

SOME LETTERS FROM CARDINAL NEWMAN TO DR. J. W. OGLE

RECENTLY IN the Autograph Letters Collection of the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine there were found six letters written by Cardinal Newman to a Dr. Ogle. They date from 7 November 1884 to 12 August 1887. Newman died in 1890 at the age of eighty-nine, so that these letters come from the last period of his life when, having been created Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1879, he was living out the last years of his life as Superior of the Birmingham Oratory. From there he scarcely travelled except on rare and short visits to London, three such visits being mentioned in these letters, usually for medical or dental treatment.

There is no address on any of the letters by which to identify the recipient. In the *Medical Directory* for 1883 there are three Ogles listed as practising in London, Charles John, John William, and William. There was a large family of Ogles, several of whom became distinguished physicians. James Adey Ogle [1792–1857] had been Newman's mathematics tutor at Trinity College, Oxford, and, after taking a medical degree, became Regius Professor of Medicine in 1851. One of his sons was William [1827–1912], listed in the *Medical Directory* for 1883, and an eminent statistician. John William Ogle [1824–1905] belongs to a distant branch of the same family and it is he who seems to be the most likely recipient of these letters.

Father Stephen Dessain, the editor of Newman's letters and diaries, now in process of publication, has kindly written to me describing an envelope which the Birmingham Oratory possesses with the postmark 13 December 1874 addressed to J. Ogle Esqr M.D., 30 Cavendish Square, London W. This is the address given for John William Ogle in the 1874 directory.

John William Ogle was the son of Samuel Ogle of Leeds who was second cousin to James Adey. He graduated B.A. from Trinity College, Oxford, and it was at Oxford that he became sympathetic to the Tractarians. A Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, he delivered the Croonian Lectures at the College in 1869 and the Harveian Oration in 1880. From 1857 he was first assistant and then full physician at St. George's Hospital, where his son Cyril succeeded him and where James Adey's son William also worked. Although he resigned through ill health in 1876 he kept on his wide medical practice and it is almost certain that Newman would continue to consult him during the 1880s.

These letters reveal a characteristic anxiety about his health which Newman had all his life. He suffered from no major physical complaint although a crisis in his life more than once appeared to cause a mental breakdown. But with his customary passion for detail he was quick to note and write about minor symptoms.

The prostate trouble referred to in these letters appears to be a recurrence of something similar for which he consulted Edward Stanley several times during 1861, although on 8 August he was writing of Stanley 'He has already made me better—and assured me that, tho' it is a fact that there is an affection of the bladder, it is (he is *sure*) simply and entirely from the deranged state of my nervous system.' (letter 8 August).

The letters are written on small pieces of writing-paper folded to measure approxi-

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mately 10 x 15 cm. and are in Newman's usual small but meticulous handwriting, in some more shaky than in others. In particular they afford an intimate glimpse of the growing frailty of one of the greatest theologians and English prose stylists of the nineteenth century.

TRANSCRIPTION OF LETTERS

The original spelling, use of capitals and punctuation have been kept except that full stops occasionally omitted at the end of sentences and between initials have been supplied. 'Raised' letters have been lowered and corrections and additions made by Newman himself have been printed in square brackets [ ].

Nov. 7. 1884

Dear Dr Ogle

You have noticed before the mu[c]us. The doctor here noticed it in May [last;] in 1850–60 Mr Babington<sup>1</sup> noticed it—and Dr. Evans<sup>2</sup> [here] about the year 1866.

I enclose Dr Evans's prescription. Mr Babington's was to the [same] effect.

Would it do me good now? Thank you for the pains you have been taking with me.

Yours most truly

J. H. Newman

Nov. 24. 1884

My dear Dr Ogle

Thank you for your answer to me. I really think I ought to see a Surgeon—and, if it must be, the sooner the better, in order to get it over. If I got to you between 12 and 1 tomorrow, perhaps I could go on to him at once, supposing, that is, you approved of it.

Most truly yours

J. H. Card. Newman

P.S.<sup>3</sup> I am too old to make punctual appointments—do not wait for me.

Nov. 29. 1884

Dear Dr Ogle

Please burn this.

You asked me whether I could be sure of recollecting all that occurred 20 years ago.

This set me on thinking, and something occurred to my memory, which it is wonderful I did not tell you.

Some one connected in my mind my case with the suggestion of stricture. And I once fell in with a medical book, which said that "simple strictures" did [*not*] always arise from [some] criminal cause—and added, (*I think*), that they sometimes so arose

<sup>1</sup> George Gisborne Babington [1795–1856] was consulted by Newman from the time of his mental breakdown in 1827 until Babington's death. He became F.R.C.S. in 1843 and was one of the original 300 Fellows. He was the family physician to the Wilberforces through whom Newman was introduced to him.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Evans must be George Fabian Evans [1806–73] who was physician at the Birmingham General Hospital for thirty-four years. His prescription is missing.

