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Educationist
in India*

Rev. FRANCIS BERTRAM, S.J.
1870-1936



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A GREAT EDUCATIONIST IN INDIA

FR. FRANCIS BERTRAM, (1870-1935)

by Rev. Francis X. Froehle, S.J.

Preparation

Francis Bertram was born at Montigny, near Metz, in Lorraine, 23rd July, 1870. War had just been declared between France and Germany and soon nothing was heard round the baby's cradle but the booming of the cannon and the clash of arms. God, however, who had destined him for a higher kind of warfare, protected him from every danger. He spent his childhood in great purity of heart, as may be gathered from his retreat notes of 1935. At the age of twelve he obeyed the divine call and set out for the Jesuit School of Littlehampton in Sussex, where his elder brother Augustine had preceded him by several years. He soon gave proof of more than ordinary talent and marked aptitudes for the study of languages. Fr. Chapiron, his professor of rhetoric, predicted that he would one day be one of the pillars of a College. Unfortunately his physical development did not keep pace with his progress in studies. When the time for joining the novitiate drew near, his health was so delicate that three Jesuit Provincials in succession refused to admit him, especially as he had now lost the use of his left ear. Disheartened as he might well be, he tried a last chance with Fr. George Bouteland, the Procurator in Paris of the Madura Mission, who answered with that heartiness so characteristic of him: "Don't worry, I shall see to it that you are admitted to the Toulouse Province, your infirmity is no reason why you should be rejected; priests do not hear confessions with both ears at the same time." Accordingly the young candidate entered the novitiate of

Toulouse on 14th August, 1888, and shortly after sailed for India in company with two Jesuit Fathers, Leo Besse and Hadrian Caussanel and two Scholastics, Bros. Louis Lacombe and John Atkinson. The sea voyage proved a severe test to him, and when the party landed at Pondicherry, the Archbishop, on seeing him, said to the two priests in a half angry tone: "Why did you bring out this skeleton? He won't live for a month." As it fell out, he outlived all his companions.

The novitiate was then at Dindigul. There his health so improved in spite of the trying climate, that towards the end of his noviceship he was fit for hard studies. He also made rapid progress in virtue under the sure guidance of Fr. Casimir Cros, who was then combining the two offices of district superior and master of novices. Fr. Cros was a man of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and of the third degree of humility. His long experience of missionary life enabled him to be eminently practical in his exhortations.

It was at the school of such a master that Brother Bertram laid the foundations of his great self-effacement. When at the height of his popularity at Madras, he was as simple and obedient as a child. No sign of boasting or swaggering could ever be detected in him. He likewise laid to heart his master's lessons on mortification and self-denial. Till the end of his life he kept up the practices of penance customary in the novitiate and after his death it was found that he had marked his particular examen till the eve of his operation. In the novitiate too he contracted the habit of keeping a spiritual journal and daily noting down the fruit gathered from his morning meditation. This journal is a mirror of his soul and reveals to us his inmost thoughts and feelings, his for-

ward movements and occasional setbacks on the road to perfection.

Brother Bertram had not yet completed his novitiate, when he was ordered to St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, to prepare for a University degree. This meant five years of hard study under trying circumstances. He began to experience what was to be the great trial of his life, viz., drowsiness caused by the climate and indifferent health. As he humorously expressed it, from the moment of rising till breakfast he led a vegetative life, from breakfast till 8 o'clock an animal life and only then his intellectual life began. But Br. Bertram set to work in right earnest and after a year passed his Matriculation, scoring first class marks. After his F.A. two years later a great act of obedience was demanded of him: to prepare for a degree in Mathematics. That was not in his line; he had a talent for literature and in course of time gained such a mastery of English that he was often taken for an Englishman. But Science was then as now the popular subject and the College had to prepare professors of Science. To mathematics, then, Br. Bertram applied himself, adding Greek for his second language. By way of diversion he turned to natural science, especially bee-keeping and the study of snakes. In his "Life of Fr. Honoré" written in French, he describes in detail the humble beginnings of the College Museum which is to-day one of the attractions of Trichinopoly. Alas, his love for nature was to cost him dear. One day, as he was collecting insects among the prickly pears along the Trichinopoly-Karur railway line, he lost his right eye by running a thorn into it. Thus it was that God visited his servant with infirmities which were to keep him humble

and modest amid his great success as an educationist. How painful it must be for a man deprived of the use of his left ear and his right eye to carry on a conversation when surrounded by many persons !

He sat for his B.A. degree in December 1895, not long after Fr. J. D. W. Sewell had obtained from the Government of Madras to accept the complete and successful course of Jesuit literary, scientific and philosophic studies as equivalent to the Licentiate in Teaching, much like what then obtained among the Jesuits in England. This recognition, for which we are greatly indebted to the late Dr. Duncan, then Director of Public Instruction, brought about further improvements in the training of the young Jesuits in India. By order of Rev. Fr. Martin, the then General of the Society of Jesus, the scholasticate was forthwith severed from St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly ; a house of higher studies, the Sacred Heart College, was inaugurated at Shembaganur on the Palni Hills, for all the Jesuit Missions in India and Ceylon, with a sister college at Kurseong for theology. These institutions undoubtedly entailed heavy expenses, but the Society never shrinks from costs, when there is question of the training of its own members. Moreover, in spite of the glamour of "academic" qualifications, it will never give up its own system of education according to the *Ratio Studiorum*, which has stood the test of four centuries. Do not suppose, however, that if Jesuits are thrown into the same mould personal initiative is killed thereby. It is on the contrary in the interests of the Society to turn the aptitudes of its members to the best advantage and its history gives evidence that it has

produced men of eminence in every branch of learning. Fr. Bertram himself was soon found out to be an eminent administrator and was made Principal of St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, where he gave of his best.

It was during his university studies that Br. Bertram came under the spell of two leaders of men who definitely shaped his spiritual life and instilled into his mind asectic principles from which he never departed. In his biographical sketch of Fr. Honoré already referred to, he is at great pains to bring out the real characters of Fr. Joseph Faseuille and Fr. Leo Barbier, who formed so sharp a contrast and yet exercised, each in his own way, a lasting influence over the younger members of the Society. Later on he loved to recall Fr. Faseuille's remark to encourage him in the study of botany: "I want you to lose some of your time, that you may not lose your head," or Fr. Barbier's answer to his advisers who objected to the editing of "*Counsel*", the forerunner of the "*Magazine*"; "Should the paper last but one year, it would do good for one year."

In January 1896 Br. Bertram was appointed Assistant to Fr. Henry du Ranquet and taught the Junior B.A. class of Mathematics till the end of 1897, when he was transferred to Shembaganur for the study of philosophy. By this time his health had improved and he gave free scope to his spirit of organisation. He laid out gardens, prepared entertainments, gave private lessons to stragglers and brought to all he did a hearty spirit of optimism.

After his course of philosophy and another year of teaching in St. Joseph's College, Br. Bertram finally set

out for Kurseong in the Himalayas for the study of theology. Br. Bertram took the fullest advantage of his opportunities to master the sacred sciences, as the following letter written much later to a novice may testify. While telling him what a Jesuit student ought to do, he tells us what he did.

"You are now entering upon your studies. Neglect nothing. Everything is useful, even necessary to an apostle. It is not for you to appraise the usefulness of what you do now. Later on you will experience bitter regrets when you find yourself short of some mental equipment you could have acquired during your studies but which you neglected. I have got to ransack all my stores of philosophy and theology every now and then and I find myself short in many respects, to my great regret. Every minute of the long years of studies and preparations in the Society has a bearing on our subsequent apostolate, and any loss we incur during that period, is a loss to souls later on and a loss to Our Lord."

We can imagine Fr. Bertram's fervour on the day of his first Mass in 1903, when we recollect with what devotion he daily offered the Holy Sacrifice,—also how sonorously he genuflected in spite of growing infirmities!

His theology over Fr. Bertram proceeded to Ranchi for another year of spiritual training. There he found one more guide who exerted a lasting influence on him. This was Fr. Sylvain Grosjean, the founder of the Papal Seminary of Kandy and of the Chota Nagpore Mission, a man eminently fitted to breathe enthusiasm into the young. Later on Fr. Bertram loved to imitate his cheerful tone of voice when he said, whilst opening the *Summa Theologica*: "Let us see what St. Thomas has got to say on the subject."

It was during this year in 1905 that he confirmed the vow which he had taken five years before, never to break deliberately a single rule. That his superiors should have allowed him to assume such a heavy obligation is sufficient evidence of the high opinion which they had of his virtue.

Master of Novices

Fr. Bertram was now in his 36th year after seventeen years of intellectual and religious training. His friends of St. Joseph's College naturally expected him to resume his chair of mathematics at Trichinopoly, but he was ordered to proceed to Shembaganur to fill the office of Master of Novices, which had fallen vacant by the appointment of Fr. Augustine Faisandier as Superior of the Mission. The order was a shock to him but God had spoken through the mouth of his Superiors, and he bowed in humble submission. He found comfort, too, in the thought that Fr. Faseuille, his spiritual guide of former days, whose soundness of judgment was proverbial, would be by his side as Rector of the College.

How he trained his novices is best told by one of them, now a zealous missionary in Chota Nagpore, who says:

"In our daily examens of conscience we are invited to thank God for the benefits received. For my part I thank Him for having given me a Novice Master who was broadminded, yet strict and earnest with regard to fundamentals of Christian and religious life. He did not bewilder our youthful minds with mystical vagaries, but laid the foundations of a solid, practical piety. He continued to teach me what my dear mother had already taught me, namely, to consider everything

we have to do as a prayer, deeming this much better than endless vocal prayers. What I must also thank him for is that he unremittingly urged us on to the study of English and Tamil. He understood that a missionary in a foreign land must know the languages spoken there."

The new novice master was a strong believer in the "sound mind in a sound body" and taught his novices how to cultivate not only the garden of the soul, but also that of the "compound." Laying out flower beds, planting trees, making roads—these were excellent means to rest a tired head. Some of his novices turned out excellent religious and learned botanists as well. Yet, while encouraging outdoor work and language study, Fr. Bertram did not neglect the more essential part of the training. He made a deep study of the Spiritual Exercises and waxed eloquent when explaining the grand subjects of "the Kingdom," "the Two Standards" and the "Contemplation of Divine Love." As late as 1933, before beginning his epoch-making retreat, he said to his Spiritual Father: "This time I want to go as deep into the Exercises as I can." A year later he wrote to a Jesuit student:

"Keep your heart and soul drowned in Our Lord during your studies. In a scholastic of the Society, studies ought not to cause any fall in the spiritual thermometer. Our thermometer reads our dispositions with regard to "the Kingship of Christ" (which gives the steam, the driving power) and to "the Two Standards" (which supply the rails on which we must move). Try and understand these two contemplations, fathom them, assimilate them and live up to them. They are the quintessence of our life."

Rector and Principal

An unexpected series of events, arranged by Divine Providence, caused the transfer of Fr. Bertram to where

his qualities as administrator would have free scope. In 1908, Bishop John Mary Barthe applied to Rome for a Coadjutor. This naturally entailed other changes in the Mission staff. Fr. Bertram was transferred to Trichinopoly as Rector and Principal of St. Joseph's College, while Fr. Hadrian Sabatier, for many years professor of philosophy at Shembaganur, was appointed novice master in his place. In May of the following year Fr. Augustine Faisandier received his bulls as Coadjutor Bishop of Trichinopoly and Fr. Leo Besse, then Rector of St. Joseph's College, succeeded him as Superior of the Mission.

The new Rector came at a most favourable time. The University Reform, inaugurated by Lord Curzon in 1904, was in full operation; the commission appointed by the Madras University had made its round of colleges and sent in its reports; Fr. Honoré was contemplating the constructions of the Digby Hall and fitting up his new laboratories; a competent staff was available thanks to the foresight of Fr. Barbier; Government had promised a generous building and equipment grant; the College was working in the right direction; all that was needed was a strong hand to bring the work of reform to completion. Fr. Bertram was to be the instrument chosen by God to effect this reform. His immediate predecessor had misgivings about the grant promised by Government and had shrunk back in amazement before the heavy outlay contemplated for the practical classes of science which were to form part of the Honours courses. But as the competency of the members of the science department had been officially acknowledged by the University Commission, he forthwith applied to Rev. Fr. General for building sanction.

Later on, when Superior of the Mission, he used to repeat with his usual frankness that no Rector ever hated building more than he did, yet no Rector ever built more than he.

Fr. Bertram fully entered into the views of his friend Fr. Honoré and with his rare gift of "never give up" carried them out in the face of every obstacle. In his annual report of 1909 he officially announced that the following year Honours courses would be opened in Mathematics, Physics, History and Economics. The result went beyond all expectations: from 300 in 1910 the number of students in the College classes rapidly rose to 500, then to 800 and finally to 1000. The yearly examination results took Madras by storm and the University authorities realised that henceforth they had to reckon with St. Joseph's College. It was not long before the Principal was nominated Fellow of the University, while Fr. Sewell, who had served on the University Commission of 1906, continued to be member of the Syndicate. At the same time the Heads of Departments were added to the boards of studies and examiners. Within a few years St. Joseph's College provided professors of science, history and economics for well-nigh all the colleges of the Madras Presidency and beyond. The Jesuit Scholastics too were afforded opportunities to take up special studies and fit themselves for their future apostolate, while Catholic students were greatly encouraged to prepare for degrees and their number rapidly increased. In 1916, shortly after the death of Fr. William Sewell, Fr. Bertram succeeded him as member of the Syndicate, a post which he held till his death. A few years later, another member of the College staff was elected to the same office.

A word must now be said about the inner working of the College. The new Principal was extraordinarily popular. His was a large heart in which there was room for all, staff and students. He moved among them like a father among his children, had a kind word for all and inspired all with his irrepressible optimism. His universal sympathy was admirably served by a phenomenal memory for names. Before long he knew the names of all the students of the College, and as the majority were sons or nephews of his own fellow-students or pupils, he would retail to them their family connections with an accuracy that bewildered them. Being himself a man of talent, he meted out preferential treatment to talented boys, watching their progress, stimulating their zeal, rewarding their success. He took infinite pains to bring up to date year after year the catalogue of graduates and to trace their whereabouts, so as to keep in touch with them and give them, if needed, a timely warning or a coveted recommendation letter.

But God's work is never done without sacrifice. Fr. Bertram had to pay the penalty of his success. His breathing having become hard, he was for ever denied the comfort of a bed, and it was an edifying sight to contemplate him in the evening preparing his easy chair for his nightly rest. When his term of office as Rector was at an end, he continued to serve as Principal under two successive Rectors who did not share all his views; yet not a word of criticism ever escaped his lips. In fact, the care with which he respected the reputation of others was a lesson by itself. Never was he heard to utter an uncharitable remark. If he himself was the object of criticism, he would bow his head without saying a word.

No sermon could have been more eloquent than his silence on those occasions. To the trials sent him by God he added voluntary mortifications. Whether he had taken the pledge we have no means of knowing; but the fact is, he hardly ever tasted wine, and his total abstinence placed him at times in awkward position. After his return from Europe he related that once when dining with his sister and friends at Metz in 1921 he asked for water to drink, "Water!" exclaimed his sister, "here no one drinks water at dinner."

Founder of Loyola College

Fr. Bertram's most important work, the founding of Loyola College at Madras, won for him his greatest glory and his greatest humiliation.

Already in 1895, the authorities of the Madura Mission were offered to take the work in hand. But Fr. General refused for want of a competent teaching staff. In 1907 the project was taken up again by Archbishop Ladislaus Zaleski, then Delegate Apostolic, who directed Fr. Sewell to draw up a memorial with plans and estimates. What the Delegate did with that memorial no one ever knew, but he told Fr. Bertram who visited him in Rome in 1921 that he opened negotiations with Dom Gasquet (later Cardinal) with a view to obtaining English Benedictines for his future College. It was necessary to convene all the English abbots to fix the contribution to be made by each monastery. The abbots were convened in due course, but at the last minute the project fell through.

Archbishop Colgan of Madras died in February 1911. His successor, Archb. Aelen, wrote the following year to

the Rector of St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly: "Close down St. Joseph's and start a college at Madras." Fr. Sewell favoured the Archbishop's plan, as the loss incurred at Trichinopoly would be compensated at Madras. But the Superior of the Mission briefly answered: "Propose something else." Correspondence went on up to the great war and the Archbishop's visit to Rome.

In Europe Archbishop Aelen applied successively to the Jesuits and the Benedictines, but received little encouragement. Rev. Fr. Wernz, General of the Society, viewed the plan sympathetically, but added that if any Provincial was prepared to accept that additional burden, only then would he give his consent. The English Provincial declined the offer. Archbishop Aelen returned to Madras in December 1914 and the project was held up till the end of the war.

In January 1918 Fr. S., Procurator of St. Joseph's College, whom business had brought to Madras, went to pay his respects to Archbishop Aelen and the conversation fell on the spiritual needs of Madras. Fr. Houbaer, Headmaster of St. Gabriel's High School, was laid up in hospital and the Archbishop had been forced to entrust the office of Headmaster, to Rev. Fr. Kuss, Vicar General and Editor of the "*Watchman*." On the face of it, the plan was unworkable. Later on Archb. Aelen was fond of relating how, full of anxiety, he went, after the Procurator's departure, to pray in the church, and had a sudden inspiration from heaven urging him to hand over the management of St. Gabriel's to the Jesuits of Trichinopoly. He forthwith hurried after Fr. S. in several parts of Madras, related to him what had just happened and

asked him to take charge of St. Gabriel's for the reopening ten days later. The Father answered that the consent of R. F. General, was needed, the more so that by taking over the school the Jesuit Mission would morally find itself bound to start a College in the near future. The Archbishop then asked the Superior of the Mission to write to Rome without delay and obtain an answer by cablegram.

The Archbishop's plan was forthwith transmitted ; R. Fr. Wernz sent his "placet" by cable and Fr. Bertram was asked to draft a deed of transfer. Rev. Father Besse and his advisers accepted it with slight alterations. The Fathers were to take over the School in June of the same year. After a free discussion, the terms of the contract were settled and signatures exchanged. This done, two Fathers were appointed to Madras, one as Headmaster, the other as Assistant.

The foundation of a first grade Catholic College was a public demand. But the first thing was to acquire a site. After long and fruitless searchings Fr. Bertram and his faithful companion fixed their choice on the Nabob's Gardens at the end of Stirling Road ; but the sixteen acres with a house right in the middle of the grounds were insufficient for a College. They therefore resold part of the property and bought the Puliur land across the Nungambakam tank where the college stands to-day.

The Mendicant

The task now before Fr. Bertram was to get funds for the buildings—and a cheerless task it was. His superiors decided to send him to Europe on a begging

tour. He placed before them the manifest impossibility of collecting the large sum that was required when the times were so hard and the finances so bad everywhere. They replied: "Go ahead, try and get money, at least improve your health."

He sailed from Colombo on the *Ormonde*, 4th March, 1921 and soon made the acquaintance of CLEMENCEAU, the French ex-premier, who was returning to France on the same boat. On the 6th March he writes in his diary:

"I have just had a talk with Clémenceau all to myself, for three quarters of an hour. He was quite simple, good-natured, chummy. Gave me his idea about India, wonderfully accurate, gave me his ideas about some other things too, even some very contentious ones. I feel convinced the man has no bitterness against anybody, and he really means what he says when he recommends union and mutual help and mutual forbearance. Of course his ideas on religion are not acceptable, but he quite allows that people should differ from him. He invited me to pay him a call at his house in Paris: "You will have a warm reception, I give you my word for it. There now," he concluded with a friendly tap on the knee," I have told you my way of thinking, I have made my confession."

On 21st March he wrote again: We go into harbour at 7 a.m., one hour late, owing to bad weather at night. The authorities of Toulon come out to meet Mr. Clémenceau, viz., the Préfet, sous-Préfet, the Préfet maritime, another admiral, a general, Clémenceau's family and the reporters of newspapers. I met Clémenceau as I was standing near. The old man saw me and said to those who had come to meet him: "Here is a Jesuit Father who has tried to convert me, to what creed I can't exactly tell." These words and some others, supposed to have been spoken by him, appeared in the papers. Clémenceau shook hands again, and again wished me success."

Fr. Bertram went to Paris on 22nd March. After visiting his family in Metz and a few Jesuit houses in France and Belgium he reached Rome on April 27th. Rev. Fr. General was very kind and encouraging; he approved the plan of the future college, but added that success in begging would be a sign of God's Will that a college should be opened at Madras. The first door at which Father Bertram knocked was that of the Pope himself. The account of his audience with the Sovereign Pontiff must be given in his own words:

"The Holy Father was standing near his writing table. I made the three customary genuflections but was not allowed to kiss his feet. He stretched out his hand and I kissed his ring. On his invitation I sat down by his side. The Holy Father then asked me where I came from and what was the purpose of my voyage to Europe. On hearing of the future college of Madras he inquired whether the opening of that college was a mere project or a matter finally settled. I answered that we were fully determined to begin, that the Indians wanted that college and that the Archbishop of Madras, the Apostolic Delegate and Propaganda desired it.

—Propaganda desires it? Then Propaganda must pay. Is it not so?—Certainly, Holy Father, but I don't think Propaganda is in a position to pay.—He who wants the end must procure the means; therefore Propaganda must pay.

After a few questions about the plans and estimates the Holy Father continued: "Well, the Pope must set the example. Here are 100,000 lire."

These words literally took my breath away. I had never thought of asking anything from the Holy Father. I had not even dreamt of the possibility of such a generous gift.—"It is not as much as you expected, added His Holiness, what you want is rupees and at the present rate of exchange 100,000 lire

will give you only 27,000 rupees, a little more than one fourth. But I want to give good example to encourage others to help you." I must confess I forgot all the rules of etiquette and answered: "Most Holy Father, you have made me very happy." "Yes, yes, he rejoined, it's all right, courage and confidence." Thereupon he handed to me a hundred notes of 1,000 lire each. I put them in my pocket with a trembling hand, asked for a special blessing on the future college and withdrew."

Fr. Bertram's next visit was to Cardinal Van Bossum, Prefect of Propaganda, from whom he obtained, not without some difficulty, a letter of recommendation. With this document and the blessing of Rev. Fr. General he returned to Paris and started on his begging tour. It proved a failure. He travelled over Lorraine, crossed over to England and Ireland, returned to France and finally sailed for America—all to no purpose. Everywhere he received the same answer: "Your Mission is not known, make it known before you begin to ask for funds.... You won't get money for a University College, which does not interest the general public." He took the hint and stopping his wanderings sat down and wrote: "*The Call of the East*," or "*Caste and Christianity*," a tract of twenty four pages, which the *Irish Messenger Office* of Dublin undertook to publish free of charge. It had no better success.

In England, however, Fr. Bertram found what he had not sought, viz., a goodly number of excellent vocations, especially from Osterley, and this was no small compensation for his failure in collecting funds. Another ray of light in the midst of a dark sky was the cheerful news, brought him by cablegram when he was in the States, of the award of the Kaiser-I-Hind medal for

eminent educational services in India. But the object of his visit to America left everybody perfectly indifferent. If he had been begging for direct conversion work, he might have touched the heart of those who had dollars to spare. But a University College at Madras—who cared for it? In spite of his disappointment Fr. Bertram did not forget his friends in India and for their benefit contributed to the College "*Magazine*" delightful accounts of his visits to the various educational institutions of the Society in America, to the Yosemite Valley, the Grand Canyon and the gigantic fir tree said to be 3,000 years old. At the sight of that marvel of nature, his botanical instincts reawoke and he collected seeds to be sown in the orchard of St. Mary's, Kodaikanal. Only one has developed into a beautiful tree which embellishes to-day the immediate neighbourhood of the new block on the northern side.

In September 1922, when Fr. Bertram was staying with his Jesuit brother at Pueblo, he received a letter recalling him to India without delay. Things had moved rapidly at Madras. The new University Act, limiting the area of the University to a ten mile radius from the Senate House, was on the anvil. If a Catholic College was to be opened at Madras, here was a chance which might never return. Fr. Bertram came back from the States by the shortest route and went direct to Rome to report to Fr. General. "Well," said Fr. Ledochowski laconically, "no money, no college. Go to the Secretary of Propaganda and tell him that the Madras College scheme is given up, at least for the present." He added, however, that he would ask the Superior of the Mission to convene his advisers and consider the question once more in the light of the new

developments. On receiving their report he would give his final answer.

Fr. Bertram sailed from Marseilles. He writes in his diary:

"I landed in Bombay at noon on 1st December, and under instructions from Trichinopoly proceeded to Goa**. Left Goa on the 4th, arrived at Madras on the 6th and at Trichy on the 9th—a failure."

There can be no doubt that Fr. Bertram returned to India in a state of depression, but he cheerfully accepted his trial and God blessed him for it: the College of Madras was not to be given up. Rev. Fr. General's letter to the Superior of the Mission arrived about the same time and the matter was reconsidered. But now the question no longer was where to find the money, but where to find the staff. Discussions and correspondence with Rome dragged on for months, when, in September, Rev. Fr. General cut the Gordian Knot by requesting the English Provincial to lend the Mission one or two Fathers. Fr. Bodkin, the Provincial, generously acceded to his request and promised two M.A.'s, one of Oxford the other of Cambridge. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to His Paternity and to the English Province for having so readily assisted us in an hour of need. The foundation of Loyola College was assured.

First Principal of Loyola College

The drawing up and approval by Fr. General of the plan of the College and of three hostels took several

** The body of St. Francis Xavier was then publicly exposed, as is the custom every ten years or so.

months. In the meantime it was decided to anticipate the laying of the first stone and to invite for the occasion Lord Willingdon before he relinquished his office as Governor of Madras. His Excellency very kindly accepted. Lady Willingdon also promised to attend. Archbishop Aelen who had been looking forward to that day (March 10th 1924) was compelled by ill-health to forego the pleasure of being present, but he insisted on blessing the stone before it was taken to the building grounds. He exclaimed with joy: "*Digitus Dei est hic*, the finger of God is here," and forthwith set the example of generous help by donating the sum of Rs. 10,000, one half in his own name and one half anonymously, but all from his private purse.

The construction work was started without delay. The application for a building grant was made on the 4th August, 1924 and permission asked to build in anticipation of the sanction of plans and estimates. An application for recognition of Loyola College as a constituent College of the Madras University was sent in on the 18th December and a commission appointed to inspect the College. Unfortunately the inspection report was handed in only on the 17th March of the following year, too late for the meeting of the Academic Council. Fr. Bertram, nothing daunted, applied for permission to open courses in July in anticipation of the sanction, and his petition was granted by the Syndicate.

On the 19th May, Fr. Bertram received official notice of his appointment as Principal of Loyola College. What it cost him to leave St. Joseph's

College may be gathered from an entry in his spiritual journal, 24 May, 1925 :

"This transfer is momentous in my life, whether I look back on what I leave behind or forward on what is awaiting me. My severance from St. Joseph's College, where I have lived so long and worked so hard, especially since 1908, appears to me like anticipated death. All my links, all my connections were with St. Joseph's College; they have been cut asunder. As for Loyola it means suffering, anxiety, the cross. We have no money and we must build. I have a feeling that Loyola will be the end of my life, my last and greatest trial. In the Madura Mission I have known men of great authority, Fathers Barbier, Faseuille, William Sewell, Louis Verdier. All of them had their greatest trials towards the end of their life, and those trials were in the line of their special aptitudes, such, it seems to me, will be my case, if I have found grace with God. To die on the cross with Jesus and like Jesus will henceforth be my programme. Be it so. The only grace I ask is to be able to say with St. Andrew "O Crux, O bona Crux. O Cross, much beloved;" I dare not add: "*for long desired.*" God grant that I may at least have courage to say: "*Submissively accepted.*"

These words show that the separation was painful indeed, yet Fr. Bertram never gave any outward sign of his interior suffering.

On Sunday, 5th July, Archbishop Aelen blessed the buildings and the following day the Principal registered 40 students—the number was to run up to 78 within a few days. Recognition was granted by the Syndicate after the August meeting of the Academic Council and the College authorities could now think of holding some

public function by way of formal inauguration. Sir A. P. Patro, Minister of Education, was requested to perform the opening ceremony and he cordially accepted, but he understood he could not well inaugurate a College the building of which was not yet sanctioned. Assisted by his indefatigable Secretary, the late Mr. Arpudasamy Udayar, he took up the case of Loyola College in right earnest, overcame the opposition of the Law Secretary, which was determined and strong, and succeeded in declaring the College eligible for a half grant on the revised estimates. He also gave permission to put up a tablet commemorating the inauguration which took place on October 12th. Such were the beginnings of Loyola College, which rightly claims Fr. Bertram for its Founder.

Its marvellous development in the space of fifteen years, the opening of Intermediate and Honours courses, the multiplication of hostels, the raising of the stately gothic church and of the Fathers' residence, the construction of the science laboratories and the colony of Pushpanagar, the annual increase of Catholic and non-Catholic students—the present number stands at 1000—all these are matters of common knowledge. But God alone knows the number of letters, articles and petitions which Fr. Bertram wrote to raise funds for his College and obtain building grants for his fourteen hostels. The financial problem of Loyola College was to be to its founder a never-ending cause of anxiety. Inveterate optimist as he was, he had to muster all his courage to preserve confidence in God. On the 24th January, 1925 he writes in his spiritual diary :—

“Our Lord wants Loyola; there can be no doubt about it, if we consider what has so far been accomplished. Loyola

has been officially opened. But here we are unable to go ahead for want of funds. If Loyola is God's work, the money will come, though I don't see whence or how. God does everything out of nothing and the first thing He does is to reduce His human instruments to nothingness. Jesus wants Loyola, and that it may be a success He also wants something else, viz., my own humiliation. All this is very cheerless to human nature, but let it be so. Fiat."

Considerations such as these are found on every page of his journal, until the building work was completed and then he had to confess that the foundation of Loyola College was almost miraculous. Such too was the opinion of the Superior of another Jesuit Mission in India, who intended to transfer one of his colleges to more extensive grounds and consulted Fr. General on the subject. His Paternity invited him to visit Loyola and work on that model. The Superior proceeded to Madras and after inspecting every part of that College wrote back to Fr. General: "It's splendid, but I have not the gift of miracles."

We will now let one of Fr. Bertram's subordinates tell us how he governed his college:

"Of all the Jesuits I have met in four different Missions Fr. Bertram was unquestionably the greatest. Only *he* could have planned Loyola College and carried out his plan: it is a monument to his long and broad vision. He had, besides, a remarkable "*modus agendi cum hominibus*", a way of acting which accounts for his success in dealing with all: novices, Brahmins, students, officials. His way first made me realise how a Jesuit could be an apostle in a College: conversion work was his only aim and his only hobby, for which he spent his busy life.

I liked him most as Rector. You felt he trusted you. He gave his subjects a free hand in their departments and thereby got the best out of them. He had none of the pettifogging solemnity and touchiness which is so unwelcome to inferiors, though he was in authority most of his life. And he was great enough, that is, humble enough, not to be disturbed by criticism. His simplicity was touching, especially in the great days of his Vice-Chancellorship.

Without putting on an air of edification, his religious life was extremely edifying—to see him, for instance, before the Blessed Sacrament or making the Stations or kneeling down to say a Hail Mary on entering his room as he did when a novice—in spite of engrossing College and University business.

I treasure up two valuable spiritual tips he gave me:

1. Don't be led by likes and dislikes. 2. One who refuses Our Lord the best sacrifice cannot be intimate with Him."

The Apostle of the Brahmins

Any casual visitor to the hostels of Loyola College will soon descry at the south-east end of the grounds a line of snug cottages bearing the proud name of Pushpanagar, the city of the Little Flower. They are the houses of Brahmin converts and owe their existence entirely to Fr. Bertram. When asked who had suggested to him the idea of a Brahmin colony at Madras, he invariably answered that circumstances had forced it on him. Sincere inquirers, sent by friends or parish-priests, knocked at the door of the Principal and asked to be instructed. Busy as he then was, preparing his course of moral instruction to the College students, it occurred to him that he might kill two birds with one stone by accepting to give the would-be converts a course of

religious instruction and thus lead them on to the true faith. It was a work of patience, but the Father realised that it was God's work and set to it in right earnest. The reward was not long in coming. On Easter Sunday 1929 he had the happiness of baptizing a Brahmin of Kodaikanal who had received instruction mainly from the Jesuit students of Shembaganur. Next came the turn of Paul and Lucy, the story of whose conversion reads like a romance.

But now Fr. Bertram had to face a more difficult problem. How was he to procure his new converts, boycotted as they were by their families, a means of livelihood and a safeguard for their faith? There was only one way, viz., to give them lodgings on the college grounds and find employment for them either in the college or in its neighbourhood. The Father did not hesitate. He took up his pen and wrote letter after letter to his friends in India and Europe, giving glowing accounts of the first conversions and asking for help. His appeal met with ready response; money came in and the architect of the college received orders to start building the first block of houses. Such were the modest beginnings of Pushpanagar.

In course of time, new catechumens arrived and those who were already baptised invited their parents, brothers and sisters in the hope that the Catholic atmosphere of Loyola and daily contact with the Fathers might bring them eventually into the true fold. This necessitated the construction of a new block of houses when the money so far collected had all been spent. Fr. Bertram took up his pen again and wrote soul stirring articles which were published in Rome and elsewhere in Europe. They

brought him, not only the warmest encouragement of the General of the Society, but also funds for the new constructions. In the meantime he mustered all his courage and went from firm to firm, from office to office to find employment for his neophytes.

To personal effort he added prayer, especially prayer said in common. Addressing all the Brahmin converts of Madras and Trichinopoly, he proposed to them a league of prayer to storm heaven and obtain special graces for those catechumens who had to overcome wellnigh insuperable obstacles. Here, he added, was a splendid opportunity for the lay apostolate, which gratitude to God for the gift of faith made it a duty for them to seize without demur. Needless to add, his proposal was readily accepted by all. That the league was pleasing to Our Lord we gather from the following entry in Fr. Bertram's diary under date of 3rd October, 1931 :

"The Catholic Brahmins of Loyola, together with their friends of Trichinopoly and Shembaganur, have just finished a novena to the Little Flower. During this novena three important events took place : a good sum of money came from Paris, a difficult situation was eased and a convert who had lost his post on account of his baptism was reinstated."

But if Fr. Bertram's catechumens and neophytes needed special prayers, their spiritual director needed them still more. His new enterprise met with some opposition. It was objected that the founding of a Brahmin Colony on the college grounds might scare away non-Catholic students, that the expenses incurred were out of all proportion to the results obtained, that the sum spent on one Brahmin convert would suffice for a hundred conversions among the depressed classes, that the

work of Frs. Billard and Lacombe at Trichinopoly had not been an unqualified success.

Fr. Bertram answered these criticisms by silent action. Without saying a word in self-defence, he carried on what he thought to be God's work. To those, however, who had a right to question him he opened his mind and wrote an apology worthy of a true apostle. The conversion of Brahmins, he said, was in the best traditions of the Madura Mission. In the old Mission of the XVI and XVII centuries some Fathers were set apart for the conversion of higher castes, especially Brahmins. The only reason why Fr. Robert de Nobili adopted Indian customs and spent several years in the study of Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu was to make himself acceptable to higher castes and teach them the true religion. It was also from among Brahmin converts that the missionaries chose some of their catechists, convinced as they were that Brahmins would command more respect and exert more influence than men of other castes. If in the new Mission nothing had been attempted for the space of fifty years, it was because the missionaries turned all their attention to the arduous task of recovering the ground which had been lost during the absence of the Society. Fr. Billard admittedly had some bitter disappointments: a few, only a few, of his converts returned to Hinduism; but that was no reason for giving up the conversion of Brahmins as a hopeless task; there were apostacies in other castes as well.

The most serious charge was that of the heavy expenses entailed by the conversion of Brahmins. Fr. Bertram answered it by saying that a Brahmin convert boycotted and penniless could not in decency be expected

to give up his social position. To go begging after having led a comfortable life was heroism pure and simple and not every convert had the stuff to make a hero. Hence the unescapable dilemma : either be ready to spend money, or give up the conversion of Brahmins altogether. In England the problem had been partially solved by the foundation of the Converts' Aid Society. Was the starting of a similar association outside the range of possibilities in India ?

Such in brief was Fr. Bertram's vindication of his policy. While admitting that some of his principles are slightly overstated and were in practice too rigidly applied, we cannot call in question the sincerity of his intentions and the fervour of his zeal.

How dearly he loved his Brahmin converts some extracts from his diary amply testify. During his retreat of 1931 he wrote :

"In the course of the past year how many visits to my neophytes to instruct, guide, encourage and protect them. What anxieties on their account! But how could I help it? All those neophytes were once complete strangers to me; I did not go in search of them. Our Lord sent them to me. Could I drive them away?" In 1936, when he was no longer Rector, he wrote again : "Under the present circumstances I cannot do much for the Brahmins. I shall do what is within my power. Besides, it is good to detach ourselves from those we love. I don't think I shall find any difficulty in this, for, after all, those souls belong to Our Lord who created and redeemed them."

