ordained priest by Bishop Briggs, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District, who was at the same time President of the College, May 24, 1834. In becoming a priest he attained what from early childhood had been the one object of his ambition.



CHAPTER II.

First Years of Priesthood. Bradford and Doncaster.—(1834-1840.)

WE learn from the Ushaw Chronicles that Father Furniss resigned his minor professorship of Poetry into the hands of another, June 9, 1834, and on the 18th of the same month left the College for Hesleyside,* "in vineam Domini." If he was destined in the first instance for the mission of Hesleyside, his stay there was for but a few days; since his name appears on June 29, in the Register of Baptisms at St. Mary's, Bradford, where he remained some time over one year. During this period are also in the Register books, together with that of Father Furniss, the names of the Rev. George Corless, Charles Pratt, Philip Kearney, John Rigby, and Peter Kaye, who was in charge of St. Mary's for some years. The date of Father Furniss's last entry is July 23, 1835. I have been unable to learn anything more of him during his year at Bradford, except that there are some still living in the parish who remember him as a priest there.

About the month of September, 1835, Father Furniss was sent as the first resident priest to Doncaster.† This mission had been commenced in 1833. It

* This mission is in Northumberland; it was formerly called Bellingham and Hesleyside, but is now simply called Bellingham.

† There are four baptisms entered in the Register before Father Furniss went to Doncaster, by the Rev. J. Kearsley.

seems that some buildings in Prince's Street, consisting of a stable and coach-house, were then purchased and converted into a school-room; and here a priest from Sheffield used to say Holy Mass occasionally. Father Furniss purchased a house in Prince's Street, adjoining the school-room, which he converted into a chapel, effecting for himself a more ready access to it by making a door through the side wall of the house. Here Canon Frith, who gives these details, remembers paying him a visit for a few days. The chapel bore the title of St. Peter ad Vincula, which the present church still retains. This was erected twenty-seven years ago in Canon Pearson's time on the site of the old buildings.

"The bigots of Doncaster," says Canon Frith, "were not long before they made an attack on Father Furniss—and in particular a Church of England curate in the town—by publishing rancorous and calumnious articles and letters against him and the Catholic faith in the *Doncaster Gazette* and other newspapers. But they found that they had caught a Tartar, and that he was more than their match. They were soon silenced by his able, incisive, and sarcastic replies. Father Furniss in his early days at Doncaster devoted much time to this controversial correspondence, and many of his letters were of considerable length."

From the Rev. Charles Burke, who later on was for many years the parish-priest at Doncaster, I have gleaned what remains in this chapter of the life of Father Furniss during the five years that he had charge of the mission.

He showed great zeal for the House of God, and the spirit of faith and piety that animated him, by his strict observance of all the ceremonies and rubrics of the Church, as far as the circumstances of the mission would allow, and by the care that he took to beautify and adorn his poor little chapel. The six handsome silver-plated candlesticks, the silver cruets and stand, and the silver thurible, which are all still in use, were gifts of Father Furniss. He was assiduous in preaching, in instructing the people from the pulpit, and in visiting them in their homes. He very soon prepared a number of the children and adults for the sacrament of Confirmation, which Bishop Briggs came to administer. As there was not at that time any railway communication from York, where the Bishop then resided, he had to drive to Doncaster in a one-horse carriage, attended by his faithful bandy-legged servant, Matthew, a well-known character at Ushaw and throughout the

The first entry of a baptism by Father Furniss is October 8, 1835, and the last March 17, 1840. His first entry of a marriage is that of Henry Smith, of Drax Abbey, to Ellen Furniss, October 6, 1835. The last marriage is dated November 21, 1838.

Northern District, who acted as his Lordship's groom, valet, and general factotum.

The sick and poor especially ever found in Father Furniss a devoted friend. For he not only attended diligently to the spiritual needs of the sick and afflicted, but never failed in his large charity to minister to their temporal wants also, by sending them wine, more delicate and nutritious food, and what other remedies they might require. For the poor he had a very tender care. A certain number of the aged and infirm were his constant pensioners, and came regularly to his house to receive their portion of soup and meat, and loaves of bread. Many a casual beggar and tramp too, who had heard of his benevolent bounty, would come to seek his help, and never went away unrelieved.

After Father Furniss had lived some time near the chapel, and his health was beginning to be impaired through weakness of the heart and bronchial affection, he removed at the earnest entreaty of his sister and her husband, Mr. Henry Smith, to Hall Cross Hill.* Here he was visited by his favourite brother Bernard, a physician, then in the last stages of consumption. He died soon after at Drax Abbey.† Father Furniss was always fond of a good horse, and used frequently to ride. His brother left him an excellent carriage, of the use of which, in his delicate state of health, he now availed himself. But not long after his brother's death he became himself seriously ill; and, being unable to leave his house and go to the chapel, he converted the drawing-room into an oratory, where he frequently said Mass. As his health did not rally, he was advised by his physician, Dr. Scholfield, to give up all thoughts of further clerical work, and, as a last resource for prolonging his life, to go abroad and try the effects of a warmer climate.



* Hall Cross Hill is the higher part of a street called Hall-gate. The remains of the old cross, which originally stood at the intersection of two streets, were years ago removed to this site for the convenience of traffic. Hence the name. Father Furniss lived in a house close to the Hall Cross.

† He was buried at Sheffield in the Catholic cemetery, where now stands the fine Church of St. Marie's.

CHAPTER III.

Sojourn of Several Years abroad.—(1840-1847.)

FATHER FURNISS left England for southern Europe in 1840, and spent some six or seven years travelling about through Italy, the Tyrol, Spain, and the East. This he did principally in hopes of regaining his health, and returning to his work as a priest; but also to satisfy his piety, by visiting the most famous shrines of Our Blessed Lady and the Saints. Father Furniss throughout his life evinced uniformly a serious purpose of sanctifying his soul and serving God in the way of perfection; and there is testimony from one who knew him well at this period that he was then much occupied by these thoughts. Hence, wherever he went, his chief care and occupation was to foster and increase this spirit of piety by devoutly frequenting the churches, the holy sanctuaries and shrines of the Saints, and spending much time in reading their Lives, in prayer, and meditation.

He was careful to note down whatever specially interested and impressed him in his travels, and he thus laid up a large store of anecdote and story with which he would often illustrate his discourses and instructions later on in his Children's Missions. He was a very attentive and keen observer of all that he saw, marking the surrounding scenery and the minute topography of the places he visited, so that the vivid and accurate impressions, thus formed and retained in his memory, gave him that marvellous power which he had in after years of fascinating his hearers by his graphic descriptions. His interest in ecclesiology and archeology was great, and led him to collect here and there in his travels a large number of holy relics, pictures, and other objects of sacred and antiquarian art, which he brought home with him; and one or another of them he would sometimes exhibit to the children.

During his sojourn abroad he kept up diligently the study of theology, and especially of Holy Scripture. This is shewn by the copious notes contained in the manuscript books which he wrote at this period, and which are still preserved. He generally spent the winter in Rome, and went elsewhere during the warmer season. At Rome he used to attend the lectures on moral theology held in the Roman College. He had ever a particular devotion to St. Alphonsus Liguori and his writings. His attraction to the holy Doctor's Moral Theology was such that he always had with him Neyraguet's Compendium, and would take it out to read from time to time on his journey. In 1842 he made at Rome the acquaintance of Monsignor Weld, which soon ripened into intimacy, and from October, 1843, to June, 1844, he used to dine every day with Monsignor Weld in his apartments. We may learn something of

Father Furniss's English contemporaries at that time in Rome from the following extract from Lucas's *True Tablet*, August, 1842.

"The Right Rev. Dr. Wiseman arrived at the English College on the 14th inst. . . . A few evenings ago I was at a defension, in its fine Hall, of a logical and metaphysical thesis by a younger son of Lord Clifford, William to wit,* Cardinal Acton presiding, and Drs. Wiseman, Baggs and Grant objecting. The young gentleman acquitted himself of his task in a distinguished manner, and much to the admiration of his learned and venerable audience."

Father Furniss during all this time was in very precarious and delicate health; and no one thought that he would resume again any active work. This appears from another cutting of the same issue of the *True Tablet*: "The Rev. John Furniss is again better, but fears are entertained that he will not be able again to bear the climate of England."

Amongst the remedies prescribed for him was goat's milk, about which he used to tell an amusing incident that occurred in his Spanish pilgrimage.† As it was extremely difficult to procure fresh goat's milk every day, on one occasion at least he took with him a goat in the diligence. His fellow travellers were highly amused, and I believe sometimes milked the poor animal on their own account. From this incident, some have drawn a long bow and maintained that Father Furniss took a goat about with him wherever he went during all the years he was abroad.

The following letter from the Rev. Father Douglas, describing Father Furniss's tour in Palestine, will be read with interest:

"Rome, January 16, 1889.—In the beginning of April, 1845, Father Furniss started from Rome in company with the late Mr. Carrington Smythe, son of Sir Edward Smythe of Acton Burnell, Mr. Hamilton, and your humble servant, for Palestine. We came by steamer through the Straits of Messina to Malta, and from thence to Constantinople, to Smyrna, Rhodes, Larnaca in Cyprus, and so to Beyrût in Syria, where we arrived on the 2nd of May; a month having been spent at the above named places. Having procured the necessary things for travelling in those days, and servants, we rode on horseback to Djebail, and turning short of Tripoli, entered the Wady Kadiska or Holy Valley, in which at Dimam we visited the Patriarch of the

* Afterwards Bishop of Clifton.

† I have not been able to ascertain the date of Father Furniss's Spanish pilgrimage, whether it was before or after his tour in the East. It is more probable that it was after, and before his return to England. Amongst the sanctuaries he visited in Spain, were those of Seville, Toledo, St. James of Compostella, and the spots rendered famous by St. Teresa.

Maronites. The third night after our departure from Beyrût, we slept under the cedars of Lebanon, and then crossed the chain to Baalbek or Heliopolis, where we passed Whitsunday and assisted at the Mass of the Greek Melchite Bishop, as Father Furniss—not having a portable altar or vestments—could not say Mass. Two days' more riding, and passing the nights in tents, brought us to Damascus. The war had broken out between the Druses and the Maronites, so in attempting to pass from Damascus to Panias (Cæsarea Philippi) we fell into the hands of the Druses, and had to retreat to Damascus, whence after some days the Pasha gave us a Turkish guard to convey us over the Lebanon to the camp which the Pasha of Beyrût had pitched on the western slope of the chain. From Beyrût we took a boat to Caifa under Mount Carmel, and from thence on horseback to Carmel, Nazareth, Mount Tabor, Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, Cana, and again to Nazareth and Acre. Thence we went by boat to Jaffa, and again on horseback to Ramleh and Jerusalem.

"Arriving in the Holy City on the 1st of June, we stayed there until the 17th, visiting Bethlehem, St. John in Montana, and all the other sanctuaries. Father Furniss celebrated Mass in the Holy Sepulchre, and gave us all Communion, after having passed the night in the adjoining building occupied by the Franciscan Friars. Father Furniss went to the Jordan and to St. Saba, which I did not, being tired out. From Jerusalem we went to Gaza, and then had an eight days' journey on camels across the desert to Cairo, where we arrived on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. Some days in Cairo and a visit to the Pyramids brought us to the time of the Indian mail from Suez (there was no canal then), and so we got to Alexandria, and thence to Naples, where Father Furniss remained. This was in the latter half of July, 1845."

During their sojourn in Egypt they talked over the idea—Father Furniss, it is said, seriously—of becoming hermits in Egypt, in imitation of the Fathers of the Desert.

His travels, especially those in Palestine, were of great use to him in his Children's Missions in after years. His graphic descriptions of the spots connected with his Gospel and Scripture stories, which he had seen with his own eyes, led some of the very little ones to believe that he was as old as the Wandering Jew or older, and had been a witness of the stories as well as of the spots. His venerable appearance confirmed this conclusion in their innocent minds.



CHAPTER IV.

*Return to England. Visitation Convent. Work
in London. Vocation to the Redemptorists.
—(1847-1850.)*

FATHER FURNISS returned to England from his long sojourn abroad in the year 1846 or 1847; and the next that we hear of him is from the Convent of the Visitation at Westbury-on-Trym, near Bristol, where he was chaplain to the nuns in 1847, and remained so about a year and a half. In answer to my enquiries, through the kindness of the Rev. Mother Superior, I received the following reminiscences of him at this time.*

"There are three Sisters in the Community still living who knew Father Furniss, and I have been trying to ascertain all I could from them; the information is, however, but small.

"They tell us that Father Furniss had an extraordinary devotion to Our Blessed Lady. He had a picture of Our Lady, which he said was miraculous, and before which he had evidently obtained some special favour. This picture he used to pass through our grating on Sundays, and the Sisters used to carry it in procession, and on the Sunday evening it was returned to the Father. On leaving us to join your Order, he gave us the picture on condition that we should always burn a lamp before it, which has always been done. It is quite of the style of the old miraculous pictures—Our Lady and the Divine Child in her arms, in dark colouring. Every one here has a great devotion to it. It forms the altar-piece of Our Lady's Chapel within the Monastery.

"Father Furniss undertook to explain the whole of the psalms of our Office (Our Lady's) and of the Office of the Dead, assembling the Community twice a week for the purpose. He had great zeal for the conversion of sinners, and used to make a list of names, which he recommended on Saturdays. He was full of charity for his neighbour, and was ever ready to help the poor in their needs. Once a young man presented himself under the plea of wanting to be instructed in the true Faith, but really to get some clothing. The Father was so moved by his poverty that he went to his wardrobe and gave him his own great-coat; he never saw the man again. I should have said that when questioned as to the grace he had received before

* Monastery of the Visitation, Westbury-on-Trym, January 8, 1895.

the picture of Our Lady, he used to cast his eyes down and keep silence, and would not reveal what had passed."*

From the Convent of the Visitation Father Furniss went to London in 1848 or 1849, where he was for some short time with the Rev. Frederick Oakeley, assisting him in the work of his extensive and populous parish of Islington. Here he occupied himself in gathering in from the crowded lanes and by-ways of the district the poor Catholic children, who were very numerous in consequence of the recent large immigration from Ireland, and necessarily in a state of great neglect, as the schools for them had not then been built, and priests to care for them were at that time very few. Father Furniss spent himself in instructing large numbers of these little waifs and strays, as well as bigger boys and girls, whom he gathered together out of the courts and alleys, and prepared many of them for Confirmation and Holy Communion. It was now for the first time that he began to be conscious of his predilection for children, and also of the great power he had over them.

Here in 1850 he met again his old friend, Monsignor Weld, and also Father Douglas, who had meanwhile been ordained priest, June 25, 1848, and had made his profession as a Redemptorist, December 8, 1849, and was then attached to the Monastery of St. Mary's, Clapham.

"Up to this time," writes Father Douglas, "he had had no particular liking for children, but then this love began to spring up in him, and he began to exert himself with the greatest zeal in the courts of London amongst the little ones. It was now at length, too, that he turned his attention to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, having always had a very special drawing to St. Alphonsus."

The late Father James Bradshaw, C.S.S.R., writes of him at this period as follows:

"I met Father Furniss for the first time after leaving College at a soirée held at that time the Tuesday in each week at the house of Cardinal, then Bishop, Wiseman in Golden Square. It was in the spring of 1850. I had charge of a small parish at Croydon. I invited him to come and preach for me on the following Sunday, which he did. Before parting that evening, we agreed to go and make our annual retreat at the novitiate of the Redemptorists at St. Trond. Neither of us owned to a *sneaking* intention of joining that Order. At the appointed time I wrote to his Reverence, and fixed the day of our visit to St. Trond, but his reply was, 'Not this year, I have another engagement;'—he was starting a new mission at Peckham. I went off

* "He was a great friend of Monsignor Weld. He came here to supply as chaplain in 1847, and remained about a year and a half."

alone to Belgium, and finished by postulating, and being admitted into the Congregation of St. Alphonsus Liguori. On returning to the Redemptorist house at Clapham, I found that Father Furniss had just gone through the same process there, and had resolved to become a Redemptorist. We arranged the time for our departure to the novitiate in a couple of months."

The Redemptorists had but recently come to London, and through Cardinal Wiseman had been established at Clapham. Father de Buggenoms whom Father Furniss had met in London, was chiefly instrumental in drawing him to the Congregation, of which Father Douglas and another priest whom he had known intimately in Rome were already professed members. He was moreover especially attracted to the poor, and he saw that the work of the Redemptorists was principally for the poor and the most abandoned souls. The vast multitude of poor Irish driven into England by the famine, and in extreme need of spiritual succour, excited his compassion, and he felt that in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer he would be able most effectually to labour for them, and above all help the poor children, who had now become so dear to his heart. Such appear to be the chief motives by which God drew him to his vocation as a Redemptorist.



CHAPTER V.

Novitiate at St. Trond.—(1850-1851.)

ALL who knew Father Furniss were astonished when they heard of his resolution to enter the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and many laughed at him for entertaining the idea, and at the Redemptorist superiors for receiving one so weak, broken down, and prematurely aged as he appeared—though he was only in his forty-first year. He was received by Father de Held, then stationed at Clapham as Visitor of the English Houses, and with the sanction of Father Deschamps,* the Provincial of Belgium, to which province Holland, America, and England then belonged. Father Furniss was sent in the summer of 1850 together with Father Bradshaw to the novitiate at St. Trond, where Father Paul Reyners was novice-master at that period. They were expected to arrive in good time to make the fifteen

* He was afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Malines.

days' retreat before the Nativity of Our Blessed Lady, on which feast they were to receive the holy habit. The days passed on, and there was no sign of the expected postulants. Father Paul wrote to Father de Held, who could only reply that they had left Clapham for St. Trond days before, and that he had thought they had long since arrived. The fact was that Father Furniss had not lost his old love of making pious pilgrimages, and, judging probably that this was his last chance of making one, he proposed to Father Bradshaw, on the way over from Dover to Ostend, a pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Hermits at Einsiedeln in Switzerland. To this proposal Father Bradshaw readily agreed, thinking that they would reach St. Trond in time for the commencement of the retreat. But somehow their pilgrimage took nearly three weeks instead of one week, as Father Furniss had supposed. At length, on the evening of September 7, the wanderers arrived at St. Trond. Father Paul, in very bad humour, inquired the meaning of the long, and so far unexplained, delay. Father Furniss with perfect simplicity said that it had struck them on their way to go as pilgrims to the shrine of Our Lady of Einsiedeln, to ask her blessing on their vocation and novitiate, and that they had hastened to be in time to get the habit on the morrow. Father Paul answered indignantly, "There was now no question of *that*,—they had not made the retreat which the Holy Rule required," etc., etc. "Was not a pilgrimage to Our Blessed Lady as good as a retreat?" put in Father Furniss. "*You* may think so," replied the incensed novice-master, "*I* do not."* They consequently only received the habit on October 15, the feast of St. Teresa, when Fathers Plunkett and Bridgett received it also.

Amongst the thirty and more novices then at St. Trond, Father Furniss, from his being much older than the rest, was rather prominent, and was constantly brought forward by the novice-master for remarks or criticism. As all who knew Father Paul are aware, though kindest of the kind, he tried his novices in every possible way, and was specially on the look-out to try priest-novices, believing they needed it more than others, if they were to become true child-like Redemptorists. Father Furniss's antecedents secured him an additional share of these attentions of his novice-master. The humiliations he received were not perhaps very severe; but whatever they were, he bore them all bravely and good-humouredly. He was frequently accused in Chapter by the youngsters for want of personal cleanliness and neatness. Indeed he was habitually—in later life too—slovenly, very negligent about his external appearance, untidy and disorderly. He felt much

* This circuitous route to the novitiate used not unfrequently to be brought up, by way of banter, against Father Furniss in after years.

these accusations, but bore them well. He gave great edification to all who were with him in the novitiate by the great fervour with which he went through the various spiritual exercises of the day, by his observance of the Rule, and general spirit of prayer and piety. Thus he was habitually to be seen in the chapel every morning a quarter of an hour before the bell was rung for the early meditation at five o'clock. He excelled especially in devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and there may still be seen before the statue of Our Lady in the corridor the lamp which he gave to be placed there, and which he took care, as long as he was at St. Trond, should be always kept burning at his own expense.

Though no longer young, and continually suffering from feeble health in consequence of heart and bronchial affections of many years' standing, he went through his novitiate with hardly any dispensations from the ordinary rule. He was distinguished for his uniform gaiety and cheerfulness, being the life and soul of the recreation, fond of talking and relating stories; and, as his French was *very* English, he was a great source of fun to his fellow-novices, amongst whom he was a great favourite, especially with the younger ones. They used to call him "the old man," and delighted in teasing him, whilst he in turn showed himself not unwilling to be teased. His playful ways and innocent tricks won their hearts; he freely indulged in *badinage* with them, and was ever fond of a pleasant joke. This characteristic of Father Furniss was very useful to him later on with his dear little ones. Moreover it endeared him to his confrères, wherever he went, and clung to him to the very end—amidst his wonderful successes, in the trials and contradictions that surrounded him for years, and even in the terrible sorrow of his last years, which formed the old man's crucifixion. Whilst still on this subject, I will quote the words of a Father who was one of his co-novices, from a letter dated April 15, 1895:

"What struck me most in Father Furniss besides his wonderful zeal for the work of the children, was his invariable good humour and gaiety of manner, in spite of his serious and almost continuous infirmities. He was full of fun; and his fun was not altogether free from a certain amount of innocent malice. His piety was evident, and it was this which gave him such power over the children. They always considered him a real saint."

Father Furniss's seven years of pilgrimage proved always an interesting, amusing and edifying subject for conversation during the novitiate. He seemed to have visited every noteworthy place that the novices had read of in the Lives of the great Catholic Saints, especially of Italy and Spain: with the sanctuaries of France and Germany he seemed to be little acquainted.

He did not, when a novice, forget the poor Catholic children for whom he had laboured so zealously in London, but bore them still in his heart. His vocation, indeed, to be the Apostle of Children already showed itself in the novitiate, at least to this extent, that he took the most lively interest in all that concerned them, often saying that he loved to labour amongst them, and hoped one day in the Congregation to be allowed to consecrate his life to work for them. He was careful to gather and note down from his spiritual readings in the Lives of the Saints all the anecdotes he met with about children, and whatever else particularly struck him as bearing on them and work for their souls.*

No doubt his recent labours for them at Islington, his experience of their destitution and needs, led him to these thoughts, especially now that he had joined a Congregation which was devoted to giving missions. For this was just the time when missions were beginning generally to be given in England, and much enthusiasm was enkindling about them. The Order of Charity and the Passionists were most of all distinguished in this work, not however for anything they had done particularly for children. Still some work of this sort had been done for them by zealous secular priests, Fathers Kyne, Hodson and others, whom Father Furniss had known in London and had been emulating at Islington. In after years, looking back on these his first missionary efforts amongst children, he would speak of them as utter failures. The manner of preaching and instructing which he then adopted, was, he said, radically wrong.

The weakly state of Father Furniss's health, which had increased at St. Trond,—his more advanced age—the very edifying way in which he had gone through his probation, and the evident signs he had given of a true vocation, led his superiors to shorten considerably the time of his novitiate, and he was admitted to his religious profession on the feast of the Visitation, July 2, 1851. Thus did Our Lady of Einsiedeln make up to him by months the weeks of delay in his receiving the habit which his pilgrimage to her shrine had cost him.

After his profession he went to the Redemptorist house at Liège, where he remained for more than two months. Here his health improved, and he occupied his time with theological studies in preparation for his approaching

* The same Father from whose letter we quoted above says also: "After the death of Father Furniss it was discovered that he must have been for many years a diligent student, for numbers of MSS. written by him were filled with appropriate texts of Scripture, quotations from the Fathers, passages and anecdotes from the Lives of the Saints, etc.,—appropriate, I mean, for his special work."

mission work.* In the month of September he left Liège to return to England. On the way he paid a short visit to St. Trond. There were then in the novitiate, besides the English novices before mentioned, Fathers Stevens, Coffin (afterwards Bishop of Southwark), Vaughan, and Gibson.† Father Lans, who had been for six years Superior of the house at Hanley Castle in Worcestershire, was then at St. Trond. He had been there for the last five months preparing himself for the office of novice-master of the then contemplated English novitiate at the new foundation of Bishop-Eton. Father Furniss left St. Trond with Father Lans for England, and arrived at Clapham September 24, 1851.

They broke their journey for a few hours at Bruges in order to pay a visit to the Convent of the Redemptoristines in that city. Sister Marie Jean de la Croix, who a few years later was sent to Dublin to found there a Convent of the Order, and was for many years the Mother Superior at Drumcondra, gives the following particulars of this visit.

"Monastery of St. Alphonsus, Dublin, Dec. 13, 1888.—I saw the Rev. Father Furniss in Bruges, after his holy profession, when returning to England. All the Sisters went to the parlour, as his Reverence had never seen a community of Redemptoristines. We were much edified by his love for his vocation and for his holy Father and Founder St. Alphonsus. He showed us all the beautiful relics that he had brought from Rome, the Holy Land, and other sacred places which he had visited in his travels. On the Rev. Mother asking for some of the relics, he said, 'I shall give some later on to the Redemptoristines who will cross the sea and come to England,' adding in fun, 'Who is ready to come?' I stepped forward without ever thinking such a thing would be realised, and said, 'I am ready, if obedience sends me.' The Rev. Mother then said, 'Reverend Father, you should put the Sister's name down in your diary.' When Father Furniss was in his last illness, I sent him word that he should remember his promise about the relics. Whereupon he sent me several cases of relics, which are now venerated in the church of our monastery."



* Father Furniss was chosen to accompany the novice-master to Clapham, for the solemn opening of St. Mary's Church there.

† Father Gibson's earliest remembrance of Father Furniss dates from the time when he went to Ushaw College as a boy in the year 1833. Father Furniss was then in deacon's orders. They had not met since.

CHAPTER VI.

*First Missions in England and Ireland.—
(1851-1855.)*

AFTER remaining three months at Clapham, Father Furniss was sent to take part in a large mission at St. Nicholas, Copperas Hill, Liverpool. This was the first of a series of 115 missions and retreats given by him during the ten succeeding years.* In his third mission, which was at Woolton, near Liverpool, his peculiar talent for directing children first displayed itself. With Father Furniss were two other Fathers under Father Lans as Superior. The Father who had charge of the children, however otherwise zealous and devoted, could not succeed in keeping them in order. Father Furniss, observing this, begged Father Lans to allow him to try whether he could not succeed better. His management proved to be so admirable, that from that time, in all the missions in which he had a share, the care of the children was assigned to him. It was not, however, until after some few years that he gave separate missions to the children. He began by going with other Fathers on the general missions; and in these the children were his special charge. He took care that every morning they came to what then first began to be called *the Children's Mass*, when from the mission platform he directed their devotions, and explained to them the nature and ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice—and after it was over gave them an instruction. He heard their confessions, prepared them for Communion and Confirmation, and directed their General Communions. As the church was occupied at night by adults, he assembled the children every evening for their mission service in the school-room, which however was generally much too small for their numbers. Father Furniss soon discovered that this system of giving missions to children was very imperfect and unsatisfactory. The results were not at all such as he desired. The children were quite at a disadvantage, and their needs were but inadequately supplied, when their mission was given at the same time as that to the adults, by which it would necessarily be overshadowed. He was fully persuaded that something much better could be planned. But it was no easy matter for him to obtain permission to give separate missions for the children. This was a novelty, which would be at once in some quarters its condemnation. Besides, the

* At the end of the volume will be found a list and summary of all these missions.

demand for missions was so great, and the missionaries were then so few, that he could not be spared for a separate work. Hence he met with much opposition, both from some of his confrères, and also from superiors, though on the whole these latter supported his views, especially Father Lans, the then Vice-Provincial, who, seeing the great good he could do, was his best friend in the matter. Another difficulty was that these Children's Missions did not pay the expenses necessarily incidental to them. Moreover, it was held by many that, owing to the vast number of children flocking together, such missions would be sure to prove dangerous and disorderly. Father Furniss, however, in course of time gained the victory over every opposition, and was at length allowed to have separate Children's Missions: and this practice was confirmed by a decree from Rome of the Father General, in the year 1855. From that date all the missions which Father Furniss gave were of this description.

During the previous years, however, his work was almost exclusively confined to the children, and on a few occasions he had given separate missions to them. Thus in the year 1853 at the desire of the administrator of St. Michael's, Limerick, he gave a Children's Mission in that parish, and at its close founded there the Confraternity of the Holy Family for Girls.

The following account of this mission was furnished by one who herself took part in it, and has been for many years a Redemptoristine Nun at Drumcondra.

"In 1853 the Rev. Father Furniss arrived with several other Fathers at their temporary residence in Bank Place, Limerick, where they attracted crowds to their little chapel, which consisted of two parlours with the partition door removed at the time of any public service. From the commencement Father Furniss's love and zeal for children were most remarkable. In the year 1853 he gave a mission to them in St. Michael's Church, at the close of which there was a very large General Communion, of most for the first time, and instituted the Confraternity of the Holy Family for Girls. When this was fully organised in the summer of the same year, there was another General Communion of all the members at St. Michael's; and afterwards they walked together, followed by the Rev. Father, to the Northumberland Buildings, where a breakfast was provided for them. In his familiar address on this occasion, he told the children to beware of admiring their dresses, lest the devil might be found sitting on the tail.

"It would be impossible to exaggerate the amount of good effected by this Confraternity, which in a short time numbered more than 400 girls. As long as Father Furniss remained in Limerick, he was its Director. On Sunday afternoon, the Rosary having been recited, he gave an instruction in that

sweet simple way of his, which impressed all his young hearers so profoundly. He also gave Benediction of the most Blessed Sacrament, during which the girls, taught by his Reverence, sang with great fervour the Litany of Loreto, etc., followed by a hymn in honour of Our Lady. Suffering, as he did at one time, from a severe cough and delicate chest, he was recommended to abstain from his usual custom of singing the hymns and litanies with the children. He allowed them therefore to commence; but no sooner had he heard the children's voices than he forgot everything else and joined in with them, being unable to resist the holy joy he felt in the devotions of the little ones. He had several pictures which he used to shew them; amongst others a copy of the Madonna painted by St. Luke. This picture excited great admiration, not only among the children, but also amongst all those who had seen it, not so much for the picture itself, but because Father Furniss had a picture of the Blessed Virgin painted by St. Luke. He had also a little bottle containing water from the Dead Sea, and this he used sometimes to bring forth in his instructions on the punishments which are inflicted on sin.

"To this Confraternity was attached a library consisting of Lives of the Saints and other pious books, which were distributed *gratis* every Monday on condition of their being returned the following week. They were often brought back by the fathers and grandfathers of the girls, of whom many were at work in the public factories and unable to come themselves; and it was touching to hear them say what good these books had done for them and their whole families. The little ones, accustomed to address secular priests only, would answer the Father: 'Yes, sir; No, sir.' Father Furniss did not like this, and would say: 'Call me *Father*, not sir.' The ladies who directed the Confraternity were ever in the greatest admiration at the untiring zeal, forgetfulness of self, and devotedness, with which Father Furniss gave himself to the Association; and many of the children who in the beginning were wild and unmanageable, under the Reverend Father's wonderful influence and winning manner, became quite docile and very pious. On returning from the meetings, some of the children, full of faith, would often join hands in a circle in front of the houses of some very bigoted Protestants, and, bowing towards their windows, would sing with the greatest animation, 'Daily, daily sing to Mary,' thus proving what zeal for our sweet Mother's honour had been implanted in their brave hearts by this true son of St. Alphonsus. After Father Furniss's departure from Limerick, the Rev. James Synan, administrator of St. Michael's, kindly gave his full support to the Confraternity, spent several hours of each Sunday afternoon with the children—as did their deeply regretted Director, who had won the hearts of

all,—and gave every encouragement to a work which he considered one of the greatest blessings that the parish enjoyed. However, on Father Synan's promotion to the parish of Shanagolden in 1859, his successor, finding the occupation of the church for so much time on Sundays very inconvenient, did not patronise the Confraternity, and the good ladies were most reluctantly obliged to abandon the work so dear to them and to its holy founder. Many and many were the deep regrets expressed by the parents of the girls, when they heard of this determination; they said God alone knew from what dangers the Confraternity had preserved their girls, and what advantages they had gained by regular attendance at its blessed meetings."

The following reminiscence of the mission at St. Michan's, Dublin, 1855, is given by a Redemptoristine Nun.

"A carpenter was fixing some presses in our Sacristy a few years ago, and the Sister who overlooked the work asked him if he was attentive to his religious duties. He replied, 'I have not time to do much, but I have never forgotten one little practice taught us long ago by one of the holy Fathers who was a Saint; Father Furniss was his name. During the mission of Anne's Street, he told us we need not go on our knees to pray, but we should from time to time raise our hearts to God during our work, and say, My Jesus, I do this for the love of Thee. I can never forget the impression the sermons of that holy Father made upon me, and very often during my work I say the little prayer he told us.' This simple avowal explained something which had often surprised us. We noticed that this carpenter often touched his cap without apparent reason, but we were far from suspecting that he was breathing the little aspiration he had learned so many years ago from the zealous Redemptorist, who, he said, was a 'grand preacher and must be a great Saint in heaven.'"

A Father who has grown grey in our Congregation gives the following particulars of one of Father Furniss's earliest Children's Missions in England.

"Let me tell you of my first meeting with Father Furniss, and the impression it made upon me. The remembrance is yet fresh, though over forty years have passed since then. It was in 1854. I was close upon eighteen. A Children's Mission was going on at St. Oswald's, Old Swan, near Liverpool. I was staying on a visit with my brother, and was constantly at Bishop-Eton which was only two miles off—already for several years a child of the Congregation in heart and desire. When I heard from the Bishop-Eton Fathers what was going on, I made my way to St. Oswald's. It happened to be the night of the children's consecration to Our Blessed Lady. I was not allowed to mingle with them, but by arriving very early managed to get amongst the adults in a corner where I could see and hear everything. I was

indeed wonderfully impressed. A beautiful altar of Our Blessed Lady, one mass of flowers and lights; a venerable white-haired priest on the platform talking in simple, child-like, but tenderest accents to the little ones; the church packed to overflowing with eager delighted children, whose eyes never strayed from preacher or altar, whose ears drank in every word, whose faces glowed while they listened spell-bound, sometimes smiling, sometimes shedding sweet tears, as the story-teller played on the chords of their little hearts. I think Father Furniss might have gone on for ever without tiring them. The adults, amongst whom I was, seemed no less impressed than the children, and smiled and wept with them. The climax was the Consecration, when the children fell on their knees with the old man, sobbing as he spoke for them, and then at his invitation raising their own little voices so sweetly and so lovingly, I had to cry myself. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene.

"Scarcely less beautiful was the scene afterwards, outside, with the sweet chatter of the little ones returning home happy and jubilant. They belonged to the Blessed Virgin now! She was their Mother, just as she was to Jesus! She would always take care of them! They did not need any other mother now! etc., etc.

"Amongst the children were two of my own cousins, girls in their teens, brought up, alas! in South America, without piety and with scarce any sense of religion. They were amongst the most enthusiastic and demonstrative—utterly transformed by the Children's Mission and that night's scene.

"One only thing pained me, and that deeply. I heard on the following day the remarks of many of the parents of the so-called better class, old-fashioned Catholics. They had not been at their children's consecration to the Blessed Mother, and instead of delighting in the innocent beautiful enthusiasm of their little ones, they checked it, and threw cold water on it. The children, they said, should remember the fourth Commandment; the Father should have taught them to love their own mothers; he had kept them out too late, had over-excited them, his stories were beyond belief and foolish, and so on."



CHAPTER VII.

*State of Catholic Children in England when Father
Furniss entered on his Missions.*

FATHER Furniss did not give full maturity to his method of dealing with children all at once. This took time for development. During the first three years and more of his missionary career the chief part of his time was spent in Ireland, where he took part in upwards of twenty large General Missions, in which he had the exclusive charge of the children. From time to time he returned to England, where he joined in the same way in eight General Missions, and one in the Isle of Man; besides giving three separate Children's Missions.

Until the time came in 1855, when separate missions to children were formally approved of by his superiors, he was cramped in his work by many difficulties, and had not free scope for his energy and zeal. Meanwhile, however, he was, so to say, feeling his way, and continually gaining a wider and more intimate experience of Catholic children both in England and Ireland. He learned to know and appreciate better their condition and surroundings, their most pressing spiritual needs, their peculiar dangers and disadvantages, and at the same time in what ways he might be best able to apply remedy and relief.

From May, 1855, to the end of his apostolic career, Father Furniss's labours were confined exclusively to separate Children's Missions. Of these, during the six years that remained, seventy-three were given in England, and eleven only in Ireland. Since, then, his work lay henceforth almost entirely in England, it will be well to say something of the condition of English Catholic children at this time.

Father Furniss began his work for children but a few years after the great tide of immigration had set in to England of Irish Catholics, forced to leave their native land through the famine and the general distress which followed it. A vast multitude of the faithful, very poor and helpless, was thus thrown on the straitened resources of the Catholic Church in England and Scotland, where the priests were then in scant number, and the chapels—for they had hardly yet attained to the dignity of being called churches—small, few, and far between. The pastors laboured hard to provide for the spiritual necessities of their new charge; but it was quite impossible that the thousands of Catholic families with which the courts and lanes of the populous cities and towns now teemed, should be properly cared for. The sick calls of themselves were enough, together with their other ordinary necessary duties,

to occupy the time and attention of the priests. Hence it is no wonder that numbers of poor Catholics—now so changed in all their surroundings, removed from their rural cabins, their country chapel, their parish-priest, who knew them all so well, to the courts and lanes of the crowded city, unbefriended, destitute, set down in the midst of so many evil influences and examples without adequate spiritual provision—it is no wonder, I say, that they should sink into neglect of religion, of Mass and the sacraments. Meantime had accumulated a vast multitude of children and young people, who had grown up without any of the early associations which belong to a Catholic country, without education, with hardly any religious instruction, who had never been prepared for the sacraments, and perhaps had never once been taken to Mass. Many of these had been employed from quite a tender age in workshops, factories, and employments of various kinds from morning to night; many little girls went very early to service, or minded babies while their mothers were out at work; whilst a large number of poor children were waifs and strays about the streets, seeking to pick up a precarious living by going on errands, and to get here and there a penny as best they could.

What Catholic schools there were in those days were very inadequate, and the attendance of the children who went to them was for the most part very irregular. Parents who had been prevailed on to send them after much insistence of the priest, would after a short time take them away to suit their own convenience, or through sheer poverty be unable to clothe them for going to school, or would keep them at home several days in the week on frivolous pretexts. We must remember that there was in those days no compulsory education, and that the present laws with regard to the age of children going to work were not then in operation. No doubt there were some good Catholic parents amongst the poor who were careful that their children should go to school, attend Mass and Catechism on Sundays, and who managed to clothe them decently; but these children were comparatively few and might be counted by the score, whilst the others were in hundreds and thousands—and it was only these few who came under the influence of the priests and, as a rule, were prepared for their confession and First Communion.

What was to be done to meet all these necessities and difficulties? The ordinary parochial organization was quite unable to cope with them. It was clear that some extraordinary agency must be called in; and this was that of missions. Missions and retreats are always necessary from time to time to stir up the spiritual life and devotion of the faithful. But missions were at that time more than ever necessary as a means of gathering together the

multitudes of Catholics, very many of them quite unknown to the priests and almost entirely lost to the Faith, that were scattered in the wide parochial districts which had been newly formed from the great centres of population. And not only were missions necessary to rally the Catholics together, but also to enkindle once more their faith and religious spirit by sermons and instructions, to give them all together a special opportunity of approaching the sacraments of Penance and the holy Eucharist, which they had for the most part so long neglected, and thus to bring them under the knowledge and influence of their pastors, and within reach of the means of grace afforded to them in the Catholic Church. These general missions were found to be an efficacious remedy in the case of large numbers of adults who, as a rule, had been to the sacraments in their early life, before they left their native land. But what was to be done with the host of children and young people who had grown up without religious instruction, who did not go to Mass, Catechism or Sunday School, and had never been to confession or made their First Communion? The General Missions for adults would not meet their case.

It is, indeed, provided by the Rule of the Redemptorists that there should be in every mission a Father who has special care of the children, who instructs and prepares them for their confession and Communion. But this provision contemplates Catholic children in their normal state, that is to say, those rather who have been already under some religious instruction, and more or less going to the sacraments before the mission, or who, at any rate, were being prepared to receive them. Besides, the Fathers are so much occupied with the adults in ordinary missions, that they have no time for duly preparing large numbers of uninstructed children for the first reception of the sacraments.

Father Furniss was moved with great compassion at the sight of so many children ready to perish unless timely succour were brought them; and he was convinced that there was no other way open to meet the grave necessities of the case, than by setting on foot special and separate Missions for Children of such a nature that all who attended—even the most ignorant and abandoned—might be prepared for the immediate reception of the sacraments. He argued — if they did not make their First Communion at the time of the mission, when were they to do so? When would they ever have a better opportunity? When again would they be so well disposed? When more under the influence of grace? When better instructed as to the nature of the sacraments, the dispositions necessary to receive them, the truths of faith in general, and their Christian duties? All that he would require of them, was due dispositions, and sufficient, though it might be very imperfect, knowledge. And this he saw the way by God's help to secure to them. And

then, even though the immediate effects of the mission might soon pass away, and they might relapse again into neglect of their religious duties, and their former sins, still he considered that their having once received the sacraments well, was a great boon, not only because of the grace they then received and their conversion to God, however evanescent it might prove to be, but also on account of the knowledge which they thus gained, and the impression which all they had gone through would make on their memory in their after life; since this experience would serve to shew them better the way to return to God again, should they at any time have the will to do so, after a life of sin.

Whereas a Catholic who has never made his First Communion is always at a great disadvantage, and handicapped, so to speak, even as regards going to confession, so long as he is a young man living a careless life away from the means of grace, he will hardly have the desire of going to the sacraments, nor the courage to overcome the shame of being obliged to tell the confessor that he has never made his First Communion. If however later on he gets more serious thoughts, and summons up courage to go to confession, he would go at a time when he knows that the priest is sitting to hear confessions—say on a Saturday night—and when he is generally occupied with a crowd of ordinary penitents. Suppose that the man has entered the confessional, the priest would ask him when was his last confession, and did he then receive Holy Communion, and on the man's replying that he had never yet been to Communion, the priest, seeing that the penitent was very ignorant of his religion, needed much instruction before he could be allowed to receive Communion, and that his confession would occupy considerable time, would probably, after saying some kind words of encouragement, bid him come to him again some evening during the week, when he could take the man's case thoroughly in hand. Now the chances are that the poor man would feel quite disappointed at being thus put off, and shrink from the effort of going to the priest again. For many ignorant people cannot understand the priest's motives for putting off at least their confession, and this it is which presses most and immediately on them, so that they have no heart or courage until this is over. Or something might hinder him from going to the priest at the time appointed; or the priest might himself be accidentally called away, and his servant, not knowing the man or his business, might say something which would seem to him a chilling rebuff. Hence the great effort of this poor man will probably prove fruitless, and it is likely that he will not repeat it, but go on all his life without the sacraments; whereas, had the man ever made his Communion, however long ago, the confessor would feel bound to hear his confession at once, even though he

should have to bid the man come to him again before going to Communion. In this case the penitent, relieved of the heavy burden that pressed on him, would be of good heart to return to the priest.

The difficulties in the way of an adult who has never made his First Communion are indeed so great that, with rare exceptions, nothing short of the grace of a mission will induce him to go to confession. But in a mission he sees many like himself, absentees from Mass and sacraments, going to the missionary Fathers. He has listened to the instructions and sermons, which have enlightened him and moved his heart. Fortunate is he if he gets this grace and corresponds with it—but he may never have the opportunity of attending a mission.

Father Furniss knew all this well, and was therefore very anxious that as many as was possible of the children who attended his missions, should then and there receive Holy Communion. But if there were any about whom he was more solicitous than others, it was the most ignorant, the most neglected and abandoned. He was anxious also about the younger children who were at school, for attendance at school was very precarious, especially that of the poorer children; and for many their school-days passed away without their having made their First Communion.

In earlier days when the Catholics were much fewer in number, the priests had been used to instruct the children with great care and method, and did not admit them to Communion until they knew their Catechism thoroughly, and had gone through a special course of preparation. The age for First Communion was then as a rule about fourteen years. One cannot indeed but be struck with admiration at the exact knowledge of all that concerns the sacraments which so many of the old Lancashire Catholics, who were brought up in this system, show, when they come to confession at the time of a mission.

It was no wonder, then, that there should be much questioning and opposition amongst many of the clergy when they saw Father Furniss's new method of preparing, in the short space of a few weeks' mission, hundreds of children and young persons for Communion who were so ignorant of Christian doctrine and had not yet perhaps even made their First Confession, and admitting many to First Communion at a much earlier age than had been customary; for his practice was to secure the first reception of the Holy Eucharist, as a general rule, to all the children ten years old, and frequently even younger, both on account of the risks of their failing to make their First Communion later, and because he judged that it was more profitable for them, and more honourable to Our Divine Lord, that they should do so,

when they were yet comparatively innocent, and their hearts unsoiled by habits of grievous sin.

When, however, it was seen that several leading priests, who were held in great esteem for their prudence and zeal, invited him to give Children's Missions in their parishes, and the success and fruits attending them were manifest, all generally approved of his method, and many who had most opposed it, became his most ardent supporters and advocates.



CHAPTER VIII.

Method of Father Furniss in Conducting a Children's Mission.

FATHER Furniss, in his separate Children's Missions, was, as a rule, accompanied by another Father, that is, when one could be spared; but, as this was often impossible on account of the small number of missionaries, he frequently, and in his last years generally, went alone. The missions, except in small places, lasted always three weeks. He considered less time than that quite insufficient to do the work thoroughly. He made a great point of the mission being well announced by the clergy in the church and throughout the parish, repeatedly for some weeks beforehand, and of special prayers being said for its success, that the children might look forward to it with eagerness, and be all prepared to attend the exercises from the beginning. He also took care that his little books of hymns and devotions during Mass should be circulated in good time amongst the children, and that they should be taught in the schools to sing them, so that all things might be ready for his coming to begin the mission.

His missions were intended not only for children who were going to school, or those under fourteen years of age, but also, and indeed principally, for big boys and girls who were at work, up to the age of seventeen and eighteen, especially those who had been brought up in much ignorance and neglect of religion, and perhaps had never been to confession at all in their lives.

As one Children's Mission was very much like another, and to give an account of one is to give an account of all, I will make my own the narrative

of one of our Fathers who was a companion of Father Furniss in several of his Children's Missions, and describe the various exercises, beginning with the evening service, which was of course the principal exercise of the day. This began generally at half-past seven. It may seem to be a late hour for children; but it must be borne in mind that in large towns the chief part of his evening audience were not school-children, but working-boys and girls from the age of twelve to sixteen. The church doors were not opened till six o'clock. Father Furniss took care to be then already in the church. He would sit on the mission platform watching the children coming in, or be putting them in their places, keeping order, and seeing that they behaved well. This he considered very important, not only that these rough half-civilised children might be taught how to behave in the church, but also in the interest of his Children's Missions; since a great objection had been made against them in some quarters, on the plea that it was impossible to bring so many children together without causing noise, confusion, and bad behaviour. Father Furniss wished to show that this objection had no real foundation in fact; and that it was quite possible to bring the largest number together and, at the same time, to have perfect order. Hence he always took the greatest pains to prevent any sort of disorder and confusion; and in this he succeeded admirably, especially by being himself in the church as soon as the doors were opened, to see that all came in quietly and orderly, and to suppress at once any noise or disturbance that might arise.

He strongly condemned the practice of keeping the doors closed till a short time before the service began. He said that if the children assembled at the church-doors in large numbers, and then made a rush into the church, then such noise and confusion would ensue that it would be impossible to restore order, and they would be in a state of disquiet all through the service. Whereas, if they dribbled in slowly, a few at a time, during an hour or an hour-and-a-half, they would find on entering the church an atmosphere of quiet and order, which it would be easy to maintain throughout the evening. During this time, as he was seated on the platform, he would sometimes speak quietly to the children, asking them questions about themselves, especially when they were poor, little, and wretched-looking; for such children were the special object of his care and love. At other times he would give some short simple instructions, in a half voice, to those near the platform. Thus in one way or other he kept himself and the children busy during the hour or hour-and-a-half they were coming in. He felt, of course, this waiting a wearisome and painful duty, but in the long run it fully repaid him, and bore abundant fruits.

When a sufficient number of children were assembled, that is, when the church began to fill, he would start the singing of a hymn. This had a two-fold effect—first, it kept the children occupied, and let off the steam, which otherwise would have evaporated in noise and talking; and, secondly, it taught the children to sing properly, which in view of the Children's Mass and other mission services he thought of the greatest importance.

I may here say a few words about his way of teaching these poor rude uncultured children to sing. Near the platform he would generally have two or three benches of boys, and the same number of girls on the opposite side—of course the sexes were always separated at all the mission services,—who had practised the mission hymns for some time before at school. These led the rest. All who could read had their little hymn-books, and soon caught the tunes, so that after a few days they sang the hymns fairly well. He would not allow difficult and fantastic airs. He had his own, which he generally wished the children to sing. They were pious and easy tunes, which he had picked up here and there in his missions. Most of them are to be found in his *Sunday School* book. He adopted various plans for the singing in his missions, according to circumstances. If he found that both boys and girls sang well, he would have them sing alternately. If the boys could not sing well enough to sing alone, he would make the boys and girls sing together. Sometimes the boys sang so badly that he had to suppress them entirely, at least during the earlier part of the mission, and the girls sang alone; but this was a rare case, and he did not like it.

He was very much opposed to the singing being confined to the school-children alone, but would encourage all to join in, and, as the tunes were easy, this was not difficult; so that, as the mission went on, the singing became more general; in fact, one might say that all the children sang; and he took great pains to make them sing well. Though no musician himself, he had a sufficiently correct ear to know when the singing went wrong. He would not allow the children to sing out of tune, too quickly, or not in proper time; all this he regulated himself, and succeeded admirably. His aim being to make the children sing devoutly and quietly, he was severe with boys with loud rough voices who shouted and bellowed; though he was equally severe on big girls with fine voices who sought particularly to distinguish themselves. He wished the singing to be congregational and not individual.

This practising of hymns, with intervals, would last more or less half-an-hour, at the end of which time pretty well all the children he expected would be in the church. He was very averse to begin the service before all were assembled, as a number of children coming in late, and not knowing where to find a place, will often cause noise, and be a distraction to others.

The Beginning of the Service.—As soon as the children were all assembled, and fairly tired by the singing, and, having thus let off the steam, were brought to a state of quiet and calm, he would bid them all kneel down; then together with the children he made slowly and solemnly the *Sign of the Cross*. The children generally sang the words; otherwise they said them all together in the same tone with a loud voice. This would be followed by singing or saying in the same way the *Good Intention*. Then would follow one *Decade of the Rosary*. He varied his way of saying this decade. Sometimes he would make the children sing it in a monotone, slowly and solemnly, the girls singing the first half, the boys the second. Sometimes they would all sing it together. At other times they would all say it together, or boys and girls alternately, but always very slowly and reverently, and with pauses, a few words only at once. He generally gave out a special intention for every Hail Mary. These intentions bore on what was practical for the mission, and varied each evening. When the Rosary was finished, he made them all sit down.

Next would follow:—

The Notices.—He considered these of the greatest importance. He took great pains over them, and showed great art in their selection, and in his way of giving them out. He had a great number of them—repeating most of them night after night all through the mission. This might appear useless to some, but he would answer the objection by saying that every night brought new comers, and further, that many children were so dull, or so inattentive, that it was only by ceaseless repetition he made himself understood.

His mission notices, moreover, might be divided into general and special: *general*, which regarded the mission generally, as, *v.g.*, the hours of service, that children should be in good time, that they should go straight home and quietly on leaving the church, together with two other notices: first, the promise of a medal to those children who should bring a child to the mission, that was not attending; and secondly, that if they knew of any Catholic child that had not been baptised, they should come and tell the missionary, and that if any Catholic child then in the church had not been baptised it should be brought to the missionary. These he would repeat every night all through the mission. Besides these there were *special* notices, regarding Confession and Communion, or any special service which was about to take place, or something he wanted them particularly to do. He showed great art in his manner of giving out these notices. He threw them into a very few, terse, forcible words, with no long-winded explanations. I may almost say, he acted them; certainly he forced the children to give him their attention. Though he repeated the same notices every night, he managed to vary them

very much by his way of giving them out. Nothing, he said, so much disgusts children as monotony. They cannot reason, you must make them understand through their feelings and their imagination; you can make them attentive in that way. Here are some of the ways in which he would give out his notices, and they may serve as samples for the rest.

Thus, the night before the sermon on hell, that he might get a great number to the service, he would say: "Ah, my dear children, we are going to make a long journey to-morrow. We are all going out of the church. We are going to see something very wonderful. Be in good time, or you will be too late, and you won't be able to go, you will be left behind,"—meaning that in spirit they were all to go down to hell.

If he wanted to draw them to the Mass, he would say: "Oh, dear children, come to-morrow morning to the Mass. Oh, such a wonderful thing will take place! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is going to die for you. Oh, come and see, see your Saviour die," etc., etc.

He would sometimes bring in a little story to make the notice more vivid. Thus, when urging them to come to the mission, he might speak of a boy who was sent by his parents to the mission but went off with bad companions who taught him to steal, and how he was taken up and put in prison—entering into details, and making his tale very life-like by speaking of particular customs and localities of the place where he was giving the mission. Or on the same subject of staying away from the mission, he might tell a story of a good little girl who attended a school taught by Nuns, but let herself be caught by devil's traps, and spoke to some bad boys, who took her away to some dark place and ruined her.

In this way his notices became very interesting, and he thus secured the children's attention, and made them observe the various regulations of the mission.

When the notices were over, he would begin the *Rule of Life*. This he would explain in the same dramatic manner, dwelling now on one point, then on another; illustrating them by stories at times; always putting the religious practice he was recommending in a very vivid and striking way before the children. Perhaps generally after the notices, he would begin by making them first sing the Rule of Life, and then explain it as described, dwelling especially on one point, or at most two points, every night.

Before beginning the evening discourse, if he saw the children were at all restless, he would make them sing a hymn, but if the church was full, and the children were quite quiet, after the Rule of Life he would at once begin.

The Evening Discourse. Its length.—He made it a rule that it should not occupy more than twenty minutes, and that the whole evening service, that is

to say, from the Rosary to the Benediction inclusive, should hardly exceed one hour. He would say that the children's attention could not be kept longer; but that they could well bear so much, if the service was varied, and made interesting to them.

The Subject of the Evening Discourse.—Father Furniss in his Children's Missions followed faithfully all the subjects of the adult missions—viz., the eternal truths, salvation, the value of the soul, mortal sin, penance, death, judgment, particular and general, heaven and hell; the various duties of children, the commandments of God and the Church, the occasions of sin, the sin of impurity, prayer, the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Virgin, frequentation of the Sacraments, the devout life, etc. His way of treating these subjects was to throw them into a story or parable. Three or four well-told stories formed the whole of his discourse. There was no moralising, no long-winded reflections, very little application of the moral to the children. The story spoke for itself, like Our Lord's parables. It was put so vividly, so plainly, before the children that they could not fail to understand it and take in the moral.

His Manner of Preaching.—Father Furniss was a weak man and his health very delicate. He had not a strong voice, but it was loud and piercing. He spoke slowly, but not painfully so, even for the adults who listened to him. His articulation was extremely clear and distinct, no word was lost. He made it a point to give emphasis to the last words of every sentence, so as to make them heard in the most distant part of the church. And, noticing that many drop their voices and become inaudible at the end of their sentences, he often advised others to adopt the method which he himself practised. He riveted the attention of the children. They certainly followed him. This was evident by their perfect silence when he was preaching. Indeed, he could not preach unless there was complete silence throughout, even in the largest churches. If, as sometimes happened, he failed to command the attention of the children, he would stop and, by some artificial means or some extraordinary action, he would regain it, and restore silence. It was seldom, however, that having once gained their attention he ever lost it. He made no break in his discourse, knowing that, if he once lost the children's attention, he could with difficulty regain it.

How, we may ask, did Father Furniss succeed in commanding, nay, riveting the attention universally of the vast crowds of children to whom he preached? For we must remember that in his Children's Missions he did not address a select number such as are seen half-filling the church at Catechism, but a multitude, always many hundreds, sometimes more than two thousand, packing the church from end to end. Certainly he did not command their

attention by striving to stun them, as some seem to do, with vehement and rapid loud speaking, and to master them by main force. This may keep them quiet or send them to sleep, but can never rivet their attention. Nor did he keep their attention alive by telling a number of ridiculous stories, to amuse and make them laugh; this is the practice of some, but it can scarcely do them any real good; whilst for several reasons it is often reprehensible. These stories are generally addressed to one class alone—the more intelligent of the school-girls and boys, and they are lost on the greater number. Father Furniss aimed at making himself understood by all the girls and boys—the dullest, the most uncivilised, and the most depraved. Still he would not have the very little children, that is, those under eight or nine years old, attend the night service. It is true that Father Furniss sometimes made the children laugh, but he did so rarely and only by the way. Upon the whole his discourses were of a very serious nature. The children were deeply impressed by them, and in a wonderful way struck with the fear of God and contrition for their sins, and were made to understand the value of their souls, the importance of salvation, of frequenting Mass and the sacraments, and fulfilling their Christian duties. Some became very earnest, practised prayer and meditation, were seen making the Way of the Cross by themselves, and were zealous to bring back their parents and companions to a good life, for Father Furniss taught them all such pious acts. The effects might be transitory, no doubt, with many, as is mostly the case with children, but for the time the impression was deep.

As I have said, his whole evening discourse consisted of three or four simple stories, very simple indeed, easily understood and quite in touch with their daily life, with things with which the children were familiar,—as a rule, nothing wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous—though indeed he did on occasions but at other times, relate to them miraculous and supernatural occurrences;—nothing complicated or involved, which would require more intelligence than they possessed. He had a marvellous power of entering into the details of a story, and because these often concerned matters with which they were quite familiar, the story came before the children true to life; and the picture that he drew was not beyond the imaginative powers of a child. Father Furniss was a great actor; he acted all his discourses; they were full of action. He moved much about the platform, and made use of very expressive gesture, whilst he always bore himself grave and dignified. He was as far removed from monotony as possible. His discourses were all well studied and almost committed to memory. He was a perfect orator. His voice was in thorough harmony with his subject, giving full expression to all the passions of his soul. His words were all chosen with the greatest care, his style very

terse and simple, with not a word too much, and the word chosen was just the one to produce the deepest impression. Sometimes, indeed, one single word spoken with great passion or emphasis was enough to stir the souls of the children to their inmost depths.

He finished his discourse by an act of contrition. The children knelt down. He addressed the crucifix. The act was short, but so sorrowful, tender, loving, and pathetic, as to bring tears to the eyes of the children and make them sob aloud.

Then followed *Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament*, given generally with the ciborium. The *O Salutaris* and *Tantum ergo* were sung, and nothing more. Before the priest ascended the steps to give Benediction, Father Furniss would turn to the altar, and make for the children very short and simple acts of faith in the Blessed Sacrament, adoration, thanksgiving and love, the whole lasting for a minute or two. The recitation of the Divine Praises followed.

Before the children began to move from their places to go out, he gave one or other notice about those whom he wished to remain, or any other matter of importance. He finally cautioned them about good behaviour on their way home. As the bad behaviour of such large numbers of children on their way home late at night was made one of the complaints against his missions, he was very careful to secure as far as possible perfect order in leaving the church, and making all go home quietly. He generally sent the boys out of the church first, giving them a sign all to rise to their feet and make a genuflection together. Then he dismissed them bench by bench. This brought the evening service to an end.

The Mass and Morning Instruction.—This would generally take place at 9 or 9.30. It was attended principally by school-children; and at it Father Furniss liked all to be present, even the very little ones. The working-boys and girls who attended the evening service in crowds were unable to come in the morning, except a few perhaps that were out of work. Father Furniss was on the platform during the Children's Mass, and explained its various parts to them in a few simple words of instruction, calling their attention to what the celebrant was successively doing. Thus he would say: "Now the priest is offering the bread. See, now he takes the chalice with wine in it. Now he washes his fingers. Now he asks you all to pray for and with him. Now he is praying for the living,"—adding a word to explain each act. After the consecration he would say: "Now, dear children, there is no longer bread and wine on the altar, but Jesus Christ is there; the bread and wine have been changed into His Body and Blood; tell Him that you believe He is really present, and adore Him." Then he would make the children say with him

very short simple acts of faith and adoration. "Now he is praying for the dead," etc., etc.

In the earlier part of the mission there would be more of this explanation of the Mass accompanied by short prayers than later on, as by this method the children would learn better the doctrine and order of the Holy Sacrifice, and thus be able to sing more intelligently the hymns of Mass as the mission went on. All these hymns bore directly on the Sacrifice, being in chief part a very simple rhythmical paraphrase of the principal prayers of the Liturgy.*

A short *Instruction* followed the Mass. This morning instruction never exceeded a quarter of an hour; it was generally on the sacraments, commandments, one or other point of the Rule of Life, or something else that was practical. Sometimes he would say a few words on one of the eternal truths, as there were some of the children then present who could not attend the evening service. This morning instruction was given in Father Furniss's usual style, and generally thrown in the form of a story, but delivered in a more quiet and instructive tone than that of the evening discourse. It was always made interesting to the children.

A favourite instruction of Father Furniss, which he gave sometimes in the morning and sometimes at night, was one on the Infancy and Childhood of Our Blessed Lord. He placed on the platform a picture of the Divine Child with Mary and Joseph, and proposed Him to the children as their model in all those virtues which belonged especially to their age and state, and their duties to their parents.

He made use sometimes in his discourses and instructions of other pictures, which he took with him on his missions. Thus there was one which portrayed the good child, beautiful and happy in the grace of God, and another representing the bad child still in the bonds of sin and under the tyranny of Satan; and again one which showed the happy death of the good child and the evil death of the bad child.

As has been already said, one of Father Furniss's daily notices was that, if the children knew of any Catholic child that was not baptised, they should bring it to him, with the promise of a medal in each case. The result of this was that the baptism of children of careless Catholic parents became a marked feature of the Children's Missions. These children were not babies,

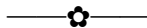
* The hymns may be found in *The Sunday School*. They were written by a Redemptorist Father, who was much hampered in their composition by Father Furniss's insistence on a simplicity which sometimes partook of baldness. "I tagged rhymes to his words," says the Father, "and it was not easy, for he would not let me make inversions, or take unusual words."

but some of them several years old, and for the most part old enough to go to school. The number of these varied much in different parishes. In some they were but few; in many they were counted by scores, and in one place they amounted to 120. This tells a sad tale of the state of Catholics in England at that time, especially in the thickly populated cities and towns. Some few might have been conditional baptisms of Protestant children, or even of adults, but such cases would be very rare. Having more than enough to do with his Catholic little ones, he had no anxiety to make converts. No doubt, if Protestant children occasionally presented themselves, he might receive them, but not without the consent of their parents, and good security that they should be brought up as Catholics.

The following extract from a letter written by a Nun in Australia illustrates this last point, and will be read with interest.

"April 24, 1895.—It is so many years since I first heard the saintly Father Furniss, that I am afraid I shall not be able to give much information as to my impressions of him. I certainly owe him an unbounded debt of gratitude; for under God I am indebted to him for the great gift of the true Faith.

"I remember very distinctly, when I was, I suppose, about eleven years old, passing a church into which hundreds of children were pouring. What roused my curiosity was the strangeness of such numbers going to church on a week-day. I followed the crowd, and for the first time found myself in a Catholic church. It was packed with children, all listening with rapt attention to the preacher. I listened too with the greatest attention; everything was so new to me. Towards the close of the sermon Father Furniss turned to the altar, and spoke to Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. I shall never forget the effect this had on me. His earnestness and faith were so great that I almost felt he saw Our Lord present. I managed to attend several times during the mission. Finally I ventured alone into the sacristy and asked to be baptised. After a few instructions I was received into the Church. He seemed to me, as well as I can remember, to have a most extraordinary influence over, and sympathy with, children. He understood child-life perfectly. I am sorry I cannot write more. I am so pleased that the life of the saintly missionary is being written. It seems such a pity to let holy lives die out of people's memory. You can make any use you think well of what I have said, omitting names."



CHAPTER IX.

*Method of Father Furniss in conducting a
Children's Mission—continued.*

THE *Confession of the Children*.—Father Furniss was a wonderful confessor of children. His way was to take their confessions into his own hands, that is to say, he did not wait for them to make their accusation, but interrogated them himself about the sins they had probably committed. He was quick in hearing their confessions; for, from his great experience, he knew well how to examine them, and what sins they were most liable to fall into. Hence he never lost time in asking them useless or superfluous questions. He had, of course, a plan of his own for examining their consciences, and when he had gone through his list of sins, he felt convinced that it would be only a loss of time to put further questions. His public instructions had already prepared the children for their confessions; for in these he went fully into all the points of examination of conscience, the distinction between grievous and venial sins, what must necessarily be confessed or not, how the latter might be otherwise pardoned, how they should deal with doubtful or forgotten sins; how, after a good confession, they should allay scruples and quiet their conscience before going to Holy Communion. In these instructions too they were taught how to make acts of contrition, and the motives were explained to them. Frequently during the mission they repeated these acts, so that it was not difficult to secure their contrition when they made their confession.

He tried to render confession for the children very simple, easy, and informal, so as to drive from them all hurtful fear. He did not like hearing children in the confessional; he said it made them afraid. Hence he generally heard them kneeling before him in the open church. Certainly he was used thus to hear all the little children and the boys. The bigger girls he might take to the confessional. In examining them he would adopt their own familiar way of talking, their childish idioms, their slang terms. Thus he became a child with the children. He easily believed in the contrition of children. He thought, indeed, that it might be transient, but still real for the time being. He liked the very little children to come once to confession during the mission—those of seven years old or even younger. He said it made a good impression on them. As to absolving them, he had no difficulty in applying freely the doctrine of St. Alphonsus on giving conditional absolution to very young children.

He would have, as a general rule, all the children who were not for First Communion go to receive the next morning after their confession, if they had been absolved, and come to confession again one of the last days before the General Communion, on the closing Sunday of the mission. But for most of the working-boys and girls it was not possible to assist at Mass and receive on a week-day.

His plan was to begin the confessions on the first Tuesday evening after the sermon on the sacrament of Penance, with hearing working-boys and girls who had made their First Communion, and to continue each evening to hear these until their number was fairly exhausted. His practice was to absolve them at once if he considered them duly disposed, and bid them go again to confession before the General Communion. On the Wednesday morning, after the Mass and Instruction, he began to hear the school-children and those who were not at work—first the girls who had made their First Communion, then the boys—then, as time allowed, the others, and so each following forenoon. Father Furniss heard no confessions during the afternoon nor before the evening service. He required a complete rest, and to husband his strength for the work at night.

So much with regard to the school-children and the working-boys and girls who had already made their First Communion.

And now with regard to the working-children and young people who had never been to the sacraments—and these formed by far the majority, in most missions, of his evening audience. From the very beginning of the mission he would keep a certain number of these—one evening girls, another boys—after the service, to be prepared for their first confession, and later on for Communion. For this purpose, he distributed them into small classes, groups of about twelve, in benches apart, all over the church. Each group he assigned to some person whom he had selected as competent to teach the children such elementary Christian truths as are necessary for receiving the sacraments. These the instructor taught orally, standing in front of the children as they sat in their benches. But, before they began to teach, Father Furniss would show them exactly how they were to do it, and what they were to teach. He considered that with the class of children he had to deal with—quite uneducated, many of whom had never been to school at all, and were unable to read or write—it would be worse than useless to attempt to teach them more than the bare essentials, viz., what was absolutely necessary for the reception of the sacraments, and a few prayers. Hence he never attempted to teach them the Catechism; to do so, he said, would be simply loss of time. He held that, if they attended the mission, they would gain a

great deal of general and practical knowledge of religion, and, what was far more important, a *moral* and religious preparation for the sacraments.

These classes were continued night after night all through the mission, and lasted for about an hour. He himself superintended them, and visited them from time to time to see that the teachers carried out his method of instruction. He frequently found that they deviated from his way, and struck out a path of their own. They had lost sight of what was essential and fundamental—the simple truths which the children could understand—and gone into unnecessary and extraneous matter; the result of which was that the poor scholars had become perplexed, and learned nothing. He was therefore severe in making the teachers keep strictly to the rules he had laid down, and when he found that they would not observe them, he dismissed them.

When these children and young people were considered sufficiently instructed, Father Furniss examined each separately or entrusted some competent person with the duty. If he was satisfied, he gave the boy or girl a little ticket, by which the confessor would understand that he or she was sufficiently instructed and consequently did not need to be further examined in elementary Christian doctrine. To give more time for these instructions, he would not begin their confessions until those of the working-children who had already made their First Communion were all heard.

Father Furniss and his fellow-missioner—when he had one—would hear the confessions of all the children themselves, if they were able to do so. However, this was often impossible in large towns, and then he would ask some of the local clergy, and also, sometimes, other priests who entered *con amore* into his system, to help him.

About the Wednesday of the third week of the mission, all the children would have been once to confession; and it was now time to begin to hear for the second time all those who were going to Communion on the last Sunday. This was no easy matter in many missions, where perhaps a thousand, or sometimes near two thousand, would be preparing to join in the General Communion. He would, therefore, generally begin to hear them a second time on Thursday. With the aid of additional confessors whom he then called in, Thursday, Friday and Saturday were sufficient for the second confessions of all. He thus, no doubt, got through a great number in a short time; yet there are many evidences that he fully satisfied the consciences of the children. By means and ways of his own he met the requirements of the case. Thus, in order to prevent scruples and the frequent returns of the children to confession, he was wont to give them repeatedly certain practical rules about sins forgotten in confession or faults committed since confession.

And this he did so clearly that they all understood him, and thus he had little trouble with them on that score.

I may here add my own testimony in proof that the children fully satisfied their consciences by the confessions which they made at Father Furniss's missions.

Many of the missions, as well to children as to adults, in which I took part during the three years that immediately followed the close of Father Furniss's career in 1862, traversed the same ground as his own Children's Missions had occupied; and hence large numbers of children and young people who had made their confessions at them, came to confession to me, and I found invariably that all these looked back to their confessions made in Father Furniss's missions with entire satisfaction and security, so that there was nothing whatever to supply or repair. I was very much struck by the continual recurrence of this fact; whilst in missions later on, both in Ireland and England, I met over and over again with persons, then grown up and married, who assured me that they dated their conversion and first start in a good Christian life to one of Father Furniss's missions, to the impressions which he made on them, and to the good confessions which they had then made.

The children eagerly sought to go to confession to Father Furniss. Hence we must conclude that he was very kind, gentle, and patient with them. The only case I have heard of a child being afraid of him and unwilling to confess to him was the following, which occurred, I believe, in a Children's Mission at St. Augustine's, Manchester, as it was there I heard the story circumstantially related by the priests.

Father Furniss wore artificial teeth. A little girl came to him and was about to make her confession to him, when perhaps for some momentary convenience he proceeded to take out his teeth, first the plate from his upper jaw, then that from his lower jaw. Meanwhile the little penitent gazed on at the operation with astonishment and awe; and then, seemingly struck with horror, thinking perhaps that the next thing he would do, would be to take out his eyes, or take off his head altogether—with a scream she fled from the sight, and ran out of the church to her parents' home. For some time she could not be prevailed on to return to the church, and the thought of attempting confession again quite appalled her. However, the story says that she was in the end brought to a better mind, and consented to go once more to Father Furniss, who, by his gentle treatment, succeeded in regaining her confidence. Her conscience was satisfied, and she was completely consoled by her good confession.

Special Ceremonies of the Mission.—Father Furniss had at the Children's Mission all the special ceremonies customary in Redemptorist missions to the people.

On the night of the Blessed Sacrament, after preaching a very beautiful sermon on the love of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, on neglect of Mass, and sacrilegious Communion, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed with the ciborium, and, between the *O Salutaris* and the *Tantum ergo*, he made a very touching act of reparation for his own and the children's faults against the Blessed Sacrament.

On Our Lady's night, after a very beautiful discourse, describing in a very tender manner her greatness, loveliness, power, and mercy, he consecrated all the children most solemnly to the Blessed Virgin, charging them at the same time ever to practise a constant devotion to her as their own loving Mother.

Father Furniss preached the *Way of the Cross* to the children with pathos and simplicity. This ceremony went straight to their hearts. It was easy to see that they really understood it, and a beautiful sight to see those poor wretched uncultured children sobbing aloud and shedding tears of contrition over their sins.

The General Communion.—This on the last Sunday of the mission was a most soul-stirring sight. Often in large towns as many as a thousand or twelve hundred children, and even more, would be prepared to go to Communion. Father Furniss had given them from the platform full and detailed instructions as to how they should go to the altar with all reverence—their hands folded before their breasts, their eyes modestly cast down,—and how they should receive, with minute directions with regard to the Communion cloth, how they should hold their heads, open their mouths, put out their tongues, how to act if they had a difficulty in swallowing the Blessed Sacrament, how they should leave the altar rails and return to their places after they had received. For nothing was little or unimportant in his eyes that bore upon reverence and devotion at the children's Communion. He had everything arranged on the morning in perfect order, and planned beforehand in what way the vast throng of little ones should go to the altar, assigning to the teachers, and others whom he had invited for the purpose, their several posts in leading the children up to the rails. Still he superintended the whole himself, and was most active in seeing that his directions were properly carried out. During the Mass, standing on the platform, he recited aloud with the children the acts preparatory to Communion. While they were communicating—often during the space of half-an-hour,—he would alternately let them sing Communion hymns, or

make with them various acts of faith, adoration, love, petition, etc. As soon as Communion was over, he began the acts of thanksgiving, etc., making them aloud together with the children. Nothing could exceed the touching beauty of this sight of the children's General Communion, in which their real piety and devotion were most manifest, giving unmistakable proof by their attention and earnestness how fully they realised the great act they were doing, and the Divine Mystery in which they were taking part.

But perhaps the most affecting service of the mission was its *close*. This generally took place on the Monday evening following the General Communion, as the church on Sunday was too much occupied by the general congregation. The old Father went in for a great children's cry. He loved it. There was perhaps in this a bit of vanity on his part. He loved the children very dearly, and he liked to feel that they loved him in return, and that their little hearts were breaking at the thought of losing him. He justified all this to himself by saying that it made a great impression on them, and would help to keep the mission in their memory. He prepared them for this from the very beginning of his discourse, which had a tone of sorrow and something specially plaintive about it. He gave the children his last parting advice, as though he were an aged parent on his death-bed taking leave of his beloved offspring, and assuring them over and over again of his love, reminding them of what he had done for them during the mission, and that they would never meet him again on earth. He went through the various blessings calmly and sorrowfully, interspersing them with grave warnings. The climax was reached when he pronounced the word Farewell. He would repeat it with variations over and over again: "Farewell, dear children, farewell, dear boys, farewell, dear girls. We have come to know and love one another during the holy mission. We shall never meet again on earth. Farewell," etc. The effect of this on the children was most wonderful. Beginning quietly and slowly, it gradually grew, until there was not a dry eye in the whole church, not a child that did not give way to his sorrow by sobs, tears and groans. The adults who were present caught the infection, and could not restrain themselves. The old man himself seemed overcome by grief as real as that which harrowed the children's souls. He could scarcely go on, yet he did go on. It was what he wanted. It was the human reward of his labours, and it made him feel that his work had not been in vain, that the mission had been understood by those poor uncultured children, that it had wrought a profound religious impression upon them. Instead, therefore, of trying to calm their grief, he went on for some time opening new fountains of sorrow, and every word he spoke added fresh motives for regret that the mission had come to an end,

and bound the hearts of the children more and more closely to the apostle of Christ.

After the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a last and peculiarly striking ceremony took place. This was the taking down of the large crucifix which had stood on the platform during the mission. Father Furniss had this done solemnly and in a very dramatic manner. The blows of the hammer resounded through the church. The children saw the crucifix fall; and then a solemn procession was formed to take it out of the church, passing down the centre and round the sides. From time to time he would add fresh fuel to the flames by his sad pathetic lamentations. This renewed the sorrows and sobs which had somewhat subsided during the Benediction service.



CHAPTER X.

Successful Results of the Children's Missions.

ERE long Father Furniss was called to give Children's Missions in most of the chief towns in the North of England, in Ireland and in several of the London churches, as well as in other places. There was but one opinion as to their success amongst the priests and people in whose parishes he gave them, and who had assisted at them. All were loud in their praise (except perhaps a few grumblers, who were hopelessly wedded to their old prejudices), and it was impossible to satisfy all the applicants for them. Many priests of Religious Orders who had care of parishes, invited Father Furniss to their churches—Benedictines, Dominicans, Passionists, Marists, Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the priests of the Order of Charity. Indeed, for the class of children he had to deal with, his system of missions was scarcely capable of improvement, but seemed to be a perfect work.

This success did not consist merely in the immense crowds of children that were at once attracted to his missions, and in these being spellbound as they listened to his eloquence, or in the vast numbers of children that were brought to the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, who had never before received them. But there were other and deeper effects.

A Father whose testimony I have already cited, who helped Father Furniss in several of his missions in the North of England and in London, thus writes:

"I often heard him say, and I observed it myself, that the change which took place in the children during the course of a mission was something quite incomprehensible. Vast crowds who, when the mission opened, were rude and unmanageable, uncivilised in all their habits and tone, seemingly incapable of any moral or religious feelings—as the mission went on, were visibly transformed into other beings, and became quiet, docile, obedient, entering heart and soul into the spirit of the mission, and grew really pious. Many of them, in fact, showed great delicacy of conscience, humility, and fear of unworthiness when the time for Communion was at hand."

Besides attending all the exercises of the mission, a number of them might be frequently seen coming of themselves to the church to pray, to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or go round the Stations of the Cross, when school or work was over.

Another proof of the effect which the mission had upon the children was the great zeal they had for the conversion of others. Not unfrequently a child would come to the missionary to tell him of an elder brother or sister living a careless life, who had never, or not for some years, received the sacraments, and how the child hoped to bring him or her to the mission; or sometimes it was to speak of a negligent father or mother.

In one of his Liverpool missions Father Furniss had bidden the children tell their fathers and mothers to be sure and go to their Easter duties. Accordingly two little boys, whose father was in America, wrote to him there, saying what the missionary had enjoined. In due time an answer came back from America, in which the good man told his children to tell the missionary that he had since been to his Easter duty; and so one day down they came from Liverpool to Bishop-Eton to deliver their message. Father Furniss, says the then Brother Porter, who tells the story, being sick at the time, had the little fellows brought up to his room, to speak to them and give them medals; and had them afterwards refreshed with bread-and-butter and milk.

The following incident, too, is an example of this childrens' zeal. It occurred in a large Children's Mission, conducted on the lines of Father Furniss some years after he had gone to his reward:

I was in the confessional one evening, hearing the children, when a little girl, about nine or ten years old, entered. She said at once: "Father, I have already made my own confession, and have been to Communion, so it is not about that I am now come, but about my father. I know you do not hear

grown-up people's confessions during our mission, but I have been speaking to my father, who does not go to his duty, and he promised me he would go. This evening, when he came home from work, I asked him again, and he said again that he would go; and I have brought him up, he is now in the church. Oh, Father, if you would please to let me tell him he may come in. He is used to drink, but he has not done so since our mission began, and I am sure he means to be good now. Oh, Father, will you please to hear his confession?" How could I withstand the child's entreaty? I bade her tell him to come in at once. The good rough miner made his peace with God, and told me with tears how he owed his conversion to his little maid.

But to return to Father Furniss and his missions. How are we to account for their wonderful success? In other words what were his chief characteristic traits, qualities, and gifts, which God was pleased to bless and make use of in order to produce such marvellous effects of His grace?

In the first place Father Furniss's personal appearance was most striking, and made a profound impression. He was very thin, looked so worn and emaciated that people would ask whether he did not live only on bread and water. He was very bald, having only a fringe of gray hair round his head. His face was perfectly colourless, giving him in Provost Croskell's words a "cadaverous appearance." He was bent; his habit and other clothes were old and shabby, somewhat dirty, and put on badly. All this gave him an air of holiness, and made the children and the people generally look upon him as a Saint. Though his age was not more than fifty-three years when he finished his course of Children's Missions, he had the look of quite an old man, was always called "the Old Missioner," and spoke of himself as such. In one mission the report got out amongst the children that he was 107 years old; he was quite delighted at this. His countenance and his whole mien were austere, but by no means repulsive. There was a something of gentle sweetness that beamed from his eye, and also a twinkle of pleasant humour. Indeed, he was habitually kind and gentle in his manner, especially to the little ones. Naturally speaking, he did not much care for big boys and girls who were no longer child-like and had probably become corrupt and vicious. It was easy to see that he really loved the children. They saw and felt this, and were at once attracted to him and loved him. There was nothing, however, in the smallest degree of softness in his dealing with them. There was an ideal charm about his personality, and he fascinated the children by his whole manner of acting with them, as far as beings of a rude and uncultured nature were capable of being fascinated by spiritual and moral qualities.

Thus, whilst they loved him, they were always impressed with reverence, and over-awed by his presence, considering him as a being of quite a supernatural order.

But, besides his striking personality, there was his style of instructing and preaching, so utterly new and different from the ordinary manner, and which came home to the children and captivated their minds and hearts by its simplicity of language, its grave earnestness, its picturesqueness, and its dramatic action. I have already dwelt on this, and we shall see it attested in letters of many priests who were eye-witnesses of his missions, which I shall produce later on.

The ordinary method of imparting instruction by catechism—line upon line, precept upon precept—which is no doubt the proper normal way of teaching children, was inapplicable to the great mass of those whom Father Furniss addressed in his missions. For the school-children were always a small minority; whilst the working-children (who formed the great majority) had most of them grown up quite illiterate, and in great ignorance of even the simplest rudiments of Christian doctrine; and having now passed the age of going to school, could never be brought to attend Sunday School or Catechism, unless they had been first religiously influenced and encouraged by being allowed to make a good start through admission to the sacraments. Besides, at their age, and in the dangerous circumstances in which they were, frequentation of the sacraments was absolutely necessary for them, and afforded the only hope of their perseverance in a better life, and of their salvation.

Father Furniss set before these ignorant children (especially at night, when the great crowd attended), as in one moving panorama, the whole cycle of Christian doctrine:—their Last End, the Value of the Soul, Sin and its consequences, Redemption, the Sacraments, the Dangers to Salvation, Prayer, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, Heaven and the means of attaining it. There were, of course, the great fundamental essential truths, and certain necessary prayers, which they had to know by heart in their defined terms. These he made them repeat aloud every night, and we have seen how by his classes he ensured the individual knowledge of them. But the general view or synthesis which he presented to them, shed a salutary influence, moral interest and light upon these particular truths, which may in a sense be called technical, disposing and enabling these rough children, in the circumstances in which they were, to learn them more easily and intelligently. This method, so novel, was a great element of his success. For in this way Father Furniss revealed to the children, so to say, another world, about which they had hardly thought before. He brought them into this

spiritual world; the land of Faith, which through his graphic instructions and discourses he made a reality to them, and peopled for them with Jesus Christ the Redeemer, His Blessed Mother, the Angels and Saints, and, on the other hand, with the devil and his wicked spirits. The examples that he related to them from the Lives of the Saints, the supernatural and miraculous stories and legends which appeared to some to be grotesque, absurd, and in bad taste, his allegories and imagery, the holy relics that he showed them, the scapulars, rosaries, and medals which he blessed for them—all these served to awaken the children's religious consciousness, to call into exercise their sympathies of faith, and to change them, by a moral influence over their minds and hearts, from being mere little materialists and creatures of feeling and sense, to become spiritual and pious, all alive to the invisible things of God and the eternal world.

At missions in which I took part during the years immediately succeeding the close of Father Furniss's active labours, I not rarely met with instances of young women employed in factories and other works, who regularly every day made their meditation. Many of these were under temporary vows of chastity, and aiming at a life of perfection. My impression is that most of these had come under the influence of Father Furniss in his Children's Missions.

I remember two sisters who were so deeply impressed by hearing the Way of the Cross preached, that they had continually in their minds the desire of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, that they might there visit the Holy Places sanctified by our Saviour's Passion. Such thoughts and desires may appear to many now-a-days but chimerical and idle fancies; but they spring from a lively faith and devotion, and are not out of harmony with the aspirations of Saints.

Father Furniss was eminently a man of faith, and had wonderful faith in the power of prayer. He made the children share in this faith, and above all things taught them to pray. The intentions he proposed to them during a mission, and for which he asked them to say a Hail Mary, were repeated over and over again, and were almost without number. He never expressed a wish for anything that regarded the success of the mission, and the general or individual good of the children, but there was a Hail Mary; and so also for the interests of the Church at large. He made prayer something very real and important by the way he made the children recite the prayers all together, solemnly and with gravely measured pauses, yet not tediously, but in good tone, and with animation; or sing them with musical cadence. It was thus with the Sign of the Cross, the Good Intention, the Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, etc. In the mission

they learnt to have a practical devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to love, honour and confide in her as their own mother, and frequently to invoke her; and also to be devout to St. Joseph, their Guardian Angel and the Saints. The mission was, in fact, one continued prayer. All that was done was hallowed by being offered up to God in prayer. They were taught also to renew their good intention frequently during the day, before even their indifferent actions; and many striking instances occurred showing how they put this counsel in practice. It was, then, by means of holy prayer that the children were spiritualised and supernaturalised, and so great a change was observable in them in the course of the mission.

But what Father Furniss made the centre of everything else was Holy Mass. He explained to them carefully what they had to know and believe concerning the Sacrifice of the Altar, its dignity, value, and efficacy, both for the living and the dead; the four great ends of Mass, its several parts, the meaning of the ceremonies, sacred vessels and vestments. Holy Mass thus became a reality to them; they were interested in its celebration. They learnt to take a part in it, and how to assist at it intelligently and devoutly. They began to understand that it was the great centre to which all else converged—their prayers, good intentions and the rest. Hence they appreciated better what Holy Communion is, and prepared for it with great expectation and care.

They understood, too, the continual presence of Our Lord in the Tabernacle, what it is to make a spiritual Communion, and what reverence is due to the church in which He dwells. They understood what it is to assist at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and there to receive Our Lord's own blessing.

Before concluding this chapter, I will make mention of some incidents of interest that have found a place in the records of Father Furniss's Children's Missions.

In his mission at Wexford in August and September, 1853, a little boy named Kavanagh, who had received the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was playing on a plank between a vessel and the quay, which another boy was trying to shake. The little Kavanagh said, "I am not afraid, for I have on me the Scapular;" but no sooner had he so said than he fell off the plank into the river. He went down, came up to the surface, and then sank and rose again a second time. He had all the while in his mind, as he afterwards said, the thought of his Scapular and of confidence in Our Lady's protection. Floating on the water, he drifted out to a cob (a kind of boat) not far off, into which the boatmen took him. His clothes were; of course, soaked through and through. But, on being undressed, it was seen—so says

the story—that one spot on his shirt—that which covered the Scapular—was quite dry, as also the Scapular, though its strings were wet. Father Furniss preserved this Scapular, and used sometimes to show it to the children as he related the story. It came afterwards into my possession when I began to give Children's Missions.

In his Children's Mission at Letterkenny in June, 1857, a Protestant boy used to mock some of the Catholic children on the way they held their hands joined together as they went to the altar rails to receive Holy Communion. As he was doing this one day, suddenly one of his hands fell down paralysed. He was taken at once to the hospital, where he died the next day.

In the Children's Mission at Drumholm in July, 1857, large numbers of the children came down from the mountains, some from distances of many miles. During the day they encamped in groups in the fields, having with them their sprigging work, and singing the mission hymns. At night the parish-priest let them stay in the chapel and in out-houses, and supplied them every day with forty quarts of milk, and bread.

The following incident in the Children's Mission at St. Patrick's, London, in March, 1860, shows the power of children's prayer, and that still the Psalmist's words are verified: *Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem*.* During the mission a young man who when a boy came to the school, and made his First Communion in that church, was lying on his bed in a wasting consumption. His friends knew that he was nearing his end; and so on a Sunday morning they sent for one of the clergy of the church. The good priest was soon by the young man's bedside, but all his words were in vain. The young man's heart was so hard that he turned a deaf ear to the priest, refused to make his confession, and seemed determined to die, as for some time he had lived, in neglect of God and his eternity. The priest returned sad and unhappy to the church, and mentioned the circumstance to Father Furniss. The Children's Mass was about to begin. During the Mass the Father narrated the case to his crowd of children, and called on them to say aloud three fervent Hail Marys for the impenitent young man, once a good child like themselves and a member of their own school. The Hail Marys were cried out with all the fervour of their young hearts. They went to the heart of the Mother of Mercy and triumphed; for immediately after the Mass the same priest went again to the dying young man, and found him entirely changed. He at once eagerly asked to make his confession; he then received all the last rites of the Church, and the next day he was dead.

* *Psalm viii.* 3.

Father Furniss gave a Children's Mission at St. John's Cathedral, Salford, in July, 1861. In the Children's Mission which he had given three years previously in the same church, an interesting child between four and five years old had come regularly to the exercises, and was admitted to the sacrament of Penance. Evidently it did not receive the grace of God in vain; for in this second mission Father Furniss became aware of the marvellous fact that during the whole interval between the two missions the child had not omitted, even in days of sickness, to assist at daily Mass every morning, and to go to confession every week. Such a child of grace, he felt, should no longer be debarred from its First Communion. *Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem.*

It is related in the account of Father Furniss's Children's Mission at Bishop Auckland, in August, 1860, that a child walked from a distance of seventy miles within a week in order to attend the mission.

The eagerness to attend Father Furniss's missions was quite surprising. Boys would sometimes give up their employment, and little servant-girls their place, just before a mission, because otherwise they would be prevented from attending the exercises. I used to hear this frequently later on from some who had done so.

I mention the following incident as a testimony to the effect of Father Furniss's missions in Ireland. At a mission at Spanish Place, London, December, 1862, amongst the crowds of penitents who came to me was a poor labouring young man, whose pure and pious life I could not but greatly admire. After his confession he said he had a question to ask me. He had come from Ireland, where, when a boy, he had attended a Children's Mission. The Father who gave the mission—doubtless Father Furniss—had recommended the children to make a little altar at home, and to light a candle on Saturday evenings before a picture of the Blessed Virgin out of devotion to her, when they said her Rosary. He had then engaged himself by a promise to this practice, and had continued it as long as he had remained in Ireland. He had been now two years in London, and for a short time had done the same there. But, lodging amongst Protestants, he found it very difficult, as they mocked and laughed at him. He had consequently adopted the practice of giving some alms to the poor on Saturday in honour of Our Lady, instead of burning the candle. Was there, he asked, any harm in making this change? The young man's marvellous perseverance in practising devotion to the Mother of God caused my wonder to cease at the pure and edifying life that he led amidst the moral corruption and irreligion of London life.



CHAPTER XI.

*Means adopted by Father Furniss to render the Good
Effects of Children's Missions lasting.*

FATHER FURNISS, as we have seen, laboured with an untiring energy and zeal in his Children's Missions, that they might, through the grace and blessing of God, have good success. He never took his work easily. He thought of nothing else, cared for nothing else, but his work amongst his dear little ones. If he had to take his hours of rest, and to make use of some dispensations from ordinary rules, he did so in order to husband his strength, in his weak health and infirmities, and thus be able to work the more. He gave himself no respite, recreation, or holiday, but went from place to place giving mission on mission, and nothing could restrain him but the will of his superiors. He was always studying how in one point or another he might improve his method. One might indeed have thought that—as his missions were so much like one another, and he had so great experience, and was become so fluent and practised a speaker—he would have to spend little or no time in preparing his discourses, and that he would be always ready. It was not so, however, for on each occasion he studied well—doubtless with prayer—what he had to say, and how he should say it; since he was fully persuaded, and would often say to others, that to instruct children well, to reach and impress their hearts and minds, was a work more rare and difficult than to preach well to adults. Father Furniss's zeal and labour, in fact, went on increasing from one mission to another with his increasing years and infirmities; so that some of the missions which he gave within the two last years of his active life, as those at Wolverhampton, Hull, and St. Patrick's, Liverpool, were amongst the most arduous and successful of his whole course.

But the zeal of Father Furniss did not rest with his actual missions, but much more was it exercised in securing means whereby their effects might be made lasting. This gave him always much anxious thought. The mission in his view was but the starting-point; the important matter was the

perseverance of the children in the good way on which they had entered,* and—yet more important still—the course which the pastors would pursue with these children in the future. He was all the more anxious, as he reflected that he would be no longer at hand, but would have to leave the whole issue of his toils and success entirely in the hands of the parochial clergy. Hence he sought in every way to stimulate their zeal, and to impress on them that if they hoped to render the success achieved in the mission permanent, they must work in the future on the same lines as he had done, and just so far as they did so, would they be successful.

As the Children's Mass had been the central feature of the mission, his first care was to establish the Sunday Children's Mass as a permanent institution in the parish after the mission was over.

Father Furniss's idea of the Children's Mass supposes the following points:

1. That, if possible, there should always be a priest or some fitting person to preside over the children, to see that the singing and all else went well, and sometimes to say a little word to keep up their attention or encourage their devotion.

2. That the children should follow the Mass and understand what was going on, by means of the hymns and prayers which they all sang and said together in common. These devotions therefore should always be suited, not only to Holy Mass in general, but also to the several parts of Mass, since it was by these the children were to be helped to follow the Mass.

3. Father Furniss insisted on all the children singing. He therefore would not allow them to follow their own devotions, but would have all take part in the common singing and prayers. All the hymns and prayers for Mass are to be found in his *Sunday School*, and also in little half-penny books† which he published purposely for distribution amongst the children. He took great care to make them sing well, piously and devoutly, and chose simple good tunes suitable for the hymns.

4. He insisted very much on the Children's Mass on Sunday being at an hour which would be most convenient for the attendance of all the children, and not too early. This hour would be generally 9.30 or 10 o'clock. He would

* The following incident shows with what anxiety and active zeal Father Furniss sought to preserve to the children the fruits of his missions, and to shield them from dangers to their perseverance. After closing a three weeks mission at Staleybridge (July, 1859,) he learnt that there were to be for the next three days some dangerous wakes in the town. In order to keep the children from going to them, he at once opened a fresh Triduum of mission devotions for them, which had the effect of keeping them away from the wakes.

† Both books are published by the Art and Book Company.

have the church at this Mass for the children alone; but, if this was not possible, and adults could not be entirely excluded, he required that at least ample room, in the best part of the church, should be provided for the children, and that they should not be put at one side where they could not see what was going on at the altar.

In parishes where Father Furniss had given a mission, the Children's Mass soon began to be a regular institution, and other priests also adopted it, so that ere long it became generally looked upon as a normal and almost necessary part of parochial organisation in the more populous places, and where several priests were attached to a church.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the extension which the Children's Mass has obtained in the present day, not only at home in Great Britain and Ireland, but also abroad in all English-speaking countries of the world.

We must here bear in mind that the Children's Mass owes its origin exclusively to Father Furniss, and that, until he commenced his missions at the beginning of the second half of this century, its very name was unknown.

I have been lately gathering together detailed statistics on this subject, and I find that there is generally a Children's Mass in the churches of all the larger cities and towns of the various English dioceses—that is to say, wherever it is practicable, since, of course, it would not be so where there is but one priest and a very small Catholic population. The same applies to the cities and towns of Scotland. The Children's Mass is kept up in several of the Cathedrals, and in many of the city and town churches of Ireland.

I learn that in the United States of America there is generally a Children's Mass in all the large parishes, and that the same is the case in Canada, as well in the French as in the English churches. It is kept up also in all the cities and larger towns of Australia and New Zealand.

The method at first generally adopted for the Children's Mass was that of Father Furniss; that is to say, his hymns and devotions, which bore exclusively on Holy Mass, were used; one of the priests was present to superintend; the church at this Mass was reserved, at least principally, for the children; zealous and systematic means were employed to secure the regular attendance of all of them; the assistance and co-operation of the Nuns, the school-teachers, and of other pious lay-people of the congregation, were enlisted to preserve good order amongst the children, and by their encouragement to help all to join well and devoutly in singing the hymns and reciting the prayers. Thus the Children's Mass was rendered beautiful, popular, and an object of universal admiration, and became a great centre and source of edification and spiritual blessing for the children and the faithful at large.

Men and women, many of them well up in years, in Great Britain and Ireland have repeatedly told me of how much they have been edified by the Children's Mass, and that they had learned more about the Holy Sacrifice from the practical explanation of it given to the children, and from the devotions they were taught to use during its celebration, than they had ever before known. Some have said that of all the exercises at the mission this was their favourite one.

But, in course of time, though Father Furniss's Children's Mass was kept up in name, abuses crept in, and in many places it has much fallen away from its original end and spirit; so that, were Father Furniss to see it as it is carried out in some churches, he would not recognise it as his own institution. He would have had it to be a means whereby all the children of the place might be helped to assist devoutly and intelligently at the great Christian Sacrifice, and take their due part in this highest act of God's worship. Consequently he would have all the hymns and prayers which the children should use, so directly to bear on the Holy Sacrifice as to be at the same time their acts of devotion for Mass, and also doctrinal lessons instructing them in its nature, efficacy, and ends. Whereas now-a-days the Children's Mass too often seems to be used rather as an opportunity for the children to sing a number of pious hymns, which however have, perhaps, no bearing at all on what is going on at the altar, and are thus so far rather a positive hindrance to due attention to the Holy Sacrifice. The children, moreover, are often left almost entirely to themselves, their attendance is not good or regular, and their behaviour is unedifying; they are allowed pretty much to go to what Mass they like; the Children's Mass is put at too early an hour, and the space in church allotted to them is insufficient. Such singing as there is—besides the utter incongruity of what they sing—is neither good nor devout. Instead of being general, simple, and grave, and such as all might take part in, it is often light and showy, confined to a few of the bigger girls, who with their loud voices drown those of all the rest. Thus the Children's Mass becomes sometimes rather a scandal, and a great cause of distraction to the adult faithful who happen to be in the church, and to the priest who is celebrating. The fact is that in some places interest and zeal for the Children's Mass has in great measure declined: its use, fulness and beneficial effects have become much impaired, and, though kept up in name for the sake of form, it is but *magni nominis umbra*.

But this is far from being the case in the larger number of churches, and many priests could give such testimony as the following:

The Most Rev. Archbishop Croke, writing from Thurles, July 30, 1895, says: "The Children's Mass which you started here at the Mission, October,

1876, is still in a flourishing condition. The Nuns assist at it with the girls, and the Christian Brothers attend to the boys."