<sup>3</sup> The postscript is placed at the head of the letter.

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from calculus.<sup>4</sup> I almost think Mr Stanley<sup>5</sup> implied or asked [me] as to stricture, tho' without mentioning the word.

Moreover, I think I found that, [if] this evil is not checked, it tends to a fatal obstructi[on] of the passage.

I understand now, why I was [so] anxious, tho' I had forgotten the ground of it.  
Most truly yours J. H. Newman

My dear Dr Ogle

Dec. 11. 1884

I have wanted to write to you for a week past—but during the last half year my fingers have got so stiff or feeble that I am as slow and awkward as a child.

This day week I submitted myself for examination—I felt it necessary to my peace of mind to know whether Mr Stanley had known more than he said, that is, if I could analyse the cause of my anxiety. I was somewhat roughly treated—perhaps it could not be helped—but the result was very satisfactory. There is *no* calculus, *no* enlargement of the third lobe of the gland, *no* obstruction of any kind. The instrument used was of full size, and went (I think he said) easily.

I am surprised you should not have heard of Mr Maitland.<sup>6</sup> He was [a] great friend of Hugh Rose,<sup>7</sup> succeeded him as Editor of the *British Critic*, and was Librarian at Lambeth.

Most truly yours

John H. Card. Newman

My dear Dr Ogle

March 4. 1885<sup>8</sup>

As I took up my pen to write these lines, I was told by Fr Neville that you had been corresponding about me with him. I have wished to write sooner, but do everything including the use of the pen, so slowly, that I am overset with a mass of work in every direction.

Alas, the Tamer [?]<sup>9</sup> failed with me. I think all my powers are failing tho' I have nothing positive the matter—but I doubt whether I should have strength to meet a sudden attack, whether it were an external accident or an illness.

What troubles me is that every morning brings its own work and more than I have time to get through so that the days go on, and I seem to have less [and less] chance of getting thro' current matters & beyond them into serious occupation[s] which have a claim on my thoughts.

<sup>4</sup> In most nineteenth-century textbooks the most common cause of urethral stricture was said to be gonorrhoea but other causes were usually mentioned. E.g. W. Wadd, *Observations on the best Mode of relieving Strictures in the Urethra*, 2nd ed., 1811, p. 6. 'The most commonly imputed cause [of urethral stricture] was, at one time, neglected or mismanaged gonorrhoea. Mr. Hunter, however has taught us that gonorrhoea is no more instrumental in producing strictures, than inflammation from any other cause.'

<sup>5</sup> Edward Stanley [1793–1862] F.R.C.S., surgeon at St. Bartholomew's 1838–61 and appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria in 1858. 'He is a most comfortable doctor. He forbids medicine, except manna and rhubarb.' (Letter 26 July 1861).

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Roffey Maitland [1792–1866] became editor of the *British Magazine* on Rose's death in 1839. He was the grandfather of F. W. Maitland, the legal historian, and author of 'The Dark Ages'.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh James Rose [1795–1838] a Tractarian theologian who founded the *British Magazine* in 1832.

<sup>8</sup> Date from end of letter.

<sup>9</sup> The word looks like Tamer and would seem to be the name of a remedy. No similar word occurs in the *Pharmacopoeia* for 1885.

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For the moment my greatest trouble is the feebleness of my fingers. My pace in writing is that of a child beginning the alphabet.

And I am losing the power of spelling.

Yours most truly  
J. H. Card. Newman

Aug 12. /87

My dear Dr Ogle

I have to thank you and Sir William Bowman<sup>10</sup> for the trouble you are both taking about me. I don't see anything likely to prevent my coming to Town next Wednesday the 17th, and, as far as I am concerned, I accept the appointment—I suppose at 12 o'clock,

Yours sincerely  
J. H. Card. Newman

<sup>10</sup> Sir William Bowman [1816–92] was the leading ophthalmic surgeon in London from the 1850s. He was consultant surgeon at the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital at Moorfields but would have seen Newman in his private rooms at 5 Clifford Street, London W.1.

H. BRENDA SUTTON

*News, Notes and Queries*

CONFERENCE ON 'SCIENCE AND THE ARTS'

A HISTORICAL CONFERENCE aimed at revealing influences of science upon literature, fine art, music, philosophy, national and social attitudes, etc. is to be held from 7 to 9 July 1971 at the Pollock Halls of Residence, 69 Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh 9, immediately preceding the annual Summer meeting of the British Society for the History of Science.

The Conference is being sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, since it is expected to attract British and foreign scholars with interests in these interdisciplinary fields. Precise information regarding speakers, accommodation arrangements, etc. will be contained on registration forms issued in January 1971. It is anticipated that the Conference fee will be £6 per head, which includes full board and lodgings at the Pollock Halls.

Anyone who wishes to receive a Registration Form for this Conference should apply to the Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee, Dr. Eric G. Forbes, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, 12 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW.