

# Elizabeth Lockhart

*Sr. Millicint Olga*

ELIZABETH CRAWFORD LOCKHART was born in Oxford on August 10, 1811. She was the daughter of Alexander Lockhart and Carr Newnes, his first wife, who died in 1813. The Lockharts were a distinguished family. The badge of their armorial bearings was a locked heart with the inscription *Corda Serrata Pando*. Sir Simon Lockhart accompanied James, "the good Lord Douglas," to the Holy Land and was in charge of a locked casket containing the heart of King Robert the Bruce. Alexander Lockhart was the Vicar of Stone and Hartwell at the time of his wife's death in 1813. Later he became Vicar of Wallingham, Surrey, and married Martha Jacob, who was a loving stepmother to Elizabeth. They had one son, William. Alexander died in 1831 and was buried at Stone.

After her father's death, Elizabeth lived with her stepmother at Hastings, then Chichester, where she attended the Cathedral and became friends with Archdeacon Manning. She became qualified to teach, and she and her stepmother and a family friend, Miss Mary Reid, opened a Church of England parish school in Chichester and taught there. William became a disciple of John Henry Newman and lived with him at Littlemore. On August 26, 1843, William became a Roman Catholic. It was then that Newman preached the famous sermon *The Parting of Friends*. In 1846 Mrs. Lockhart, too, joined the Church of Rome.

In 1847 William John Butler was appointed rector of Wantage. Butler and Manning had become friends when the former was a curate at Dogmersfield in Hampshire. Because Butler wanted to restore the religious life in the Church of England, Manning felt that an acquaintance with Butler at Wantage would keep Elizabeth from joining the Roman Church. Manning introduced her as a lady "of cultivated mind and holy life." Butler invited her to his home, and in 1848 she spent Lent at the vicarage with him and his wife. She quickly became a loved and trusted friend of the family. Butler and Elizabeth were anxious to begin the work. Soon after Easter, as a suitable house could not be found, two cottages were taken, and the nucleus of the present Anglican Sisterhood of Wantage, Sisters of Saint Mary of the Virgin, was formed. Elizabeth was joined by her friend Mary Reid and two other young girls, who were to make themselves useful in the house with the possibility of some day becoming Sisters. Elizabeth was the Superior. Toward the end of 1848 the Sisters moved into a more spacious cottage and were joined by Harriet Day, who was sent by the Rev. Henry Wilberforce, and Charlotte Gilbert, referred to by Miss Lockhart as a lay Sister. However, William Butler wished all the Sisters to have the same standing, and so there were no lay Sisters in the Community.

Archdeacon Manning visited the Sisters frequently, and from him we have one of the earliest records:

The oratory was upstairs, a little blue-washed place with sloping roof and roughly boarded floor; The only furniture consisted of two long desks with sloping sides made of bare deal, at which we stood to say the Offices. There was room for three or four at the outside to stand on either side.

The Vicar was not the spiritual director of the small Community. Archdeacon Manning, whom he thoroughly trusted, filled that post. A letter from Manning to Mrs. Sidney Herbert on the 25th of August, 1848, quoted in E. S. Purcell's *Life of Cardinal Manning*, gives his impression of the newly formed Community:

I went the week before last to Wantage, and found all going on as I could most wish ... The present Vicar is an excellent and most devoted man ... Miss Lockhart is established in an old small house, with a very pretty strip of garden at the back, most private and quiet. She has two companions with her, and her work is to be found about five hours a day in the school. The rest of her time is ordered on a very even and good rule of employments and devotion. The Vicar is the visitor and guardian of the house, and is most worthy and fit in every way for this office.

Butler and Miss Lockhart devised between them a framework for the life, which was agreed to, if not wholly suggested, by the Archdeacon. The Canonical Hours were translated from the Sarum Breviary and adapted for Anglican use, together with the Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. Certain hours were set aside for work in the school and parish. The Sisters regularly attended the celebrations of Holy Communion at the parish church. Time's for private prayer and recreation were arranged, and rules about behaviour and general demeanour such as would be expected of those dedicating their lives to God in this particular way. The daily programme was as follows:

Two hours private devotion	
Rise	5:00 a.m.
Lauds	5:45 a.m.
Prime	7:00 a.m.
Breakfast	7:30 a.m.
Tierce	8:40 a.m.
Work	9:00 a.m.
Morning Prayer at church	10:00 a.m.
Work in school until	12:45 p.m.
Sext	12:45 p.m.
Dinner	1:00 p.m.
None	2:30 p.m.
School/parish visiting until	5:45 p.m.
Vespers	5:45 p.m.
Tea	6:00 p.m.
Evening prayer at church	7:30 p.m.
Compline	9:00 p.m.
Retire	10:00 p.m.

There was a Rule of Life in the very early days, but a copy of it has, so far, not come to light. The Beatitudes may have formed part of it. There is a letter from a very old lady who wrote:

There was a Rule drawn up. And I think it a very beautiful one, which was divided into portions, one of which was read each morning at Prime ... I believe it was drawn up by Miss Lockhart and Archdeacon Manning, no doubt with the Vicar's approval. I think it was mainly taken from the Rule of some old Religious Order.

This Rule was used up to the time of the change to penitentiary work in 1850. Then the above writer says: "E.C.L. and Sr. Mary and their fellow workers were to be *enclosed Sisters and were never to go outside their own house and grounds.*"

It is thought that Manning suggested other changes, for instance, that the Sisters should adopt a more austere Rule. The Sisters wore plain black dresses, and indoors, net or muslin caps, out doors, black straw poke bonnets. However, Miss Lockhart wore a full monastic habit, which caused the Bishop to write to the Vicar advising him to persuade her to wear "a less obtrusive dress."

After only a few months at the parish school, Miss Lockhart felt herself called to the work of "rescuing the fallen." It is likely that Manning influenced her in this, as he had been concerned over the problem of prostitution for some time. There were no homes in the Church of England for women rescued from prostitution, as there were in the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant groups on the continent. Manning had preached a sermon ("Saints and Sinners") on the subject of prostitution in the Magdalen Hospital, Streatham, in 1844. However, to do this work meant a change from the work of education to which Butler was devoted. The news came as a great blow to him, especially since the matter was decided without his knowledge. He made known his feelings by letter to the Archdeacon, and the Rev. T. Vincent, the Vicar's assistant, went to see Manning. The Archdeacon had planned to open a penitentiary in London with Miss Lockhart in charge, but after the chaplain's visit, and some months of consideration, agreed "that a home for penitents, with Miss Lockhart as its head, should be opened at Wantage, under the direction of Archdeacon Manning, and with Rev. T. Vincent as chaplain." Miss Lockhart wrote to the Vicar:

31 Cadogan Place  
Jan. 14, 1850

Most Dear Friend,

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

I am detained in London by the illness of Mr. Jacob and his daughter and I feel that I ought not to leave them until someone can take my place.

I hope this may be soon, but in the uncertainty I have thought it better to delay the opening of our House till the Feast of the Purification. I also find that this will suit the Archdeacon better than the Conversion of S. Paul. I should say that the women had better assemble on the Tuesday before, that is 29th January ... I have some compensation for being detained here so long against my will in the opportunity it gives me of having a long talk with the Archdeacon, which I hope may indirectly help on our work more than my personal presence at home.

I am very glad to hear of your satisfactory visit to Cuddesdon. I have seen my dearest brother, but only by snatches ... He told me to remember him most kindly to you.

Believe me,  
Yours most affectionately

E.C. Lockhart.

The Vicar was disappointed, as is evident. Nevertheless, he wrote in glowing terms about Miss Lockhart to Mr. Keble:

I wanted also to talk to you about our Sisterhood here, which has, by the blessing of God, sped so fairly. It is exercising daily more influence on our people; and as a washerwoman said to me the other day, "It makes one ashamed of oneself to see Miss L." All classes take to it. But as I think you know, I shall lose a great mainstay, Miss L., for the Penitentiary.

Hearing of Miss Lockhart's desire for a penitentiary, Bishop Wilberforce wrote from Cuddesdon Palace on December 29, 1849 asking for "a general scheme of the institution," and continued, "I can quite conceive how beloved Miss Lockhart must be knowing of what sort her labours are. I quite should wish for a domestic chapel in such an establishment. I have the deepest interest in its welfare and would do anything in my power to aid its progress."

The following is an account of the opening of the Penitentiary taken from *A History of the Foundation*:

On a bright winter's morning, Feb. 2, 1850, four Priests, four Sisters and a few friends met together to dedicate the first Penitentiary work undertaken by Religious in the Church of England since the Reformation.

The event is briefly recorded in Mr. Butler's journal:

Feb. 2. Purification of the B.V.M.

The House in Newbury Street was opened with a celebration. Vincent arranged the Chapel. Three Sisters, two assistant friends, two penitents, were present at the Celebration, together with the Archdeacon, H.W, Vincent and myself. Before the Celebration I said the Benediction from the Rituale for the house. The Service was most thrilling, and one could not but rest in faith that God's blessing is on the work. In the evening the Archdeacon addresses the "Familia."

Miss Lockhart wrote a fuller account of the Ceremony to a friend:

Penitents' Home

Feb. 6, 1850

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

We had four Priests, the Father Director, Vicar, Chaplain, and H. Wilberforce. The Vicar said the Office for Blessing the House, and then the Archdeacon celebrated (the Holy Eucharist), the women being allowed to be present on this occasion.

They are not to be so generally, as the Archdeacon does not think it safe for them until they are better prepared. In the evening he preached, as nobody but he can, to the whole household, dear Swan, who has permission to come to our Offices, being also present.

On Sunday he celebrated again at 8 o'clock, and preached for the Vicar's Schools at Church in the morning. H. Wilberforce officiated for us, and before the Evening Service he spoke to the Penitents alone in the Chapel, and after it to us. I was sorry there were but two yet come, E.G. and M., the workhouse girl; two others have come since, and we are keeping the remaining places for E. Ryle's pupils, who are now in hospital and are to come as soon as they are well enough. We are still in much confusion, but hope by next week to be quite settled. The two houses make it much more difficult to arrange things in a regular orderly way. Charlotte Gilbert, the probationary lay Sister, is very useful. I like her much, and hope she may like the life well enough to stay with us. Sister Mary and Emma Ryle are at the other house, with Hannah Stafford to wait upon them, and go messages for us, which we find quite necessary. I have always forgotten to say to you that we are by no means in a condition, as you seem to think, not to want help. The resources our Father Director counts so touchingly upon are neither more nor less than the alms of the faithful, which he feels sure will never fail us if God indeed prospers our work. We have enough to support ourselves and six penitents, but about £200 a year will be wanted for Rent, Chaplain's Salary, etc., so if you know anyone who would like to help us either by giving or collecting, we shall receive it thankfully, so that it be not given by constraint, but for the Love of God and of His lost sheep, and of course the larger our funds the greater will be our power of enlarging our limits.

Ever your loving Mother,  
Elizabeth M[other] S[uperior].

The Bishop continued his interest in the work by coming to address the Sisters and penitents of the Home. However, another blow was soon to fall on the Vicar. On April 17, 1850, Archdeacon Manning came to see him to tell him that Miss Lockhart had decided to leave the Church of England and become a Roman Catholic. Two of her family had already done so, and she had been undecided before coming to Wantage at all, but the Archdeacon had felt that her life in the Community would settle her in the Church of England. It was a very sad day for all. For the Vicar and Mrs. Butler, who felt they had lost a good friend, for the Penitents, the remaining Sisters, in particular Sister Harriet, but above all for the Vicar, who hoped the Sisterhood would recover from the blow. He wrote of her leaving:

She has been a great help to us in every way, setting before the people the sight of seeking to fulfill our Lord's Counsels of Perfection, and in every way being well calculated to touch the hearts of rough, thoughtless people like ours. May He who sends this grief give us strength to bear it, and save our parish from injury. Those left in charge of the penitents had "called and looked upon her as their Mother." How was the news to be imparted to them?

And in a letter to Mr. Keble:

July, 1850

My Dear Mr. Keble,

I am ashamed to trouble you, but you will, I know, be interested in the sad news that Miss L. has finally determined on leaving us, and that this day she will join her brother. We have done what we could for her in some ways, but the strong draw toward Rome, together with the undermining support of her spiritual counsellors, shivered all my attempts to pieces. Now we are in much trouble to keep the work up; we have no one on whom we can rest; indeed the household is a body without a backbone, just standing up and no more. The Bishop kindly offers to do all he can for us. But he is overwrought with so many things, and my hands are indeed so overloaded that I can hardly keep what is on them already.

The Penitentiary was now without a leader. Also, the loss of Elizabeth's income was a considerable deprivation. However, she was very generous and left "all that had been subscribed, which was sufficient for carrying on the work of the Home as it was until the anniversary of the opening." Elizabeth also undertook to pay the rent of the house until Lady Day, 1851, and the rent of the second house, which was for Sisters who could not be accommodated in the first house, until midsummer.

Miss Reid left with Miss Lockhart. Now was the time for all the critics to say they knew this would happen. The Vicar was left with the Penitentiary on his hands and little help at the time. It became his work to build up the Community on Anglican lines. His *modus operandi* was to allow it to develop slowly, not to have complete enclosure, and for the Sisters to wear a quite unassuming dress. Years later, in 1873 in an address to the Sisters, he paid this tribute to Miss Lockhart: ". . . with the help of the noble and gifted woman who determined to devote her life and her means to the work, this Community was begun."

Elizabeth left Wantage in July of 1850, and for two years devoted time to the study of her new-found faith. In 1852 she decided to enter a Community being formed at Greenwich called the Sisters of Charity of the Precious Blood. An early record states:

Winning the admiration of the Community by her superior talents, unselfish fidelity to duty, gentleness and affability and also having gained practical experience in the Anglican foundation, the young religious was chosen as the member best fitted to fill the office of Superior.

Meanwhile Manning had, shortly afterwards, also joined the Church of Rome, and was ordained priest in it on Trinity Sunday 1851, to serve the diocese of Westminster. Cardinal Wiseman realized there were not enough parochial clergy in the London area, and felt the solution would be a religious community specially formed for that purpose. He chose Manning to organize it, and the Oblates of St. Charles were formed. Manning saw the need for Sisters as well to work amongst the poor and to teach the children, and so he called on his old friend, Elizabeth, to help him. With the approval of the Bishop of Southwark and Cardinal Wiseman, the Sisters moved from Greenwich to Bayswater.

Elizabeth had a hard time of it. The Rule of her Community was not yet approved by Rome, so Manning thought they should adopt the Franciscan Rule, and he sent her and another Sister to the Franciscans in Charlotte Street, Glasgow, where they did their novitiate. Eventually they returned to Bayswater, only to find that some of the Sisters there preferred to join another house of their same Order, some decided they would prefer to go to Glasgow, and some left.

Elizabeth was professed as Mother Mary Elizabeth on October 27, 1859, before the Very Rev. Mgr. Manning, Provost of Westminster. She lived a wholly dedicated life of untiring zeal and loving care for her Sisters and the poor. No task was ever too menial for her, and she dealt equally with household and parish work. She was a staff writer for the *Dublin Review*, contributed articles for the *Lamp*, translated several books, including *The Life of the Cure of Ars*, *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, and the *Life of St. Teresa of Avila*. Many of her verses were also published.

In September of 1866, the Pope allowed the new community to adopt the same Constitutions as the Franciscan Sisters in Glasgow. Elizabeth was now the Abbess.

This remarkable and gifted woman died on July 21, 1870. The Requiem Mass was sung by her brother, Fr. William Lockhart, who had become a priest and Rosminian in the Roman Church. The number of Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis continued to grow, as did the number in the Community of St. Mary the Virgin. One hundred forty-two years after Elizabeth left Wantage, the two Communities are getting to know each other by mutual visits. *Deo Gratias.*

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Life and Letters of William John Butler*, Macmillan, 1897

*A History of the Foundation*, printed for private use, 1898

McEvoy, Sister Mary Agatha, *Mother Mary Elizabeth Lockhart*, 1959 Norton,

A. F., *M.Phil. Thesis*, 1978

Archives, Community of Saint Mary the Virgin

*AUTHOR: Sister Millicint Olga, Community of Saint Mary of the Virgin, Wantage, B.Ed., Educator and Pastoral Assistant, Church of England. Her long service to the Church included ministry to children at risk through the Home Office of Approved Schools, the preparation of young people for Confirmation, an outreach to unmarried mothers, care of elderly ladies, and prison chaplaincy.*