The Very Rev. Canon Duckett, of SS. Peter and Paul's, Wolverhampton, writes, August 27, 1895: "Good Father Furniss's Mission is still kept up here and at SS. Mary and John's. The people like this Mass and come to it. It is carried out exactly as Father Furniss established it. Every second Sunday I am amongst the children, and make with them the examen of conscience and the spiritual communion. I wish you had another Father Furniss amongst you. The children want looking up again."

Another means which Father Furniss recommended to the parochial clergy for the children's benefit and for preserving the fruits of the mission was a good organisation of the Sunday School and Catechism. In order to make this interesting to the children and the teachers, and to draw to it especially the working-boys and girls who most needed instruction, he would have the children not only learn to say their prayers by heart, and be taught their Catechism by simple question and answer, but would also have them sing the essential portions of the Christian Doctrine in harmonious verse. He would in the same way have their memory impressed with moral and religious duties of their daily life by teaching them to sing *The Rule of Life*, which the teacher should take care to illustrate from time to time in one or other point by telling them some simple and interesting story. His maxim here and universally was that anything like monotony is tedious to children, and that to keep up their attention and teach them with profit one must use variety.

He suggested that the parish should be divided into a certain number of districts, and visitors appointed who might go round on Sundays, and invite the children to Mass and Sunday School; and that inquiry should be made, especially in the Sunday School, as to what children had not yet made their First Communion, and how those who had already done so were frequenting the sacraments.

In order to secure the children's regular frequentation of the sacraments, he recommended that special times should be fixed—and due notice given in the church on Sundays, and in the schools—for the confessions of the children, at such hours as would be most convenient, whether for the school-children or those at work, without interfering with the days or hours appointed for hearing the confessions of adults. As a rule, he would have monthly confession and Communion; but, if it should be impossible to have all the children once a month to the sacraments, then the boys could go one month, and the girls the next; and three or four times a year a day should be

appointed for hearing the confessions of the children who had not made their First Communion.

Father Furniss also recommended that the children should be gathered into some confraternity, with special rules and short spiritual exercises at its meeting. This should be either after the Sunday School and Catechism, or once a month on the Communion Sunday. He himself instituted such confraternities, especially that of the Holy Family, in many of his Children's Missions with most beneficial results.

He considered Night Schools to be of vast importance, not only for other things which young people learn in them, but more because they bring into notice many who have not made their First Communion or been confirmed, and afford to such an opportunity of being prepared for the sacraments. Care, he insisted, should be taken to render the Night Schools edifying and attractive.

He greatly recommended the circulation of good books amongst the children and young people through Lending Libraries attached to the Sunday and Night Schools. This he held as most important, in order to counteract the reading of the cheap dangerous literature everywhere prevalent now-a-days.

To preserve the children in the habits of prayer and piety, he encouraged them to make little altars in their homes, before which they might kneel to say their morning and night prayers—on which should be a crucifix, and hanging near the Rule of Life, which he got printed and mounted on a large card, some pious pictures, and a vessel for Holy Water, and he would have the children beautify and adorn these rude domestic altars as best they could. He also taught them to have a devotion for pious things, to have their blessed beads, to be invested in the Scapular of Mount Carmel, or to wear about them something holy, whether a crucifix, a blessed medal, or an Agnus Dei. He very much encouraged them to buy pictures, statues, crucifixes, etc., to put in their bed-rooms. As many of the children were utterly penniless, he got certain devout ladies to supply them with rosaries and other objects of devotion, so that all the children before the end of the mission were in possession of some precious object which they could treasure up as a remembrance of the mission.

Lastly, he recommended the priests to have from time to time Children's Missions in the parish, especially before missions to adults; for it is by these missions that the deepest impressions are made on the children's minds, and through the children, experience shows, the parents and the adults in general are most effectively stirred up to attend well and to profit by their own subsequent missions.

Besides these various means which Father Furniss recommended for keeping up the good fruits of his mission, there was yet another which he left behind him as his own work, viz., the books that he wrote, of which we shall speak in the next chapter.



CHAPTER XII.

Father Furniss and his Books.

THE spirit of zeal which led Father Furniss to devote himself so constantly to the special work of Children's Missions, led him still further. He took yet another means to the same end. This was the publication of a series of "Books for Children," where those great teachings of faith and morals so often repeated by him from the pulpit, gained a still wider audience from the press. These little books contain his entire system of Catechism drawn out in detail, and his various sermons and instructions to the children, both moral and doctrinal, illustrated with his stories and allegories and numerous anecdotes from the Lives of the Saints. They perpetuate, in fact, all his mission teaching. They are remarkable for their great purity of language and for their interesting and graphic descriptions. From them it is evident how far Father Furniss was from speaking at random or telling stories haphazard during his discourses. For, while these publications are obviously written with a view to simplicity and to suit the minds of children, they contain a great amount of solid theology and Scripture exegesis, and bear evidence, by the careful choice of language and matter, and by the transparent clearness of the style, of being the fruit of much thoughtful toil and study.

As they now stand they consist of two volumes, one of which bears the title *God and His Creatures*, while the other is called *The Sunday School*. The former consists of 572, the latter of 320 pages.

God and His Creatures first appeared in separate numbers at the price of one penny, under the general name of *Books for Children*. Each number bore besides its own special title. These were as follows: Almighty God, Almighty God loves Little Children, The Great Question, The Great Evil, Stumbling-blocks, The Book of Young Persons, The House of Death, The

Book of the Dying, The Terrible judgment, and The Bad Child, The Sight of Hell, Confession, Holy Communion, Schools in which Children lose their holy Faith. The recital of these separate parts will give the reader some knowledge of the subject-matter of the whole book, *God and His Creatures*, where, however, the titles will be found somewhat changed.

To meet the case of those for whom he wrote, Father Furniss cast the greater portion of these pages in the narrative form. No other form could so well hold the youthful attention. But every story that is told has its purpose, and the moral is unfailingly drawn at the end so forcibly, so clearly, that there can be no mistake. It would be hard to find anything more directly practical for the end he had in view. Father Furniss had studied the minds of children so thoroughly, and had noted so carefully the style of address that would impress and move them, that a quite original and remarkable kind of composition was the result. Here there is nothing abstract, nothing that goes beyond the comprehension of youth. All lengthy, classical, polysyllabic words are banished from his pages. The simplest, shortest, plainest terms are used. The gain in directness and clearness is marvellous. Men well fitted to judge have said that as an example of simple, straightforward, thoroughly English style, Father Furniss's books hold really a high place. People speak of the large proportion of homely Anglo-Saxon words to be found in the writings of Swift or of Cobbett, but we venture to think Father Furniss would often be found to surpass in this respect either of these vigorous writers. Such was the effect of zeal for God's little ones upon the language and pen of this apostle of the children.

Just as in *God and His Creatures* we have the substance of Father Furniss's sermons and instructions, so in *The Sunday School* we have a collection of the principles and methods that guided him in his work. This book deals with what we may call his *modus operandi*. Not content with enumerating and explaining the various means he recommended for evangelising the children, viz., the Children's Mass on Sunday, the weekly Catechism or Sunday School, the frequentation of confession and of Holy Communion, the singing of the Christian Doctrine, the Night Schools, the libraries for children, and above all Children's Missions and Confraternities—Father Furniss here descends into detail, so that those who are charged with the practical management of any one of these good works will find directions invaluable and unique. These directions were the fruit of the missionary's long experience and of that sure instinct which came of his single-hearted devotion to the children's cause. The various methods of teaching are entered into, and their advantages and defects pointed out. The simple music of the airs to be used for the singing of the Christian Doctrine

is given, as also that of the author's favourite hymns. The rules are indicated that will lead a Children's Confraternity on to success. The best method to aid children to prepare for the sacraments is discussed. We may add that for the benefit of priests who may have to hear the confessions of children, such parts of St. Alphonsus's *Moral Theology** are inserted as seemed to have the most direct bearing on the case.

Both this work and *God and His Creatures* equally bear witness to what we have already said about Father Furniss being wholly and exclusively devoted to his work for children. He was always thinking of it, always on the watch for something that could be made to assist in it. All that he read in newspapers or in books, all that he saw in the streets, all that was related to him by others, was laid under contribution. The forcible saying of some leader in God's Church, the story of misery and sin recorded in the daily press, the panorama of human action that passed before his observant eyes—all was noted, treasured up, and then found its way into his little books, to illustrate a truth, to give life to a warning, or to explain some lesson to his readers.

The thorough spirit of faith, deep and unquestioning, which animated all that Father Furniss wrote, made his books more than once the point of assault for non-Catholic writers. Men whose Christianity was of an abstract and rationalistic character might well be staggered by the reality and concrete nature of his writings about religion. Once an eminent historian so far forgot himself as to call them "infamous publications,"† and, following in his wake, another Protestant writer devoted a pamphlet to varied and ignorant abuse of the doctrine and method of the books. The latter offender was promptly called to account in a trenchant rejoinder called, *Infamous Publications! Who wrote them?* by one of Father Furniss's brethren. And other evidence is not wanting to show that whatever was unsound and vague in the Protestant mind concerning the eternal truths, and especially the doctrine of hell, was up in arms against the teaching and illustrations contained in Father Furniss's books.

On the other hand the Catholic Press was loud in his praise. *The Rambler* said: "The writer possesses the capacity—a rare one—of addressing himself to children, not in language alone, but in mode of thought." Not less favourable is the criticism passed by another reviewer in *The Weekly Register*: "We find in these books the fertility, the precision, the affectionate solemnity of St. Alphonsus. No books for children like these have yet

* These are to be found at the end of this volume.

† Father Furniss replied to this attack in *The Saturday Review*.

appeared in our language. For school and family use they will be found of incalculable utility."

Priests have told me that in their country missions they have at times made a course of reading in the church from Father Furniss's books on Sunday afternoons, in place of the ordinary discourse before Benediction; that the people were greatly interested, and that the congregation would be often thereby largely increased. The popularity of Father Furniss's books was for some time very great, and their issue from the press both in England and Ireland enormous. Wishing to obtain some proximate information on this matter, I wrote letters of inquiry to the representatives of Thomas Richardson and Son, Derby, and to Messrs. Duffy, Dublin, both of whom were Father Furniss's publishers. From the former I could learn nothing, their editions of Father Furniss's books having lately passed to other hands. From Messrs. Duffy I received the following reply:

"Dublin, January, 23, 1895.

"Dear Sir,

"There is no person connected with this house now since the death of its founder, the late Mr. James Duffy (who died July 4, 1891), who had any acquaintance or knowledge of the late Rev. Father Furniss, C.S.S.R., and none of us can, we regret, give you any personal reminiscences of him.

"As to his books for children which we publish, they have sold and continue to sell very extensively, so much so that the stereotype plates have been often worn out in the press, and had to be repeatedly renewed, especially No. X. and some others, which, owing to the attacks made upon them on public platforms and in the press by enemies of the Church, have been largely in excess of the others. We doubt if we have data to enable us to give a proximate idea of the sale of these little books, but we can safely say that their aggregate sale must have been over four million.

"We remain, dear Rev. Sir,

"Your obedient servants,

"JAMES DUFFY AND CO., LTD."

It ought also to be remembered that a French translation of *God and His Creatures* by Père Duhamel, C.S.S.R., has been brought out anonymously by Messrs. Casterman of Tournay, under the title of *Le Missionnaire des Enfants*.



CHAPTER XIII.

*Testimony of Priests to Father Furniss's
Children's Missions.*

THE late Canon Sheehan, V.G., of St. Chad's, Manchester, in a letter dated November 8, 1888, wrote as follows:

"It was with Father Furniss that began in this country the great change of admitting children to Communion at a very tender age—viz., from the age of nine. Many of the older priests were sorely disturbed by his methods, but he lived down all opposition, and we are all now moving on the lines laid down by Father Furniss.

"When he was giving a Children's Mission at St. Augustine's in this city, Mgr. Wrennall and I went to see him, with the intention of calling into question his method of dealing with children. We returned to St. Chad's discomfited, humiliated, and converted. His power over children was marvellous, and could leave no doubt on any one that he was called by God to that particular work."

"The work of Father Furniss among children," says the late Canon Liptrott, of St. Anne's, Manchester,* "was greatly appreciated by both priests and people who heard and attended his missions. I had the happiness of being under him during two Children's Missions, and I look back upon those weeks as among the happiest of my life. Will there ever be another like him?"

From a letter of the venerable Mgr. Provost Croskell's, quoted in an earlier chapter, we make the following extract:

"One of the arts by which Father Furniss won the attention of children, was that of making them sing their prayers, the leading points of Christian doctrine, and the devotions at Mass. The good Father once told me, what no doubt he has told many others, that when he first began to pay special attention to instructing children, he could not succeed in commanding their attention, until he hit upon the expedient of teaching them to sing little verses at intervals when their attention began to flag, also enlivening their prayers at Mass by singing, and by the same means impressing on their minds some leading points of Christian doctrine. Another feat of his inventive genius was his taking his place on the mission platform at the time of Mass, and explaining first the meaning of the vestments, and then each part of the Mass, while a priest was actually celebrating.

* January 4, 1889.

"During the earlier part of Father Furniss's career, opinions were divided as to the soundness of his methods of teaching. Some priests approved, others condemned his strange stories and singular methods of impressing the minds of children with the fear of God and a desire to love and serve Him.

"The Rev. Edmund Hogan, at one time Rector of the Church of St. Aloysius, Manchester, was rather sceptical as to the real benefits of his Missions to Children. This good priest had great trouble with a boy in his parish. He had tried all ways to reform him, but to no purpose. This boy was led to attend a mission given by Father Furniss at St. Patrick's, Manchester. After three or four days of listening to him, he came to Father Hogan quite a changed character. He made his confession in the most perfect disposition, and was in short thoroughly converted. After this Father Hogan used to say: 'Well, for the future, I shall always believe in Father Furniss. I have seen an instance of a thorough conversion which appears to me nothing less than a miracle.' The point of this example is that it is a testimony to Father Furniss's wonderful power in moving and converting perverse and wicked children, given by a witness not biassed in his favour.

"I mention the following incident to illustrate Father Furniss's marvellously graphic description of hell and other eternal truths.

"Towards the end of his missionary labours, he was giving a mission at St. Augustine's, Manchester. After one of his discourses on the dungeons of hell and its many awful compartments, some old women were overheard speaking of Father Furniss. His vivid descriptions of hell and his cadaverous appearance at that time while preaching, made them imagine that the good Father had died and come to life again, and was actually describing what he had seen in the other world.

"To a certain extent, Father Furniss might be compared to the renowned St. Vincent Ferrer, or by his descriptions of hell to the immortal Dante.

"In conclusion I must express my grateful remembrance of the charity of Father Furniss towards myself, when thirty years ago I was lying dangerously ill. He procured for me thousands of Hail Marys through the children who crowded to his mission at St. Augustine's, where I was then stationed. Please let me know the day of his anniversary, and I will pray for him as long as I live. I shall be glad to see a good sketch of Father Furniss in print, as he was a true missionary to the rising generation of his day. His memory deserves to be preserved, and his skill and devotedness to his special vocation imitated."

The late Right Rev. Mgr. Kershaw thus writes from Barton, November 13, 1888:

"Father Furniss gave two missions here—in both instances to children; one in the April of 1857, and another in October, 1859. They were eminently successful, not only in their effect upon the children, but also upon the adult parishioners. Their influence was felt for years afterwards; and for the two years on each occasion following the mission, the attendance at church and frequentation of the sacraments were such as was never known before or since. The Children's Mass was very popular, and only fell into disuse with us upon change of teachers and of choir-masters, who could not be brought to know and practise Father Furniss's method. I have no doubt myself that it is the true method for riveting the attention of the children, and interesting them in religious practices.

"His method of instruction, and power of projecting himself into the childish intelligence were marvellous. Some people were disgusted with his language and manner: they thought him a pious fool; but the true wisdom of his method was proved by its effects, and I myself, though I did not like some of his *stories*, was compelled in justice and candour to admit that wisdom was justified in her exponent. I was bound to acknowledge that the work of God was shown in the results. I am sorry that I can give no more information, but I wish most fervently that our dear Lord would be pleased to raise up in our midst such another friend and apostle of His little ones."

The late Very Rev. Canon Toole writes from his sick-bed: "Birkdale, November 15, 1888.—I can only say now that I would not yield to any in my respect and veneration for Father Furniss. When I recover, as with God's help I hope to do, I will try to recall everything that I could put interestingly about him and send it you." And later on:

"St. Wilfrid's, Manchester,

"August 23, 1889.

". . . I can hardly say that I can give any continued account of Father Furniss's preaching, etc., but he was remarkable for his great power of telling anecdotes, and on his skill in this much of his success amongst the children depended. The simplicity of his language was never beyond reach of their intelligence, and the conciseness of his descriptions enabled him to keep their attention fixed. I remember that on one occasion, when I had spoken to him about his great success with children, he told me that in his early days he was one of the worst story-tellers possible, but that by determination and prayer he had overcome this defect. His sermons to grown-up people partook of the same character as the instructions which he gave to children. I remember once he was preaching in St. Wilfrid's Church. Some unfortunate girl had just before drowned herself in London. In speaking of the search for

the body, when he had the congregation wound up with an intensity of feeling, he leaned over the edge of the pulpit, suiting the action to the word, as he spoke of lifting the body from the water, and all at once the whole congregation rose to their feet, and strained their necks as if to see him draw the body from the Thames. I could not describe the wonderful power which he had, better than by saying, *his words were realities.*"

In the spring of the year 1861, Dr. McCarten, then assistant priest at SS. Mary and John's, Wolverhampton, having heard from Father Clarkson of the marvellous success of Father Furniss's recent Children's Mission at St. Chad's, Manchester, prevailed on the Rector to have one in his own church. The condition of the children there is described by Dr. McCarten as deplorable, in spite of the efforts of zealous Nuns—especially their attendance at Mass on Sundays. On a cold quarried floor in a corner near the door of the church some fifty knelt or sat on benches without backs during High Mass and Sermon, overlooked by a man with a long stick, who dealt blows on their heads that could be heard by the preacher in the pulpit. Catechism in the afternoon, a very "scraggy" function, was attended by perhaps a hundred children.

The mission was announced about six or seven weeks beforehand. Using *The Sunday School* and other books sent by Father Furniss, the children were taught to sing the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition, the Rule of Life, etc. The avidity with which the children seized on these prayers, etc., surprised the priests and the teachers, as much as the ever-increasing numbers in which they attended on the six or seven Sunday afternoons. The mission began with five or six hundred children. Only children were admitted to the services. Father Furniss was convinced that the presence of adults was prejudicial to his system. At the closing service the large crucifix which had been at his side on the platform throughout the mission, was carried in solemn possession to be fixed in its place at the lower end of the church, amidst the loud lamentations of fifteen hundred children. The children from the older Church of SS. Peter and Paul, North Street, (St. Patrick's was not yet formed into a separate district) were attracted in large numbers to the mission.

It was anticipated by priests and others that the children's enthusiasm and the effects of their mission would be short-lived. But it was not so. The Rector, at the recommendation of Father Furniss, entrusted the responsibility of the Children's Sunday to one priest, who zealously fulfilled his charge. Every Sunday morning, at 9.30, from an improvised platform he directed the devotions at the Children's Mass, from which adults were excluded, after which he gave them an instruction; in the afternoon he was with the children

again presiding at their Catechism from 2 till 3.30. His instructions were conducted much in Father Furniss's way, being practical and dramatic. For three years the average at the Children's Mass was 800; on two occasions the number present exceeded 900. The number at Catechism was between 600 and 700. Three years thus passed without any symptoms of failure or declining interest. At the end of this period the third priest was withdrawn, and consequently the Children's Mass was discontinued.

On the first Sunday of the new arrangement, something occurred which was noticed by many. At the time when the Children's Mass used to commence, the figure of Our Lord on the Mission Cross erected by Father Furniss fell on the church floor and crumbled to pieces.

In the Mission Chronicles at Bishop Eton I find the following: "Father Furniss remarks that this mission at Wolverhampton was one of the most satisfactory he has ever given, both as to the mission in itself, as well as to the readiness of all on whom the children depended, to take up sound principles, as also the arrangements adopted for perseverance."

In the course of the same year Dr. McCarten during a retreat at Bishop Eton conversed daily with Father Furniss. He asked Father Furniss one day, if he thought there was one priest in every hundred who could let himself down to the level of the children in his preaching and instruction; and Father Furniss answered, "No," saying at the same time that his regret was that his system was not generally worked out, nor publicly, that is authoritatively, acknowledged.

The Very Rev. George Canon Duckett writes from SS. Peter and Paul's, Wolverhampton, February 18, 1895:

"My dear Father Livius,

"I have pleasing and grateful recollections of good Father Furniss. Many years ago he gave a Mission for Children at SS. Mary and John's in this town. I went to hear him, and I was so much edified with his wonderful work, that I decided to take the children of my parish to attend that mission; so, day by day, I marched them through the town to SS. Mary and John's Church. The following year (January, 1862,) I succeeded in getting Father Furniss to give a mission to the children of this parish. The effects of it were very remarkable and very lasting. In fact the Children's Mass that he introduced still continues, and it is my delight to be amongst the children during this Mass, helping them to sing and to understand the meaning of what they sing.

"I remember well the opening of the mission. The church was packed with children, and the good Father from a temporary platform gave a long and searching look at them. Then he called up to the platform a little child about

eight years of age. Of course every eye was on the child. He asked it its name and age. Then he gave a beautiful description of his visit to the Holy Land, with the difficulties and inconveniences of the long journey. He asked the child if it would come to the mission—come to the mission *every night*. Upon receiving an answer in the affirmative, he told the child that it would do a greater thing than he had done by going to Jerusalem, and that it would please God more than he had done.

"Bishop Brown, of Shrewsbury, called in one day as we were at dinner. He and Father Furniss had a long talk about Children's Missions. At length Father Furniss excused himself, saying that he wished to go and prepare his discourse for the evening, and I remember well it was a most thrilling sermon on the Last judgment.

"I cannot speak too highly of Father Furniss's book, *God and His Creatures*. It is most admirable and useful. I use it constantly. The stories are told in the most practical and telling way. I have sometimes tried to improve on them, but ignobly failed. I often think of his painted canary, by which he taught the children how to fly from temptation.

"Before Father Furniss came, the children were seated during the Mass at the back of the congregation. They could see little, and hear less, at least of what they could understand. Since his day the children have Mass to themselves, and they hold the first seats in the church, and they have a special address suited to their capacities. What a great blessing is this for them! I have had several missions since Father Furniss, but to my mind none so lasting or beneficial. I often wish that Father Furniss's mantle had fallen on one of you. Perhaps it has, and I do not know it.

"Your sincere friend,

"GEORGE CANON DUCKETT."

"St. Joseph's, Bradford,
"July 4, 1895.

"My dear Father Livius,

"You ask me to send some of my recollections of the good Father Furniss, whose Life and doings you are about to publish. What I know of him personally is what I observed and learnt more than thirty years ago,* when he gave a mission to the children in St. Charles's Church at Hull,

* February, 1862.

where it was my privilege to be curate for sixteen years with my dear friend and Father, the Rev. Michael Trappes.

"Father Furniss was certainly a wonderful man, and was evidently raised up by Almighty God for the work to which he gave himself so earnestly, so devotedly, and so perseveringly. Both by nature and by grace he seemed eminently fitted for his vocation. When at his work amongst the children his whole soul seemed to be absorbed in it; to him it was the work of paramount importance: 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven!'

"He felt keenly how they had been neglected, pushed into the background, relegated to some corner of the church at Holy Mass, as if they were unworthy of any special notice—and he had been sent to the rescue by Him to Whom they were so dear. He appeared to be animated by Our Lord's own love for them, and was resolved on bringing them to the front, to the special notice and care of all whose duty it was to protect them and provide for them. Whenever it was possible, they should have special Mass for themselves, and it should be rendered devotional and instructive, pleasing and attractive; they should learn their religion and profess it in holy song; they should offer their homage and supplication in holy song; by their devotion they should edify their elders who might be present, and help them to realise some of the meaning of the inspired words: 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.' The good missionary appeared to have a peculiar appreciation of Our Lord's words: 'Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.' He was himself childlike in his manner and character, seemed thoroughly penetrated with the wants and feelings of children, and had an extraordinary facility for accommodating himself to their condition, entering into it and making himself one with them. Though the multitudes were so great, he seemed invariably to exercise a power of attracting their attention, and keeping it riveted on what he was driving home to their little hearts. His stories, which were so vivid and so well suited for producing an impression on children, were the more striking and more impressive from his way of telling them. And his sudden transition from one to which they had listened so eagerly, whilst it took possession of their minds and sunk into their hearts,—to another which was to produce an equal or greater impression, added greatly to the effect and kept rekindling their interest. A very brief outline of the mission at Hull may help those who have not had the privilege of knowing him, to form some idea of the man and his work.

"Some weeks before his coming, we had been asked to train the children in singing the hymns, the Christian Doctrine, and the Holy Mass, according

to the plan which he had arranged; and when he arrived they were quite prepared. On the Sunday morning he spoke to the people on their duty, and exhorted them to fulfil it; to see that all their children attended all the services; to afford every facility for those who had to do the work of God; and not to interfere between the children and the priest in what the priest thought good for the souls of the children, with regard especially to the reception of the sacraments. The people were to have a short service at four o'clock on Sunday afternoons, but every night, Sundays included, during the whole mission, the church was to be given up entirely and exclusively to the children. At the Children's Mass he told the children that their mission was to open in the afternoon at three o'clock to the moment, and all were to be in their places without fail, and they would come again at 6.30 in the evening.

"The good Father had a little platform, and at the table beside the crucifix he was sitting from two o'clock, watching the children as they streamed in for the 'Opening,' and a very singular 'Opening' it proved. The church was quite full before three o'clock, and my senior priest and myself stood near the platform, whilst the missionary sat. Just as the clock of a Protestant church close by struck the first stroke of three, he rose, and at his voice, 'Stand up,' they all stood;—'Kneel down,' and they all knelt;—'Sing: In the name of the Father,' and all, signing themselves, sang: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.'

"I give it just as it happened, and as he spoke it. As soon as they finished the words, he said: 'Stand up,' and they stood; 'Genuflect,' and they genuflected; 'Now go home quietly, but come to-night,' and they went home. Father Trappes, a college companion of his, was with him in a moment: 'John, what are you doing? They won't come back again to-night.' 'Won't they, Michael? You wait and see.' And they did come back. He said they would come, curious to see what the old missionary was going to do next. The church was filled to its utmost capacity from the beginning to the end of the mission, without the least flagging, but with ever-increasing interest. And day after day and night after night proceeded, for God's glory and the good of His little ones, the work of instructing, of exhorting, of terrifying from sin, of encouraging to virtue, of cleansing from stains, of filling with grace those many little ones for whose welfare God had sent him. And when the last night of the mission came, the scene that we witnessed could hardly be described, and its solemnity so impressed itself on my mind that time is unable to efface it. The affectionate and impressive leave-taking, the sobbing of over 1,500 children, and the good priest's cry: 'You may well sob. What will become of you when the old missionary has gone? Will the devil turn any of you from God?'—then louder sobbing, then the reading of the

Commandments in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and the renewal of the Baptismal Vows. God only knows how many souls will owe their salvation to that one mission. And much more, only God knows how many souls will owe their salvation to that good priest's labours, devotedness, zeal and piety during the whole of his missionary career. The work which he inaugurated and carried on so long for the welfare and spiritual interests of little children did not die with him, but still lives, and, with God's blessing on it, will continue to live, producing the results which it was intended to produce, and causing the name of Father Furniss to be held in benediction.

"It is thirty years since I came to Bradford, and in the beautiful churches of which this town is proud, the Children's Mass on Sundays and holidays is a charming and principal feature of our worship, and in other towns in like manner, thanks to the good priest whose life you are writing, and of whom your Order has so much reason to be proud."

"I am yours devotedly in Jesus Christ,

"JOHN MOTLER."

A priest who knew Father Furniss and his Children's Missions writes:

"I need not say that I held Father Furniss in the greatest veneration for his own personal qualities, as well as for the immense good which he effected by his missions to the children and to the young people. I do not think that any priest who heard him, and saw how his missions worked among the young, would question his wonderful power, or have a doubt as to the result. He had a power of saying and doing with the best effects, what in the person of another would have been grotesque and objectionable. But his love for the young, his zeal for their welfare, and his wonderful earnestness carried all before him, and always filled me with the conviction that, though his ways were not exactly what ordinary people with our rather starched ideas might approve of, still it was God who was working in him and with him.

"My admiration for Father Furniss has undergone no change during the years since his death. He did indeed a great work for God and His little ones in his time."

The Rev. Father Roche, O.M.I., writes from Mount St. Mary's, Leeds, February 15, 1895:

"When I first came here in 1865 the name of Father Furniss was in everybody's mouth, and every one spoke of the great success of his three weeks Mission to the Children in 1861. The large church of St. Mary's was crowded at every service, and the children listened with the greatest attention. He was looked upon as a Saint, and the people still speak of him

with the greatest veneration. There was never such a missionary for children, and there will never be such a one again."

Mgr. Thomas Wrennall writes from his sick-room, St. Bede's College, Manchester, February 27, 1895:

"I am unable to do more now than express my admiration of the magnificent spiritual revolution effected by Father Furniss in the state of our children. Any testimony of mine would be merely a repetition of what you must have heard from many."

A Dutch Redemptorist Father, who often accompanied Father Furniss in his Children's Missions, writes from Amsterdam, January 22, 1889:

"I saw frequently large churches full of children from seven or eight to fifteen and seventeen years old. During the sermons not the least sound was heard, but all were in perfect silence. His preaching to the children consisted in telling stories to them of various kinds, to which the adults listened with the same attentive interest as the children. He lived only for children, thought only of children, and had the greatest patience with them."

Two Redemptoristine Nuns who attended, when children, the mission which Father Furniss gave at Dundalk in the spring of 1860, have sent me each their reminiscences, which I will blend together, and append to this chapter.

"The mission was attended with the greatest enthusiasm by all the little people of the town, both rich and poor. I remember the nave of that large church being crowded every day, morning and evening. The numbers who made their First Communion were very great. All through the mission great order was maintained, and everything done to foster reverence and piety in the church. At the end of each service, sometimes the boys and sometimes the girls left first, but always quite separate. Father Furniss stood by each bench successively; gave a signal, when all kneeling in it stood up like little soldiers—another signal, and all together genuflected reverently before the Blessed Sacrament, and then went out in a regular line. He had with him in the pulpit a large piece of wood and a hammer. Sometimes he would rivet the children's attention by some amusing but edifying story which made them laugh; when they had well laughed—and at other times if there was any noise,—he would strike with the hammer on the wooden board and continue doing so until complete silence was restored; and then he would speak on some great eternal truth, which impressed us greatly. His sermon on hell was very terrible. He called up from its depths a poor lost soul, unfastened the chains that bound it prisoner, and then interrogated it as to what brought it there, and made it describe the horrors of that awful place. On one occasion Father Furniss caused great excitement and interest

amongst the children by promising to give every child that came to the mission the next day, a little umbrella. A more than usually large throng arrived, fully expecting to receive the promised gift, which proved to be a *Hail Mary*, or some other little prayer, to be said fervently in the rain of temptation. The Father taught us all the *Rule of Life*, and how to sing it, and many hymns. He established on Sundays a Mass exclusively for the children, which still continues to be sung by them in English. It was edifying to see the parents and grandparents, who perhaps had never before known what it was to follow Holy Mass with the priest, taught to do so by their children. The late Dr. Kieran, then parish-priest and afterwards Primate of Armagh, presided at every service during the mission, and seemed to be greatly pleased at the good work amongst his little flock, and helped assiduously with the curates in hearing their confessions. It cannot be doubted that the good seed sown in that Children's Mission not only took deep root in the parish, but has also been carried by many a poor Irish boy and girl to America and Australia, and there has had its influence in keeping the Faith alive in the hearts of our people."

The Rev. Father Thomas, Provincial of the Marists, writes April 18, 1895:

"I have tried to obtain some information about the work of Father Furniss in Spitalfields. What I have been able to get is that—

"1. The Rev. Father Furniss together with other Fathers preached a mission in Virginia Street Chapel, January, 1855. It was the only chapel in the East-end, and has been replaced by the church of Commercial Road. The old people remember the success of the mission. The faithful were not able to enter the chapel, and the Fathers were obliged to preach in the street.

"2. Father Furniss gave a Children's Mission at St. Anne's, Spicer Street, in the first days of 1859. A Children's Mission was then something quite new in London. This followed after an adult mission preached by the Redemptorist Fathers. The solemn opening took place January 15, 1859. Father Furniss assembled the children and young people twice a day and undertook all the preaching and instruction himself. He was assisted in the confessional by Rev. Father Stevens, C.S.S.R., and four of the Marist Fathers. It was arranged that every child of eight years sufficiently instructed should be prepared for First Communion. The other children above that age, who did not regularly frequent the schools, or could not read, were to be instructed individually about the things necessary for the reception of the sacraments. After the first two or three days the church was too small for the crowds of children, who were deeply interested by the mission. The good Father was all day in the church, or upon the platform erected in the middle of the church. Before the children left at the close of the services, they were

exhorted to bring others who were not attending the mission, and rewards were given to those who did so.

"The General Communion of more than 1,000 children took place on February 6, and 900 were confirmed by Cardinal Wiseman. It was arranged that in future there should be a Mass every Sunday at 9 o'clock exclusively for the children and young people, and a day fixed for their monthly Communion.

"3. In May, 1860, a second mission was opened for the children by Father Furniss, and was attended by the same success as the former one. At the close there was a large General Communion, and Confirmation by the Right Rev. Dr. Morris, Bishop of Troy.

"The Rev. Father Crouzet, S.M., the only priest of Spicer Street now surviving from those days, and some old people who assisted at these missions of Father Furniss's, have furnished me with the above details."



CHAPTER XIV.

Father Furniss's Stories, etc.

AN objection was sometimes raised against Father Furniss that in his missions he narrated many strange and marvellous stories, some of which were not really true, whilst others were dressed up and greatly exaggerated by him. Those who made this objection were perhaps themselves somewhat lacking in the imaginative faculty, and consequently took Father Furniss too literally, or had too little in common with that sense of the supernatural which pervades the religious literature of Catholic countries and times. Many of his stories are taken from the Lives of the Saints, or from pious legends of the past, and are well-known to all those who are at all conversant with this class of reading.

Some of these, simply looked upon as real facts, may be of doubtful authority, and ought not to be told in proof of doctrine, but they are most useful to the missionary for enforcing and illustrating religious teaching, which is certainly true on other grounds quite independent of the genuineness or not of the stories themselves; and this holds good, especially in the case of children.

Some of Father Furniss's stories no doubt were made up by himself to point a moral, but they were inventions gathered from his own experience, and in such sense true; like the parables of Holy Scripture, in which something is narrated circumstantially, that might very well happen in reality, for the purpose of illustrating a religious truth. The same applies to details of circumstances with which Father Furniss was used to embellish and dress up facts that had really occurred. Our Divine Lord Himself largely made use of this parabolic method of instruction, in order to accommodate His teaching to the intelligence of the simple and unlearned, that His doctrine might be more readily received, and more deeply impressed on the minds of His hearers.

Sometimes the stories of Father Furniss were allegorical. He knew the power of fancy over children, and that lessons clothed in allegory will arrest their attention more forcibly, and sink deeper in their memory, than when presented to them in a bare matter-of-fact style, or in what is sometimes called a goody-goody way.

One of our Fathers, who helped Father Furniss in a Children's Mission at St. Andrew's, Newcastle-on-Tyne, gives the following instance of his allegorical stories.

A priest from Carlisle, who had been listening one evening to Father Furniss, on coming into the Presbytery exclaimed, "What a liar that Father Furniss is! He has just been telling the children of a great black ship that sailed up the Tyne, and came into Newcastle. This ship, he said, was full of devils, and they had come to take the children to hell," etc., etc. When Father Furniss presently came in, the priest repeated that it was all a lie. Father Furniss replied that it might be so, if the priest chose to call it so, but that truly it was an allegory. The ship full of devils meant the vessels that bring home to Newcastle many bad, drunken, lustful sailors, and he meant to caution the girls especially against them, since a wide experience had taught him that such sailors on their return from a sea voyage were a moral plague in the streets where they lived. He dealt largely at times in such allegorical language. But it was easily intelligible, and he often explained it, as Our Lord Himself explained some of His own parables. He was wont to defend himself against those who attacked him, by quoting the words of St. Paul, "As deceivers, and yet true," and instancing the stories which form the groundwork of Our Lord's parables. Of course such a way of dealing with truth made a striking impression and was very successful. If he had simply said, "Beware of filthy, lustful boys who come from sea," he would not have fixed the attention of the girls as he did when he gave a very full and detailed

description of the strange black ship which he saw sailing up the Tyne full of devils with flaming red eyes," etc.

At a Children's Mission I was myself giving in a certain place, a priest from some distance dropped in to dinner, and at once, on my introduction to him, said brusquely, "Does your Father Furniss still tell as many lies as he used to do? In his mission to my children he told them one day that he would give to all who came the next evening a little umbrella. A greater crowd than usual flocked to the church in hopes of securing the promised gift, which turned out to be his bidding them to say fervently a *Hail Mary* or some other short prayer when tempted to sin, as this would be an umbrella to protect them from the rain of temptation." Of course, such a way of first addressing me, which I did think rather strange, was only a little wild talk on the part of the priest.

"Whilst we were giving a mission to the adults at St. Andrew's, Newcastle, in December, 1858," writes another Redemptorist Father, "Father Furniss was giving one to the children in the old succursal chapel of St. Patrick, Wall Knowle,* of the same parish. I saw him there one evening produce a wonderful effect on the children. It was towards the end of a discourse on mortal sin. He had described the soul that is in mortal sin as fast bound by a great heavy chain, and how the end of the chain went down, down deep into hell, and the devil held fast hold of it. He had been bending down over the rail of the platform, as though he saw what he was describing. Suddenly he sprang up, exclaiming, 'I'll break that chain, I'll break that chain!' And at the same moment all the children started up and eagerly watched what the Father was going to do. He then fell on his knees before the large crucifix on the platform, and with hands joined and uncovered head, made a most beautiful and touching act of contrition, while all the children wept and sobbed aloud."

The same Father relates that Father Furniss "gave a mission to the children in the old chapel of St. Andrew, Newcastle, in December, 1856. The children there were notoriously negligent in coming to school, Mass, and Catechism. On the first day of the mission the attendance was miserably small. Father Furniss ascertained from the priests the names of the principal localities where the children lived. He then asked the children. 'Are there any children here from Crag Alley?—from Silver Street?' etc., etc., etc. As soon as he had found a few representatives of each district, he said, 'I want you to go to all the children in ———, and tell them that the old missionary is come, and wants to see the children,' and then he went on to entertain the children with

* It has, I believe, since been pulled down.

wonderful stories, and make them take an interest in the mission. The little messengers did their work well—fresh and fresh children kept pouring into the mission every day, till the chapel was crowded, and the children were so eager to come to the mission that they ran along the streets to the chapel to secure a place near to the old missionary."

A priest who knew Father Furniss well and assisted at some of his Children's Missions communicates the following:

"In the large towns, especially where great numbers of factory boys and girls attended the evening service, he would often denounce what is known amongst them as *company-keeping*, in a way that could not fail to be most impressive. These working young people, coming from the factories into the church later than the younger children, would be seated all together in the lower benches, or in the galleries if there were any, the boys on one side and the girls on the other. Suddenly in the middle of his discourse Father Furniss would point to where they were, now on this side, and then on that, exclaiming 'Ha! I see a company-keeper,' and every head on the side he pointed to would at once be bowed down and disappear, none being able to tell whether the Father was not pointing to him or her.

"He made it a practice to ask the names of the places where young people would go for lonely walks; these he wrote down and had the list by him on the platform for reference. In his discourse he cried out: 'Beware of going out on such a road. Keep away from the —— Fields. Avoid in the evening —— Lane,' giving the several localities their well-known names. I have heard that one or other time, he made some mistake about the names. This would rather amuse his audience and raise a laugh.

"It was wonderful the use he could make of any passing incident or cutting from a newspaper. He frequently in his missions told with striking effect the following story,* which he had taken from a London journal. A Catholic girl deserted by her sweetheart committed suicide. She drowned herself in the Thames. A letter to her aunt was found on her person, stating the circumstances, and finishing with a desire to be remembered to all her companions, as a warning to young girls not to go into bad company. On the concluding words of the letter, *Remember Hannah Kelly*, Father Furniss preached one of the most touching discourses I ever heard from him or any one else. The death-like silence in the church was most telling. The Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Goss, happened to be in the sacristy and was listening. He said that he had never heard anything so impressive. Again and again in

* It is given in more detail in his *Sunday School*, p. 7, and in *God and His Creatures*, p. 281.

different keys the Father would cry out, 'Remember Hannah Kelly! Yes, remember Hannah Kelly!'"

Father Furniss knew well children's love and appreciation of drollery and fun, and by way of relief to his dear little ones in the midst of the long course of grave subjects on which they were intent, he would sometimes tell them amusing stories which provoked much laughter, some of which may be found in his little Books for Children. These stories, however, did not enter into the body of his discourses on the great truths, but were told generally in explaining the Rule of Life, or in an instruction on the Commandments. Thus, to illustrate the first Commandment, he would represent a little girl going to a fortune-teller, and saying, "Please, Mrs. Fortune-teller, will you tell me whether I shall be married?" This, of course, would provoke loud laughter all over the church, but would not detract from the general tone of seriousness that pervaded the exercises of the mission throughout its course. Father Furniss had the rare art with children of making them serious and in downright earnest, and at the same time of keeping them in good spirits, cheerful and gay. All who knew him as a missionary will remember his extraordinary talent of passing as though by magic from laughter to great seriousness. Thus he would tell a story of a very little girl who put her finger into the flame of a candle, and burnt it, but never did so again, for she had learnt a lesson which she never forgot. On Father Furniss's graphic way of narration raising a titter amongst the children, he would turn to the big boys and girls and say: "You boys and girls, you have been so often burnt by the fire of sin and hell, through your going with bad companions who have put you up to do wicked things, etc., yet you go back to them over and over again, and you cannot learn a lesson which a little girl of three years old learnt so well."

Though Father Furniss was certainly a great story-teller and was widely known as such, and this was made an objection against him by some—yet all those who, from knowing him well in several of his missions, are the best judges, affirm that his mode of instruction was most successful in imparting religious truth to the children and in gaining a moral influence over their hearts.

Father Furniss's story-telling was, however, in great contrast with that of many instructors whom one hears—who seem to make it their chief object to amuse the children and keep their attention by saying everything, at least in their instructions, in a smart and facetious way. When they tell a story—and they tell very many,—it seems told for the story's sake, to interest and amuse the children rather than to impress them with the truth or lesson which it should only serve to illustrate and enforce. It will raise a laugh, but have

little or no influence for good whether morally or religiously on the children's hearts and minds. Such teachers seem to treat children as though they were almost incapable of any serious reflection or earnestness, and as though the chief thing to do is to play upon their imagination and fancy. Very different were the thoughts of Father Furniss about children. But it was a child's reflection and a child's earnestness that he would draw out, and by ways suited to a child.

The more shallow teachers may have a wide fame and be very popular. But the thought will sometimes occur unbidden to some—perhaps not indiscreet—listeners, that they are a little anxious to show themselves off, and display their own wit and fancy, and their power of captivating the children's attention, instead of being seriously intent on promoting what should be their one only aim, the children's real spiritual good.

Father Furniss made use at times of singular expedients to preserve order and arrest the attention of the children in his missions.

One of our Fathers writes:

"It was a very difficult task to establish order in some of the large Irish missions, where Father Furniss had often a mass of quite uncultured children to deal with, and in chapels without seats or kneelers of any kind. His method there was to draw a number of chalk lines across the chapel floor, range the children along these lines, making them first stand up, then kneel, and finally squat down. When all were comfortably settled, he would begin to address them, and no one knew better how to interest them and fix their attention at one time by questions, and another time by stories, then by exhibiting something curious in the way of a picture or relic which he had brought from the Holy Places."

Canon Frith told me that he heard Father Furniss say that on one occasion, at the opening of a country mission in Ireland, the children rushed into the chapel tumultuously *en masse*—probably from the doors not having been opened in good time beforehand, or some other cause. As he foresaw that such disorder at the beginning would have a bad influence on the whole mission, all that he did was to arrange them in rows, the boys standing on one side, and the girls on the other side, make them kneel down in silence for a few minutes, and then repeat after him all together, very slowly and reverently, three *Hail Marys*. After giving some directions as to how they were to come into the chapel and take their places another time, he dismissed them, making them go out quietly and in good order. This succeeded in securing good behaviour at the services for the rest of the mission.

Canon Frith related also how Father Furniss had made use of an exceptional expedient in the mission he gave to the children of his own

parish at Stockport in 1856. Many of them were extremely rough and obstreperous, and Father Furniss had great difficulty in keeping them quiet during the hour or more they were gathering into the church before the evening service. So he took with him on the platform a large musical box belonging to the Canon, and from time to time made it play. This had a wonderful effect in calming the children, and after a few evenings he was able to dispense with the music, as the children had become so subdued and silent, that he was able to charm them and gain their attention by telling them some of his stories, and teaching them to sing the mission hymns. Canon Frith showed me the old musical box, which he still kept as a relic of Father Furniss's Children's Missions in his retirement at New Brighton.



CHAPTER XV.

Personal Recollections of Father Furniss.

THE following is from the pen of a Redemptoristine Nun, since gone to her reward:

"I had the pleasure of knowing Father Furniss after the great Kingstown mission of October, 1855, which ended November 5, with the famous 'Bible burning.' At that time the Rev. Father Furniss commenced a long six weeks mission, three weeks for the boys and three for the girls, each including between 800 and a 1,000 children. He resided during the greater part of the two missions at my uncle's, Mr. John L. O'Ferral, of Granite Hall, where he was to all the greatest subject of edification. His zeal for the success of the mission knew no bounds, far exceeding that which his weak health would naturally allow him. Morning, noon, and night found him in St. Michael's, the parish-church, indefatigable in his labours—preaching, instructing, assisting, as he was wont, from the pulpit at the Children's Mass, which he established, hearing their confessions constantly till 10 p.m., sometimes till near 11, when he would return, then take his frugal supper, visit the Blessed Sacrament in the private oratory, and retire to rest, to begin anew the arduous work of the morrow. The Rev. Father said Mass daily in the house-chapel, always making his half-hour's thanksgiving, unless on a rare occasion, when charity might shorten it; he told us once that a meditation on the *Pater*

Noster, or rather the words of this greatest of prayers, occupied him during this thanksgiving.

"The excitement occasioned by the trial and subsequent acquittal of Father Petcherine (on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception) caused Father Furniss much anxiety, as he feared that his mission might suffer from the popular emotion. To calm the children on the great evening of the 8th of December, he told us, before going down to the church, that he would gain the attention of the little girls by an alarming story. The influence which the good Father exercised over children, both rich and poor, was astonishing. One little child of eight years, rather fastidious regarding food, made a resolution during his mission to eat of whatever was presented, and never again failed in this point.

"During the short recreation which the Rev. Father permitted himself after dinner, before resuming the labours of the evening, he animated us all by his amiable gaiety, in which piety ever had the prominence. Those amongst us who were too old for the mission, he instructed in the method of meditation according to our holy Father St. Alphonsus, even writing it out, and impressed on our young minds the great importance of a well-made morning meditation, which if persevered in would be, he said, an almost certain sign of our eternal salvation. He would also, gently but persuasively, point out to us the vanity of all things in this world. Of his hearers, I may add, three had the happiness of embracing the religious life, two of whom, we have the sweet confidence, are in the possession of the reward promised by our dear Lord to those who leave all for His love. Neither would the Rev. Father permit us to be idle spectators of the mission. One morning he said that before the evening of the following day he required a hundred brown scapulars; many hands were set to work, and the Father had his desire realised.

"The Rev. Father always spoke with an extraordinary respect and esteem of his superiors and confrères, above all of the then Vice-Provincial, the Very Rev. Father Lans, of whose sanctity he inspired us with the highest idea. Father Furniss's devotion to our dear Blessed Lady was most striking, so tender, like that of a child towards a loving mother. He endeavoured also to inspire all around with a confiding devotion to his great Father and Founder, St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, and advised them to read the works of this beloved Saint. In fine, the impression which the Rev. Father made on all who had the pleasure of meeting him was of that simple but true holiness characteristic of the children of St. Alphonsus. My uncle and aunt, who were persons of no ordinary virtue, had the greatest respect and esteem for him, considering that his stay with them was calculated to bring a

blessing on their family; they welcomed him in his various visits to Ireland, whilst the Rev. Father on his part, seeing that piety reigned supreme in Granite Hall, liked to make it his passing abode. The conversations which Father Furniss held with one of my uncles, Mr. Patrick Segrave, about the Holy Land, which both had had the happiness of visiting, were most interesting; my uncle being at the same time quite charmed with the religious and no less winning manners of the good Father.

"I think it was during this mission (November and December, 1855,) that he obtained from his late Eminence of holy memory, then Dr. Cullen, the *Imprimatur* for many of his *Books for Children*. One day the Rev. Father was very anxious about a bill he had to pay to the late James Duffy, the well-known publisher: he recommended prayers to be offered before Our Lady's statue for this intention; in the evening he returned beaming with joy, with the good news that Duffy had remitted the cost of £11. The little spare time the Father had, he generally devoted to the revision of his useful publications. At a later period, 1856-1857, he arranged at Granite Hall the music to be sung by the children at the meeting of the Confraternity, etc. This mission of the winter of 1855 concluded, as is customary, with the General Communion of the children and their Consecration to the Blessed Virgin—the latter most probably for the girls on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The good Father had much to suffer from the severe weather during the mission, the ground being constantly covered with snow, and the cold intense.

"In May, 1856, Father Furniss came again to Kingstown, from a Children's Mission at Gorey, Co. Wexford, accompanied by Father Bruining, to finally arrange the establishment of two confraternities of the Holy Family, one for boys, the other for girls; the Fathers remained for about a week and then returned to England. The confraternities succeeded very well and did much good. The children had also their feasts attended to by many ladies; but as those who were the chief promoters either died or left Kingstown, the confraternities gradually lost their first stimulus, and, I hear, have for long been given up. The Children's Mass, got up at first with such enthusiasm, was also left off, but only for a time. It was once more inaugurated during the Redemptorist mission in Kingstown in 1874, and still continues every Sunday at 10 a.m.

"Father Furniss was in Ireland in the years 1857, 1858, 1860 and 1861, and as usual stopped at Granite Hall on his way to and fro. In 1860 he paid a visit to our first little monastery at Drumcondra, to which I had gone in 1859."

"I should say that Father Furniss," writes one who was his contemporary, "was a man of special piety and much given to prayer and devotional exercises. I think that he certainly made that impression on all his fellow novices. The fact of his having spent several years before he entered religion in making pilgrimages, visiting the shrines of the Madonna and Saints, collecting holy relics—in a word, in pious practices, and not in ordinary sight-seeing—is an evidence of his spirit of faith and piety. This, during the ten subsequent years of his missionary life, necessarily took the form of an intense zeal for souls, which was displayed in ceaseless and unwearied active labour. So that it would be true to say of him as of many other missionaries, 'Laborare est orare.' When on mission he was so fully occupied that little time remained for him to do much in the way of prayer beyond what was prescribed to the missionary Fathers generally. His health was very poor, and he was very weak. Consequently he was obliged to take all the rest he could, and to husband his strength, when not engaged in work for the children; and he thus spent what leisure time he had on mission chiefly in reading and taking repose.

"At home too, during the brief intervals between his missions, he devoted all the leisure time he could command to writing his books for children. This was his constant occupation. These little books required much study and reading, and he was unwearied in his search for suitable matter for them. He was, moreover, often called on to defend his doctrine and practice, and this involved a rather large correspondence.

"In fact, the spirit of his Children's Missions so entirely possessed him during those years as seemingly to take the place of any other spirit. But when his active life was over, he at once betook himself to the care of his own sanctification, and gave himself exclusively to prayer and piety. He would often then express his regret that, through giving himself with over-zeal to exterior work, he had declined from his former fervour in seeking to make progress in the interior life and the work of his own sanctification."

Father Furniss was a man of strong character; he held his convictions firmly, and had a great will of his own; he could not easily brook opposition, and was naturally inclined to be self-willed and obstinate. This at times betrayed him into difficulties, and showed itself on occasions when he would have done better to give way to the views and desires of others. He was, moreover, naturally irascible, and would fire up sometimes if anyone opposed or bantered him. Hence a certain priest used to call him "Fiery Furnace." He must, however, have combated strongly against this propensity, and by grace succeeded greatly in overcoming it, for, according

to the testimony of many priests and others, he had the general reputation of gentleness, patience, and pleasantness.

A Father who was a contemporary of Father Furniss writes:

"It was an extraordinary thing to see this man—who at home was always coughing and, as it were, completely broken down in health, and with difficulty preaching a quarter-of-an-hour's sermon in our church—renewed in life and vigour, when he met the children on mission. He was never weary in working for them, instructing them, hearing their confessions, directing their devotions at Mass, preparing them for Communion, making acts of preparation and thanksgiving for them and with them—and then, after a few days rest, he was off again to give another mission in some large town or remote country place. I believe that he gave upon the average a Mission to Children every month of the year, until he broke down altogether.

"At home in the intervals of his missions he was ever employed upon his works for children, his little *Catechism*, his *Sunday School*, his *Books for Children*, etc., which are so well known and widely spread.

"In recreation he was always cheerful and full of pleasant humour. He always had some story, some pointed remark or repartee ready to amuse the Fathers and make the recreation pass merrily."



CHAPTER XVI.

The last Years of Father Furniss.

FATHER Furniss returned home to Bishop Eton July 20, 1862, from a fortnight's Children's Mission at Brewood in the diocese of Birmingham—the last of his long series—in a very weak and exhausted state of health. He said Mass on August 2, the feast of St. Alphonsus, and the next day was seized with so severe an attack of his disease of the heart, that it was considered advisable he should receive Extreme Unction, which he did from the hands of Very Rev. E. Vaughan, the Rector. This was the commencement of his long last sickness. He had now at length quite broken down. For several months he remained confined to his bed, so seriously ill that his life was almost despaired of. He bore his sufferings and infirmities

with a patience and humility that edified all, occupied only in best preparing himself for a happy death.

In the month of September I returned to England from our House of Studies at Wittem in Limbourg, after having completed my theological course, and was attached to the monastery of Bishop Eton. I had thus the privilege of knowing Father Furniss during the six months that he still remained there. He had then somewhat rallied, and liked to have a Father with him from time to time during the day. As I was then more at home than others, I paid him frequent visits. He would have me sometimes read to him or say some prayers with him. Some days he was very cheerful, and would converse freely, saying often a little word about what was so dear to his heart—his children; but he was soon tired, and could not talk long at a time. As I was then preparing to go on some Children's Missions, several of which I took part in with Father Bradshaw during the first years of my Redemptorist life, Father Furniss liked me to read to him the instructions I was composing, made suggestions about them, and gave me little bits of advice on Children's Missions in general. I remember his inveighing once with some warmth against preaching too long sermons to the people, and especially against long exordiums. He held that sermons *ex abrupto* were often to be preferred, and set exordiums for the most part of little profit.

At times he was much dejected and depressed in spirit. One day when he was very low, and suffering much, he began to speak with apprehension and fear of his death, which he thought was near approaching. Endeavouring to encourage and console him, I remarked that St. Alphonsus says that a perfect act of conformity to God's holy will in the hour of death will not only secure our eternal salvation, but also our deliverance from purgatory. Father Furniss at once replied: "Does St. Alphonsus really say that? I do not remember him saying so. Can you find me the passage?" I promised that I would look it out for him. I found it to be in the words of the devout Blossius, cited with approval by St. Alphonsus.* I showed him the passage, He then asked me to write it out very legibly, and to fasten it near to him on the wall, so that he might easily see and read it from his bed.

On February 10, 1863, Father Furniss was at length able to say holy Mass again, for the first time since the feast of St. Alphonsus. To the record of this

* "He who dies in union with the will of God makes a holy death; and the more closely he is united to it, the more holy death doth he die. The Venerable Blossius declares that an act of perfect conformity to the will of God at the hour of death not only delivers us from hell, but also from purgatory."—*A Christian's Rule of Life*, ch. iii. s. 5, p. 121.

in the Bishop Eton chronicles is added: "Dr. Eager was the means under God of working this wonder: for it was contrary to all the hopes and declarations of his other medical attendants."

On March 1, at the earnest recommendation of Dr. Eager, the Rector took him to Ince Blundell, the residence of Mr. Weld Blundell, for a few days change of air. This greatly improved Father Furniss's health, and on March 12 the Rector accompanied him to Clapham, for what was then contemplated as only a temporary change; but St. Mary's, Clapham, his first religious home, proved to be his last resting-place for the two years and a half that remained until his death. Here he continued all along in much the same precarious invalid state, but with varying ups and downs of health and spirits. Thus the Brother was roused in the middle of the first night after Father Furniss's arrival by his loudly ringing his bell, affirming that he was dying and must be anointed. However, the Father who was brought to the sick man did not take the same view of the urgency of the case, and succeeded in calming him.

Father Furniss during these last years at Clapham was not always confined to his room, but would go about the house, and occasionally walk in the garden. He almost always took his dinner in his own room, and joined the Fathers afterwards at the common recreation. A lay-brother remarks that, whilst he was habitually recollected and observed well the silence, he was at the same time wonderfully smart and active in his movements for one so prematurely aged and bowed down by infirmities; and that, if in passing through the hall he saw any children there, he would always say to them a few good, kind, pleasant words. Nor did he lose his old sense of humour and fun, but took a pleasure sometimes in playing little innocent tricks on others.

Thus, hearing one day that the Provincial, Father Coffin, was confined to his bed through some passing indisposition, Father Furniss sent his invalid superior a very respectful message of anxious inquiry by the Infirmarian Brother, who tells the story, asking him at the same time to accept one of his little books, entitled *The Book of the Dying*, for his spiritual reading. As the publication of one or other of his little books still needed completion, he found some occupation in correcting the proofs for the press during the earlier days of his sojourn at Clapham.

Father Furniss must have considerably rallied after some eighteen months at Clapham, for he then consented to preach a little mission of a week to the children of St. Mary's. He is still remembered as sitting in his chair on the platform, preaching each evening with much earnestness to an attentive audience of little ones who occupied all the front benches, whilst the rest of the church was filled with adults. He broke down, however, after about the

fifth evening, and his place had to be supplied by another Father until the close of the mission.

Save this small effort, Father Furniss was entirely occupied during these last years with the work of his own sanctification, spending the day in pious reading, prayer, self-examination and frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He never failed, when he was able, to say holy Mass daily, and had a great devotion to make the Way of the Cross, and to pray before a very beautiful crucifix that was in his room—as well as before a Madonna copied from the one ascribed to St. Luke, which he liked to have always hanging near to his bed.

But all this time of retirement he was left, through the divine dispensation, almost wholly bereft of consolation, interior peace, and the sweets of holy solitude. For it pleased God that his soul should be sorely tried by temptation as gold in the furnace. Day and night he was anguished with many fears, scruples, and doubts, so as well nigh to despair of his eternal salvation. Yet in all these bitter trials his faith remained strong, and his only consolation was often with the greatest devotion to kiss the feet of his crucifix or the picture of Our Blessed Lady, and to cry out from his inmost soul, as he was wont to do a hundred times a day, "Blessed be God. Blessed be Jesus and Mary. Blessed be the most holy will of God." And, not satisfied with uttering these pious ejaculations orally with his lips, he would repeatedly put them with his own hands to writing. It seemed to him that all his past work for the children was fruitless and without merit; that the principles on which he had acted were wrong; that he had been carried away by over-zeal, and too great reliance on his own judgment. Hence he was continually accusing himself of wilfulness and disobedience to his superiors in his work. But all the while he had a very child-like spirit of obedience to his director, which was considered to be a special grace in reward for his love for children.

Thus did Father Furniss's lively faith shine forth conspicuously amidst the dark clouds with which his soul was obscured. Indeed, so firm and strong was this virtue in him throughout his life, that he used to say that he had never had any temptation against faith.* And now against this virtue all his difficulties and trials had no force; sustained and strengthened by faith, he was enabled to conquer them all, and to persevere to the end.

* "I remember hearing Father Coffin once say," says a Brother who survives from those days, "that Father Furniss was so full of faith that he did not think he was ever tempted on that score. He said this in such a way as to make it quite clear to me that Father Furniss was very terribly tried on other points."

Moreover, by means of these trials and straits he learned deep humility, so that not only had he very mean and lowly thoughts of his labours, his missions and books, but he did not like to hear even a word said about them. If he thought of them at all, it was rather to reproach himself with what he looked upon as their mistakes, defects, and faults.

A Father who knew Father Furniss very well, writes as follows: "Not long before his death I visited Clapham and found Father Furniss in a pitiful state. It seemed to him as though God's anger was perpetually threatening him. He was continually going to confession to any one who would hear him. He was quite like a little child, and had to be guided by strict obedience to his director and superiors. He would say that he was lost, and that there was no hope for him. He needed constantly the help of his superior to keep him out of despair."

Strange to say it was the life he had led in the Congregation which was the subject of his scruples. It seemed to him that before he entered religion, he had spent a life of great piety, devotion and recollection, really tending to perfection; but that, since he had been so much taken up with his missions in the Congregation, he had left off attending to his own sanctification, and lost his former fervour. All that he had done for the children, his ideas about their confessions and Communions—his whole system of missions, in fact—now appeared to have been wrong; and he accused himself of setting himself up in opposition to his superiors and to the priests, and nothing would satisfy him but to send letters retracting all that he had said and done in the course of his past work, to the priests of those places where he had given his Children's Missions. And this he would have done, had he not been prevented by his superior.

We need hardly say that all this was an illusion and a temptation permitted by God to try Father Furniss for his greater spiritual good, and that he might, by acts of confidence in the Divine mercy and faithfulness, merit a richer reward in heaven. It is evident that the irrefutable arguments by which he sustains his method of dealing with children in his writings, are to be preferred to the impressionable judgment which he bore upon his work, when he was broken down by long sickness, and his mind enfeebled and obscured. This appears from the testimonies of so many priests of eminence and large experience, conspicuous for their zeal and prudence, to the success and excellent fruits of Father Furniss's missions, as well as to the good esteem in which he was held on account of the edification which he gave to all by his virtuous life and conversation.

Doubtless he made mistakes sometimes, and did things which he had afterwards to regret. As is incident to men of strong wills and characters who

have at the same time very strong convictions, he strove to carry out his ideas at times with too strong a hand; but whatever were his errors and faults, the many rebukes with which it pleased God in His fatherly love to visit him at this time, gave him ample means of purifying his soul from them and making compensation.

As the time of release for Father Furniss drew near, his fears and temptations left him more and more, and his soul once more regained its confidence and calm. It seems that during the month of August he took to his bed, no more to leave it. The Infirmarian Brother has a few reminiscences of the weeks that remained. Father Furniss, he says, was continually making pious ejaculations, and often, kissing the crucifix, or with his eyes turned to his beloved picture of Mary, would exclaim: "Blessed be God, Blessed be Jesus and Mary." He also frequently repeated the following lines—of which, should he forget them, the brother was to remind him—

Jesus, my God, my bliss how great
That I can love but Thee!
Myself to Thee I consecrate,
Do what Thou wilt with me.

He also very often during those last days spoke of the saying of Blossius that any one making a perfect act of resignation at the hour of death would go straight to heaven.

On September 2, 1865, he received Extreme Unction, and on Saturday, September 16, the vigil of the feast of Our Lady of Dolours, a quarter of an hour before midnight, in possession of his senses up to the very last, and with his eyes raised to heaven, without agony he peacefully expired. May he rest in peace!

On the following Tuesday evening (September 19), at 6.30 his body was borne by his brethren to the church, where they recited in choir Matins for the Dead, and the next morning at eight o'clock Lauds, after which the Requiem Mass was sung, a very large concourse of people assisting. His body was taken at 11 a.m. for burial to the cemetery at Mortlake, there to rest with his brethren in religion. Besides the Fathers who accompanied the funeral many of the devout faithful followed on foot from Clapham.

In Memoriam.



THE following lines were written for a Catholic Journal by a priest who knew Father Furniss well, on hearing the news of his death.

"Father Furniss after his many labours has passed to eternal repose. One of those rare examples of men born to accomplish a great work has departed, leaving, however, a rich inheritance to the Catholic Church in England and Ireland.

"Born in 1809, John Furniss, after having been some time at Sedgley Park School and at Oscott, completed his course of studies at Ushaw, where he was ordained priest in the year 1834. His college life gave no further earnest of his future career than was afforded by his tranquil disposition, and by his simple, artless goodness and piety. He entered upon missionary life at Bradford, whence he was soon removed to Doncaster. After remaining there about five years, his health suddenly failed, and disease of the heart and chest brought him to the brink of the grave. After a partial recovery he was directed to leave his mission and to travel to a warmer climate. He spent several years in Italy, and visited Spain, the Holy Land and the East, thereby regaining gradually sufficient health to undertake a mission in what was then the London District. Shortly after this, however, he experienced the grace of a vocation to the religious state; and, selecting the Congregation of the Redemptorists, in the year 1850 he entered their celebrated novitiate at St. Trond in Belgium. After his profession on the Feast of the Visitation, July 2, 1851, he returned to England, and was attached to the community at St. Mary's, Clapham, until November, 1855, when he was transferred to Bishop Eton, which was his home until the spring of 1863. On his partial recovery at that date from a serious illness of several months, he was removed to Clapham and remained there until his death, September 16, 1865.

"The Congregation of which he was a member, as most of our readers are aware, has for one of its leading objects the conducting those spiritual exercises which have obtained the name, by excellence, of Missions. While engaged in this function, Father Furniss manifested such an extraordinary aptitude for interesting children, and such a marvellous gift of winning their

hearts, that he was permitted to devote himself entirely to their service. Few have ever seen their efforts for Christ's little ones blessed with so immediate and so abundant harvest; fewer still have explained so clearly and so simply the secret—so far as earthly means are concerned—of his success. He would have smiled to hear that he had systematised, if he had not discovered, the philosophy of religious training for children; and yet how else can we characterise the unpretending works in which he has laid down the whole theory and illustrated the practice which conspired to bring about the surprising effects which he produced, and which enable us to perpetuate the good that he wrought? We speak from personal knowledge and without exaggeration, when we assert that the attendance of children at Mass in certain congregations has been permanently increased sevenfold by his 'Missions to Children.' The work, which is so often found too wide and baffling for the priest, and which parents too universally neglect, was suddenly accomplished as by a miracle. To the sacraments, to Mass, to Catechism, the children flocked with ever-fresh delight, and with edifying devotion. So deeply were the foundations of his system laid that it was found equally effective on the hills of Ireland, and in the courts of London, Liverpool and Manchester. His *Books for Children* were diffused at something like an average of a thousand per month, and they exemplified the possibility of cultivating the weakest and most wayward of intellects on the old principle of *Lectorem delectando, pariterque movendo*. In this brief notice of his life a review of his publications would be out of place. We must confine ourselves to recording that his books admirably answered the purpose for which they were written, and that his *Sunday School*, especially, is likely to hold its place as the most useful and suggestive of manuals for all who are engaged in the religious training and instruction of children.

"Devout, diligent and untiring, austere to himself, the pattern of gentleness and tenderness to others, he worked with an earnestness and singleness of purpose, which have been rewarded with great consolations even in this world. With that wisdom which men deem foolishness, he descended to the level of the little ones, that he might gain them for Our Lord. The holy will of God in the sanctification of souls was his guiding star; and his motto, practically at least, *Nos stulti propter Christum*. It will be a signal favour of Divine Providence if a successor shall be found to emulate his virtues, and to devote himself with the same heroic charity and zeal to the furtherance of that important work in which the latter years of his life were spent.

"One remark in conclusion may be permitted to us, unconnected as we are in any way with Ushaw. It may alleviate the regret with which the intelligence of his death will be received in the College where he received

his training for the sacred ministry, to reflect that while the most illustrious of its students was presiding amidst the most distinguished Bishops of the Catholic world, another of its students was labouring with an almost miraculous success, amidst the lowliest and most ignorant portions of Christ's flock. Singular indeed is the felicity of Ushaw in being able to claim as its own a Cardinal Wiseman and a Father Furniss."



MISSIONS AND RETREATS

PREACHED BY FATHER FURNISS

N.B.—The Children's Missions are distinguished from General Missions in which he took part, and had at the same time the exclusive care of the children.

The number of confessions, communions, confirmations and baptisms is frequently omitted in the Mission Chronicle. Hence the statistics are necessarily very imperfect.

1851.— December 21 to January 11, 1852.—Mission at *St. Nicholas', Copperas Hill, Liverpool*, with four other Fathers under Father Prost.

1852.— February 28 to March 17.—Mission at *Mawdesley, Lancashire*, with Father Bradshaw.

March 21 to April 6.—Mission at *Woolton, near Liverpool*, with two other Fathers under Father Lans.

April, May.—Mission at *Londonderry, Ireland*, with several other Fathers.

June, July.—Mission at *St. Andrew's, Westland-Row, Dublin*.

August.—Mission at *Sheffield*.

September 8 to October 2.—Mission at *Enniskillen, Ireland*.

October 10 to November 1.—Mission at *Waterside, Londonderry, Ireland*.

November 21 to December 14.—Mission at *Letterkenny, Ireland*.

1853.— January 2 to February 1.—Mission at *Omagh, Ireland*.

February 21 to March 18.—Mission at *St. Anthony's, Liverpool*. Every day Father Furniss instructed a large congregation of children in the church, and each evening about 1,000 girls, and 800 or 900 boys in the school-rooms. Communions 1,000, of which the larger number were First Communions.

August 16 to September 25.—Mission at *Wexford, Ireland*, where he instituted two confraternities, one for the boys under the Christian Brothers, the other for the girls under the Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation Nuns.

October 16 to November 13.—Mission at *Strabane, Ireland*. First Communion of more than 500 boys and 1,000 girls. Two confraternities were established, and very many children withdrawn from Protestant schools.

November to December 6.—Children's Mission at *St. Michael's Limerick*. The confraternity of the Holy Family for girls was established with great numbers and signal success.

1854.— May 1 to 22.—Mission at *St. Mary's Cathedral, Cork*. 1,600 children at the General Communion.

June 3 to 19.—Mission at *Mallow, Ireland*.

August 3 to 16.—Retreat to the *Girls' Orphanage, Falkner Street, Liverpool*.

August 17 to 20.—Retreat to *Girls' Industrial School, Mount Vernon, Liverpool*.

August 20 to September 4.—Children's Mission at *St. Oswald's, Old Swan, Liverpool*. 300 children confirmed.

September 20 to October 3.—Mission at *Douglas, Isle of Man*. Children's confraternity established.

October 8 to 28.—Mission at *St. Finbar's, Cork*. The Children's Mission was given in the Franciscan Church, 2,000 at the General Communion.

December.—Children's Mission at *St. Vincent's, Liverpool*.

1855.— January 3 to 28.—Mission at *Virginia Street Chapel, London*.

February 3 to 17.—Children's Mission at *St. Mary's, Clapham*, simultaneously with an adult mission.

February 24 to March 25.—Mission at *St. Michael's, Dublin*. Children's Instruction daily at 2 p.m. in the church. Evening mission service for boys and girls alternately in the school-room. 1,400 Communion of children, of which 200 were First Communion.

April to May.—Mission at *St. Wilfrid's, Manchester*. A large General Communion of children.

May.—Triduum to children at *Rochdale*, in preparation for their confirmation.

June 3 to 20.—Children's Mission at *St. Nicholas', Copperas Hill, Liverpool*. 800 children at Holy Mass each day.

July.—Children's Mission at *St. Vincent's, Liverpool*.

August 4 to 18.—Children's Mission (girls) at *Blackstock Street, Liverpool*, with very great success.

September 11 to 25.—Children's Mission (boys) in the same church. 750 Communion.

November, December.—Children's Mission at *Kingstown, Ireland*, first for the boys, then for the girls; 1,900 confessions, 1,600 Communion. Large confirmations, two confraternities established for the children. The mission

had very great success. During its course there was great excitement on account of the trial that was going on of Father Petcherine, for his alleged Bible-burning at the end of the adult mission which had immediately preceded. The trial resulted in his glorious acquittal on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8.

1856.—January, February.—Children's Mission at *York*, both in the church, and also in the Convent for girls. 300 Communions, two confraternities established. 17 baptisms.

March 1 to 8.—Children's Mission at *Blackbrook, Lancashire*.

March 8 to 13.—Children's Mission at *Rochdale*. 600 Communions, 3 baptisms.

March 14 to 21.—Retreat during Holy Week to the Students (50) at *Ampleforth College*.

March 28 to 31.—Triduum at *St. Patrick's, Liverpool*, to children, in preparation for their confirmation.

April 5 to 22.—Children's Mission at *St. Alban's, Blackburn*. 1,100 Communions, 800 confirmed, 23 baptisms.

May.—Children's Mission at *Gorey, Co. Wexford, Ireland*. 1,200 Communions.

June.—Renewal of the late Children's Mission at *Kingstown, Ireland*, to consolidate the children's confraternities of the Holy Family, that had been there erected.

June.—Children's Mission at *St. Nicholas', Copperas Hill, Liverpool*.

June 29 to July 2.—Triduum at the *Girls' Orphanage, Falkner Street, Liverpool*.

July 5 to 28.—Children's Mission at *St. Patrick's, Manchester*. 2,000 Communions, 700 confirmed, two confraternities established, 26 baptisms.

August 8 to September 1.—Children's Mission at *Stockport*. 2,500 at the General Communion, 977 confirmed, 2,700 confessions, 50 baptisms.

September 19 to October 13.—Children's Mission at *Macclesfield*. 1,000 Communions, 30 baptisms.

October, November.—Children's Mission at *St. Patrick's, Leeds*.

November.—Children's Mission at *St. Anne's, Leeds*. 1,000 Communions, 30 baptisms.

December 16.—Children's Mission at *St. Andrew's, Newcastle-on-Tyne*. 1,200 Communions, 30 baptisms.

1857.—January 16 to February 9.—Children's Mission at *Birkenhead*. 2,000 received the sacraments. Confirmation, 25 baptisms.

February 22 to March 16.—Children's Mission at *St. Mary's, Manchester*. 1,000 Communions, 760 confirmed, 22 baptisms.

March 22 to April 6.—Children's Mission at *Barton-on-Irwell, Manchester*. 450 Communions, 369 confirmed, 27 baptisms.

May 23 to June 12.—Children's Mission at *Ballyshannon, Ireland*. 2,500 Communions, 700 confirmed.

June 20 to July 6.—Children's Mission at *Letterkenny, Ireland*. 2,100 Communions, 700 confirmed.

July 11 to 27.—Children's Mission at *Drumholm, Ireland*. Two General Communions during the mission, i.e., the same 2,400 children received twice, 500 confirmed, children's confraternity of the Holy Family established.

August.—Children's Mission at *Enniscorthy, Ireland*. 900 communions, 450 confirmed.

October 16 to November 12.—Children's Mission at *Sunderland*. 800 Communions, 750 confirmed, 40 baptisms.

December 2 to 21.—Children's Mission at *Hyde, Manchester*. 750 Communions, 15 baptisms.

1858.—January 8 to 20.—Children's Mission in the *Passionists' Church, Broadway, Worcestershire*. 68 Communions, 15 baptisms.

February 5 to March 1.—Children's Mission at *St. Vincent's, Liverpool*. 900 Communions, 478 confirmed, 10 baptisms.

March 6 to 21.—Children's Mission at *Scarborough*. 150 Communions, 14 baptisms.

March 22 to 28.—Retreat at *Ampleforth College* to Benedictine Fathers (16).

March 30 to April 4.—Retreat at *Ampleforth, College* to the Students.

April 11 to May 10.—Children's Mission at *St. Anne's, Blackburn*. 735 Communions.

May 11 to 24.—Children's Mission at *St. Alban's, Blackburn*. 600 Communions, 30 baptisms.

June 18 to July 10.—Children's Mission at *Gorey, Ireland*. 800 Communions.

July.—Children's Mission at *St. John's, Salford*. 1,100 Communions, 20 baptisms.

August.—Retreat to boys (60) at *Woolhampton School*.

September 18 to October 4.—Children's Mission at *Newport, Monmouthshire*. 700 Communions, 20 baptisms.

October 6 to 11.—Retreat to young lady boarders at the *Notre Dame Convent, Clapham*.

October 16 to 31.—Children's Mission at *Stratford, Essex*. 600 Communions, 25 baptisms.

November 10 to 22.—Children's Mission at *Sunderland*. 600 Communions, 40 baptisms.

December.—Children's Mission at *St. Andrew's, Newcastle-on-Tyne*. 900 Communions, 110 baptisms. Father Furniss gave this mission in what was then the succursal Church of St. Andrew, at Wall Knowle, as other Redemptorist Fathers were giving simultaneously a mission to adults in the principal church.

1859.—January 15 to February 6.—Children's Mission at *St. Anne's, Spitalfields, London*, the church of the Marist Fathers. Above 1,000 at the General Communion; Cardinal Wiseman confirmed 900; 30 baptisms.

February 25 to March 20.—Children's Mission at *St. Augustine's, Manchester*. 1,500 Communions, 400 confirmed, 75 baptisms.

March 28 to April 2.—Retreat to penitents, at the *Good Shepherd, Liverpool*.

May 27 to June 14.—Children's Mission at *Whitehaven*. 300 Communions.

June 24 to July 18.—Children's Mission at *Staleybridge*. 3,000 Communions, 75 baptisms. This mission was immediately followed by three days renewal, to keep the children from some dangerous wakes then going on in the town, during which there were 500 additional Communions.

July 19 to 27.—Children's Mission at *Hyde, Manchester*. 500 Communions, 7 baptisms.

August.—Children's Mission at *Burnley*. 1,000 Communions, of which 500 were First Communions, 400 first confessions, 700 confirmed, 30 baptisms.

September 4 to 25.—Children's Mission at *St. Patrick's, Manchester*. 2, 500 Communions, 1,399 confirmed, 40 baptisms. 6,600 medals were sold during the mission.

October.—Children's Mission at *Barton-on-Irwell, Manchester*, with signal success.

October.—Children's Mission at *Carlisle*. 600 Communions, 35 baptisms.

November.—Children's Mission at *Chorley*. 1,400 confessions, 1,000 Communions, 620 confirmed, 35 baptisms.

December.—Children's Mission at *St. Aloysius', Somerstown, London*. 1,200 confessions, 450 Communions, 271 confirmed, 1 baptism.

1860.— January 5 to 23.—Children's Mission, at *Ashton-under-Lyne*. 1,100 confessions, 700 Communions, 20 baptisms.

February 3 to 28.—Children's Mission at *St. Wilfrid's, Manchester*. 1,700 confessions, 1,300 Communions, 900 confirmed, 29 baptisms.

March 4 to 25.—Children's Mission at *St. Patrick's, Soho Square, London*. 900 confessions, 600 Communions, 8 baptisms.

April 12 to May 8.—Children's Mission at *Dundalk, Ireland*. 2,000 confessions, 1,511 Communions, 1,200 confirmed, 1 baptism.

May 25 to June 17.—Children's Mission at *St. Anne's, Spitalfields, London*, the church of the Marist Fathers, with the same success as at the former mission there. 1,400 confessions, 750 Communions, 450 confirmed, 26 baptisms.

June 23 to July 17.—Children's Mission at *Berwick-on-Tweed*. 400 confessions, 350 Communions, 7 baptisms.

July.—Children's Mission at *The Brooms, near Newcastle-on-Tyne*. 130 Communions, 10 baptisms.

August.—Children's Mission at *Blackhill, near Newcastle-on-Tyne*. 350 Communions, 15 baptisms.

August, September.—Children's Mission at *Bishop Auckland*. 350 Communions, 15 baptisms.

September 25 to October 1.—Retreat to the Students at *Ampleforth College*.

October 11 to 29.—Children's Mission at *Naas, Ireland*. 1,000 Communions, 10 baptisms.

November 7 to 28.—Children's Mission at *St. Chad's, Manchester*. 1,000 Communions, 600 confirmed, 15 baptisms.

December.—Children's Mission at *St. Mary's, Wigan*. 700 Communions, 530 confirmed, 4 baptisms.

1861.— January 3 to 21.—Children's Mission at *St. Vincent's, Liverpool*. 600 Communions, 400 confirmed, 20 baptisms.

February 27 to March 19.—Children's Mission at *SS. Mary and John's, Snowhill, Wolverhampton*. 700 Communions, 28 baptisms.

March 20 to 25.—Retreat to boys at *Sedgley Park Schools*.

April 3 to 29.—Children's Mission at *St. Anne's, Blackburn*. 1,100 confessions, 650 Communions.

May 2 to 22.—Children's Mission at *St. Mary's, Leeds*, Church of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. 1,200 confessions, 700 Communions, 21 baptisms.

May 24 to June 11.—Children's Mission at *St. Nicholas', Copperas Hill, Liverpool*. 1,100 confessions, 400 Communions, 22 baptisms.

June 14 to July 2.—Children's Mission at *Kirkham, Lancashire*. 550 confessions, 400 Communions, 15 baptisms.

July 10 to 30.—Children's Mission at *St. John's Cathedral, Salford*. 1,600 confessions, 1,200 Communions, 27 baptisms.

August 21 to September 19.—Children's Mission at *Drogheda, Ireland*. 5,000 confessions, 4,000 Communions, 1,000 confirmed, 2 baptisms.

October.—Children's Mission at *Durham*. 700 Communions, 15 baptisms.

November.—Children's Mission at *St. Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle-on-Tyne*. 1,000 Communions, 60 baptisms.

December.—Children's Mission at *St. Mary's, Liverpool*, Church of the Benedictines. 1,000 Communions, 16 baptisms.

1862.—January 8 to 28.—Children's Mission at *SS. Peter and Paul's, Wolverhampton*. 900 confessions, 600 Communions, 15 baptisms.

February 5 to 26.—Children's Mission at *St. Charles', Hull*. 1,500 confessions, 1,000 Communions, 50 baptisms.

March 13 to April 11.—Children's Mission at *St. Patrick's, Liverpool*, the first fortnight to the boys, the second to the girls. 2,000 confessions, 1,400 Communions, 30 baptisms.

May 22 to June 5.—Children's Mission at *Hartlepool*, 500 confessions, 300 Communions, 18 baptisms.

July 16 to 20.—Children's Mission at *Brewood, Stafford*. 150 Communions, 10 baptisms.

1864.—September 25 to October 3.—Children's Mission in the Redemptorist Church, *St. Mary's, Clapham*, assisted by two other Fathers.

TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSIONS AND RETREATS, 115.

APPENDIX.

I.

On Metrical Mass—prayers for popular use in Medieval Times.

THE following extracts are added, as they may serve to show that there were in the middle ages some analogous precedents at least for Father Furniss's use of popular devotions in the vernacular during the celebration of Holy Mass.

"The Instructions and Prayers which Canon Simmons has entitled *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*," writes Father Bridgett,* "differ from the prayers contained in the Primers or Laymen's prayer-books, especially in this, that the latter are mostly authorised liturgical prayers or else translations, whereas the prayers to be said during Mass are private compositions. They differ from those in our ordinary modern English Missals and prayer-books, in that both rubrics and prayers are in rhyme. They are rather like the *Children's Mass* of the late Father Furniss, C.S.S.R., except that this was intended for congregational singing, whereas the old English rhymes were for private reading. The prayers are seldom translations of those of the liturgy, though they are in harmony with their character and object. Several copies exist of this book, or rather several variations and adaptations of an older English rhyme, which Canon Simmons believes to have been itself a translation of an original in Norman-French, made in the twelfth century. . . To confine ourselves to one version.

"The priest is supposed to vest at the altar, as he would probably do in the oratories of noblemen, or even in many parish churches which had no sacristies. The people kneel. The author in red letter explains what the priest does at the foot of the altar, and exhorts his reader to shrive himself, *i.e.*, to confess his sins together with the priest and the Mass server, saying the

* *History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain*, vol. ii. pp. 58-66.

Confiteor. I give his translation of this as a specimen. 'I know to God, full of might—And to His mother, maiden bright—And to all hallows here—And to thee, father ghostly—That I have sinned largely—In many sins sere—In thought, in speech, and in delight—In word and work I am to wite—And worth to blame—Therefore I pray St. Mary—And all hallows holy—In God's name—And the priest to pray for me—That God have mercy and pity—For His manhede—Of my wretched sinfulness—And give me grace and forgiveness—Of my misdeed. Pater, Ave, Credo.'

"The assistant is then told to stand after the Confiteor, when the priest is 'at the south altar nook,' and to pray for the celebrant that he may acquit himself well of the Mass; and also for all present and all living and dead for whom it is offered. The Gloria in Excelsis is paraphrased and to be said by the assistant standing. He kneels at the Collects and Epistle, and says Paters. At the Gospel he stands, makes a large sign of the Cross, and says, 'In the name of the Father, and Son, and the Holy Ghost—A [*i.e.* one] soothfast God of might most—Be God's word welcome to me—Joy and louing [*i.e.* praise], Lord, be to Thee.'

"If he could not follow the Gospel—and in the middle ages collections of the Mass Gospels in English, though not unknown, were rare,—he would at least say as follows: 'Jesus mine, grant me Thy grace—And of amendment, might and space—Thy word to keep and do Thy will—The good to choose and leave the ill—And that it so may be—Good Jesu, grant it me. Amen.'

"The Creed is given in verses of eight or four syllables; 'I trow in God, Father of might—That all has wrought—Heaven and earthe, day and night—And all of nought,' etc.

"At the Offertory the assistant may offer or not, according to his devotion. The prayer commemorates the offerings of the Magi. When the priest asks prayers at the Orate Fratres, the layman replies, 'The Holy Ghost in thee light—And send into thee right—Rule thy heart and thy speaking—To God's worship and His louing.'

"'When time is near of saking'*—A little bell men used to ring—Then shalt thou do reverence—To Jesus Christ's own presence—That may loose all baleful bands—Kneeling hold up both thy hands—And so the levation thou behold—For that is He that Judas sold—And since was scourged and done on Rood—And for mankind there shed His Blood—Such prayer then thou make—As likes best thee to take—Sundry men pray sere [*i.e.* several]—Each man in his best manner—Short prayer should be without dread—And therewith Pater Noster and the Creed—If thou of one be

* Page 65.

unpurveyed—I set here one that may be said—Though I mark it here in letter—Thou may change it for a better.'

"The prayer that he adds is in another metre, and was probably an older form in common use. It is as follows

"'Loued be Thou, King—and blessed be Thou, King—Of all Thy gifts good—And thanked be Thou, King—Jesus all my joying—That for me spilt Thy Blood—And died upon the Rood—Thou give me grace to sing—The song of Thy louing.—Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo.'

"A later form in another MS. is this:

"'Welcome, Lord, in form of bread—For me Thou tholedst a painful deed—As Thou sufferedst the crown of thorn—Grant me grace, Lord, I be not lorn.'

"Some Latin prayers are provided in the MS. as substitutes. One consists of five series of honourable titles, somewhat like those of our modern Litany of the Name of Jesus, each series beginning, 'Ave Jesu Christe;' the second is a more popular rhyme:

"'Ave Caro Christi cara—Immolata Crucis ara—
Pro redemptis Hostia—Morte Tua nos amara—
Fac redemptos luce clara—Tecum frui gloria.'*

". . . † The Rev. Colin Grant of Eskadale informs me that in Inverness the Catholic peasants are accustomed to recite Gaelic verses in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, which are derived from no prayer-book, but have been handed down by tradition, perhaps from pre-reformation times.

"He has kindly furnished me with the following translation, and with the original Gaelic, which I give in a note. He says that the rhythm halts sometimes, as if the verses had been imperfectly handed down. He took them in July, 1880, from the mouth of John Macdonald, of Eskadale, 99 years old, who learnt them 80 years ago from Donald McGruar, Strathglass, then 70.

"'Hail to Thee, O Body of Christ—Hail to Thee, O King of Hosts—Hail to Thee, O gracious Godhead—Hail to Thee, O true Manhood [Man]—As Thou wert pleased, O Christ, to come—Under the cover of bread, Thy whole Body—Heal my soul from every evil—that is upon me now—Hail to Thee, Blood and Flesh—Hail to Thee, Food of grace—Wash my sins in the Blood

* Our layman was told to say after the *Ite Missa est*, "God be thanked of all his works—God be thanked of priests and clerks—God be thanked of ilk a man—And I thank God as I can."

† Page 66.

of Thy grace—Hail to Thee, both Man and God—Guard me from him that goeth about—May I receive Thee at the hour of my death—O Trinity without end, without beginning—Neither let Thy anger be upon me—Hail to Thee, true Body, born of Mary Virgin—By Thy being pierced, shedding waves of Blood—Holy Trinity, grant us Thy sacraments—To-day and at our death hour, and Amen."



II.

On the Age in former times for Children's First Communion.

At what age children were generally prepared for their first confession and Communion in early times and in the middle ages, there is little certain information in history, still there are some indications. It seems that there was some variety of opinion and practice on the matter in different times and places. Not to speak of Infant Communion, which continued to prevail for many centuries, but from which we are now prescinding,—that very little children capable of instruction received Holy Communion in the seventh and eighth centuries is clear from a canon of St. Willibrord, which says: "If any communicate after breaking his fast, let him do penance for seven days on bread and water. But let little children, if they do so, be flogged."* We might gather the same still earlier in the sixth century, from the story told by St. Gregory of Tours of a little Jewish boy, who after receiving Communion was miraculously preserved by the Blessed Virgin from being burned to death.†

"We know from Venerable Bede that in his opinion there were great numbers of boys and girls whose life was so innocent that he wished them to communicate more frequently than was then the custom. From the laws of Howel the Good, drawn up in 960, we find that children then confessed in Wales at a very early age: 'The child of seven that shall go under the hand of the confessor,' etc. In the twelfth century an anonymous author thus writes; 'Give not the Lord's Body to boys under ten years old; for although they are pure, yet they know not what they receive. But if death is imminent,

* *History of the Holy Eucharist*, vol. i. p. 223.

† See *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries*, p. 322.

Communion may be given them though they are only nine or eight, or even seven years old, if they know the Our Father and are good."

"Bishop Henry of Sisteron, who governed his church from 1240 to 1250, fixes an earlier age: 'Let priests admonish their parishioners to teach children from the age of seven and upwards the Pater Noster and the Credo, and on Good Friday bring them with them to the church to kiss the Cross, and on Easter Day to receive the Body of Christ, having however previously confessed.'"^{*}

III.

On Children's Confession and Communion, from the Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

A.—DE SCIENTIA.

Altera sunt præcepta explicite credenda *de necessitate medii*, altera *de necessitate præcepti*. Nulli dubium est quin explicite de necessitate medii credenda sint Deum esse, et remuneratorem esse boni et justum vindicem mali. Quoad autem mysteria SS. Trinitatis et Incarnationis et mortis Jesu Christi, licet adsit sententia probabilis pro utraque parte an debeant credi ex necessitate medii aut præcepti, attamen certum est ex prop. 64 ex damnatis ab Innoc. XI., non esse absolutionis capacem qui ignoret ea mysteria. Explicite vero *de necessitate præcepti* debent sciri et credi, *saltem in substantia*, ut docet S. Carolus Borromæus in sua *Instructione ad confessarios*, 1° Symbolum Apostolorum; 2° Oratio Dominicalis, et Salutatio Angelica; 3° Præcepta Decalogi et Ecclesiæ; 4° Sacramenta quæ cuilibet sunt necessaria, ut Baptismus, Eucharistia et Pœnitentia, cæterorum enim sufficit habere fidem implicitam, cum explicita sit tantum necessaria illis qui ea suscipiunt.[†]

"Non omnes tenentur sub mortali hæc prædicta scire memoriter, aut eo ordine, aut iis verbis quibus proponuntur; sed quoad Orationem Dominicam scire, omnia bona petenda esse a Deo, quæ est ejus summa: quoad

^{*} *History of the Holy Eucharist*, vol. ii. pp. 24, 25.

[†] *Homo Apostolicus*, Tract. 4. n. 3.

symbolum vero, præcepta et sacramenta, sufficit, si quis rogatus de singulis recte respondeat. (*Hoc est conforme illi, quod tradidit S. Carolus Borromæus in sua Instruct. ad confessarios, ubi docuit satis esse quod fideles rudes sciant Credo. saltem in substantia*).*

B.—DE SACRAMENTO PŒNITENTIÆ.

1. *Obligatio*.—Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, omnia sua peccata, saltem semel in anno, fideliter confiteatur proprio sacerdoti. Tenentur ad hos præceptum qui ante septennium pervenerint, si jam usum rationis adepti sunt.

2. *Defectus Præparationis*.—Absolutionis est incapax qui ignorat quatuor mysteria principalia.†

Confessarius tenetur instruere pœnitentem, cum observat, aut prudenter judicat illum necessaria fidei et salutis ignorare.‡

Perperam agunt ii qui rudes dimittant, ut melius se examinent; hoc P. Segneri vocat errorem intolerabilem, et jure optimo.§ Tenetur confessarius eos examinare, interrogando juxta ordinem decalogi.** Advertat nihilominus confessarius se non teneri tam minute hos interrogare; interrogat tantum de peccatis, in quæ faciliter incidere possunt, spectata eorum conditione et capacitate.††

Errant ii confessarii qui volunt certum judicium facere de peccati qualitate, an sit grave vel leve, exquirendo a rudibus istis, utrum pro mortali habebant, an pro veniali; hi enim multoties respondent ut casus sibi verba suggerit.‡‡

Multoties, etiamsi pueri interrogati de sexto præcepto negent, prodest uti cum eis interrogationibus suggestivis, v.g. Et nunc dic mihi, quoties hæc fecisti? Quinques, decies?§§

* *Theol Mor.* Lib. 3, Tract. 1, cap. 1. n. 3. [Footnote indicator added to text]

† *Homo Ap.* Tract. iv. n. 3.

‡ *Homo Ap.* Tract. xvi. n. 105.

§ *Ibid.* 103.

** Tract. ult. n. 18.

†† Tract. xvi. n. 103.

‡‡ *Ibid.*

§§ Tract. ult. 37.

3. *Contritio*.—Perpauci sunt pœnitentes, præsertim rudes, qui præposito actu doloris ad confitendum accedunt.* Oportet curare ut pueri eliciant actum doloris necessarium ad suscipiendam absolutionem, modo respectu ipsorum magis proprio.†

4. *Absolutio*.—Consuetudinarius qui prima vice suum pravum habitum confitetur bene potest absolvi, etiamsi nulla emendatio præcesserit, modo eam serio proponat.‡

Probabiliter potest absolvi *sub conditione* qui aliquas tantum imperfectiones confitetur, de quibus dubitatur an pertingant ad venialia; hoc tamen non admitterem sæpe—nisi semel in mense—neque si ille posset materiam certam de vita anteacta præbere.§

Si dubium sit an puer perfectum usum rationis habeat . . . bene potest administrari hoc sacramentum *sub conditione* 1°. in periculo mortis; 2°. in obligatione implendi præceptum paschale; 3°. quando justa adest causa, ut esset hæc liberandi hunc puerum a statu damnationis, si unquam in illum est lapsus. Idque agendum, *etiamsi puer sit recidivus*; dum ideo differri debet absolutio iis qui perfectam discretionem habent, quia spes est quod ex tali dilatione ipsi redeant dispositi; sed spes hæc difficulter haberi potest a pueris, qui perfecto usu rationis carent. 4°. Probabiliter dicunt plures doctores quod pueri isti dubie dispositi absolvi possunt (saltem post duos vel tres menses) sub conditione, licet sola venialia afferant, ne careant diu gratia sacramentali, et forte etiam sanctificante, si forte aliquam gravem culpam haberent ipsis occultam.**

5. *Pœnitentiæ injungendæ*.—Potest minui pœnitentia, si pœnitens est infirmus spiritu; adeo ut prudenter timeatur ne ille non adimpleat pœnitentiam proportionatam. "Talem imponat pœnitentiam, ait S. Carolus Borromæus,†† qualem a pœnitente præstari posse judicet."

Pœnitentia his pueris injungenda levis sit quantum fieri potest, et curandum quod illa ab ipsis quantocius impleatur, alioquin aut eam obliviscentur, aut omittent.‡‡

Cum pueris adhibere debet omnem charitatem et modos suaviores quantum fieri potest.§§

* Tract. xvi. 117.

† Tract. ult. 38.

‡ *Theol. Mor. Lib. vi. Tract. 4. n. 459.*

§ *Ibid. n. 432; Homo Ap. Tract. xvi. n. 6.*

** *Homo Ap. Tract. ult. n. 38.*

†† *Ibid. Tract. xvi. n. 50.*

‡‡ *Ibid. Tract. ult. n. 38.*

§§ *Ibid. n. 37.*

C.—DE SS. EUCHARISTIA.

1. Pueri baptizati rationis impotes, et perpetuo amentes Eucharistiam sumendo vere gratiæ augmentum percipiunt, quia sufficit hoc sacramentum in gratia suscipere, ad ejus effectum sane percipiendum. Ob majorem tamen reverentiam hujus sacramenti, Ecclesia Latina merito illud parvulis dari prohibuit.*

2. Quæritur an pueri statim ac usum rationis adepti sunt, et confessionis sunt capaces, possint et debeant communicare. Affirmant Palud., S. Antoninus, etc.; sed communiter et probabiliter negant alii: nam cum majorem reverentiam exposcat Communio, et propterea majorem quoque expostulat cognitionem; saltem quia hæc obligatio sic a communi Ecclesiæ usu intellecta est.†

3. Cæterum valde probabiliter dicunt Suar., Sot., Laym., Castrop., etc., cum S. Thoma, quod licet hujusmodi parvuli non teneantur, *semper ac tamen discernere valeant hunc cælestem panem a terreno, possunt admitti ad Communionem*. "Quia (ait S. Doctor) possunt aliquam devotionem concipere." Et id confirmatur ex *Can. penult. 26, qu. 6*, ubi dicitur: "Cui Pœnitentiæ Sacramentum conceditur, neque Eucharistiæ Sacramentum denegari debet, si desiderat."‡

4. Dicunt communiter doctores, regulariter loquendo, obligationem communicandi incipere ab anno nono, et non posse differri ultra 12, aut ad plus 14.§

5. Dictum est *regulariter*, nam ut advertunt auctores, citius possunt obligari pueri qui ante talem ætatem perspicaciores conspiciuntur. Unde recte reprehendit Ronc. parochos, qui indiscriminatim non admittunt ad communionem nisi pueros in certa ætate constitutos.**

* *Theol. Mor. Lib. vi. Tract. 3, cap. 2, n. 301.*

† *Homo Ap. Tract. xii. n. 43.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*

** *Theol. Mor. Lib. vi. Tract. 3, cap. 2, n. 301.*

6. Pueris qui jam sunt rationis compotes, in articulo mortis non solum communio dari potest, sed etiam debet. Idem docet Benedictus XIV.*



* *Ibid.*