These are not empty words, but the overflowing of the love of a heart as tender as that of a mother. It may

be truly said that Fr. Bertram spent his life for his dear Brahmins. Neither fatigue, nor sickness, nor humiliations could stop him when they were in need of his assistance. They returned love for love and the memory of the *Tataswamy*, the grandpapa, will never die at Pushpanagar.

Father Bertram and the Madras University

In 1935 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the coronation of King George V, Fr. Bertram's name appeared once more on the list of Honours. He was awarded the Jubilee Medal in recognition of his eminent services to the Madras University during the 25 years he was associated with its work. A year later his friends of Madras and elsewhere urged him to stand as candidate to the office of Vice-Chancellor of the University, promising at the same time to give him their votes. Failing health and orders from higher authority did not permit him to accede to their request. But it was an open secret that in the event of his standing for election most of the other candidates would have withdrawn. At the condolence meeting convened by the Sheriff of Madras and presided over by Sir Mahomed Usman, who had been successively Minister and Acting Governor, one of the speakers gave expression to his regret that a Doctor's degree *honoris causa* had not been conferred on such an eminent educationist as Fr. Bertram. In his reply Mr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, Acting Vice-Chancellor, revealed the following fact:

"A suggestion to that effect had been made by his colleagues on the Syndicate, but Fr. Bertram would not hear of any such proposal as long as he had anything to do with University work.

"We were waiting for the first opportunity to reward him with a doctorate and it would have been a great privilege for us to do so. Death has taken him away and that privilege has been denied us. But I can assure you that the fault is not ours. We respected Fr. Bertram's wish."

In its turn the Annamalai University of Chidambaram also offered him the Vice-Chancellorship. He declined the offer for the same reasons as at Madras, but in the present case he had another, to him very strong motive for refusing: he could not bring himself to live, even for a time, away from his Religious brethren.

These details give evidence to the influence wielded by Fr. Bertram in the Madras University and in academic circles generally. What that influence was the following extract from an article written to his memory by the Registrar of the University will clearly show us:

... "It was as the educationist and administrator that Rev. Fr. Bertram was best known to me. A residence of over forty years in India, to which he had come in his early years, had made him thoroughly conversant with all phases of educational work, and his long connection with the Madras University Syndicate had given him an insight, which at times was almost uncanny, into University collegiate developments. A mathematician by training, he brought to bear in the problems which came his way a clear and analytical mind, swift to get to the root of the matter and to suggest a practical solution of the problem. His interests in education ranged over a wide field: he was as much at home in discussing questions of high school education, as in probing the weakness of University life and work. He was not an orator, but he could be trenchant in debate and his wide experience, firm conviction, and genial mode of presentation, enabled him to command a good hearing and to have often a decisive voice in academic discussions.

His figure in the front row of seats in the Academic Council and Senate meetings was a familiar one to all members who were accustomed to look to him for a lead on policies requiring sane, broadminded points of view. His long and continuous connection with the University naturally led to his appointment on several occasions as Acting Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University, where, in the role of administrator, he amply justified the choice of his colleagues on the Syndicate.

Much of the logical precision and astuteness of the Frenchman was in his make-up, and, with a caninness worthy of a Scot, he could make a rupee go the length of two.

It is a fact known to many that his visit to Europe and America to raise funds for his cherished dream of Loyola College met with a poor response and that, on his return, he was faced with the problem of abandoning the scheme, or attempting to build with very inadequate funds. Judicious management of affairs and a strong personal element in the building operations enabled him, to the astonishment of his confreres, to raise the solid edifice to the memory of the Founder of the Order. To him *Petros* meant more than a stone and on a rock he built something permanent that will remind one, as time rolls on, of his kindly, shrewd, unselfish nature.

His death came as a shock to many and created a gap which will not be easy to fill in the Order to which he belonged and in the causes to which he gave his time and experience so ungrudgingly. It was my sad privilege to be present at the funeral service and subsequent interment of this good man. And as he was quietly laid to rest in the subdued stillness of Shembaganur, surrounded by so many of his faithful brothers, I felt that the end was fitting of the man, who, having nobly done his work, desired now to rest in peace."

(Sd.) WILLIAM MCLEAN, *Registrar, University of Madras.*

Last Illness and Death

Fr. Bertram had been ailing for two years when in 1936 an operation seemed imperative. At the beginning of May he went up to Kodaikanal to place himself in the hands of Col. Harley. Before entering the Nursing Home he made his annual retreat which turned out to be a direct preparation for death. Here is what he wrote in his spiritual diary after meditating on detachment:

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 "At my age and with my infirmities which herald approaching death and the coming of Jesus, anxiety about my health and the wish to recover from sickness are making themselves felt. At bottom it is the desire to preserve a life which I feel is escaping my grasp. While doing what the rule enjoins, I must practise the second degree of humility as laid down in the foundation principle: "so that we should not wish for health rather than sickness, for a long life rather than for a short life." "I shall, therefore, cultivate indifference, patience and obedience." At the end of the retreat he wrote again: "Tomorrow at 10 a.m. I start for the Nursing Home, *in manibus tuis sortes meae*, my lots are in thy hands," (Psalm 30).

Soon after the operation, the patient's general condition gave cause for anxiety; on the fifth day a change for the worse set in and the doctor sent word through the nurse that the end would soon come. The Last Rites of the Church were then administered and Fr. Bertram kissed his Crucifix, renewed his religious vows and soon after, fell into a coma. The following morning at 6-55, whilst the prayers for the agonising were being recited, he peacefully rendered up his soul to God. He was 65 years and 10 months old. On hearing of his death Col. Harley said, with tears in his eyes: "A good man has passed away."

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