

A LAYMAN'S RETREATS

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A layman's retreats by Henry Owen-Lewis

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HENRY OWEN-LEWIS

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The late Henry Owen-Lewis of Enniskeen

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By
HENRY OWEN-LEWIS

Edited by
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and Prefaced by
THE BISHOP OF NEWPORT



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PREFACE

BY THE BISHOP OF NEWPORT

THE pages which follow are a tribute of veneration and love to a father from his children. They contain the Notes left by the late Mr. Henry Owen-Lewis, of several Retreats made by him under Fathers of the Society of Jesus, together with a brief memoir of the writer. One is not called upon either to praise or to criticize a publication of this kind. It will appeal to all who knew the author in life, and his friends who read these very intimate and sincere reflections will be pleased, and also edified, by the ingenuous revelation they afford of the interior principles of a worthy and useful career.

Readers in general into whose hands this little book may fall will, if I am not mistaken, find in these Retreat Notes a deeply pathetic picture of the spirit of a layman, who, whilst frankly

living in the world, and in no way pretending to deep or unusual spirituality, was determined to do his best to live for God and save his soul. The Notes cover nine or ten Retreats, made in common with other laymen at Manresa, under the Rev. Father Lucas, Pope (twice), Joseph Rickaby (twice), King, Strappini, Colchester and Lester. They do not pretend to be more than echoes of the voice of the preacher—disconnected reproductions, some longer, some very brief, of the more striking thoughts or the practical lessons which had struck the devout hearer in the course of the meditations.

Accordingly, we find the great features of the admirable Ignatian spiritual groundwork reappearing persistently—the four last things, the appreciation of sin, indifference to creatures, the fervent acceptance of Christ, *et cetera*. The writer dwells now upon one topic, now upon another—

and if he does not do justice to the utterances of these masters of spirituality and of English speech, he does what is perhaps more touching and interesting—he lets us see a soul in the process of purifying and elevating itself by the exercises they propose. Simply and without pretence, he sets down, for his own soul's use, the matter and the spirit of what he hears, not omitting the homely illustrations and the primitive facetiousness (though there is very little of this) which are thought necessary in presenting the spiritual life to laymen. One can follow him not only in the intelligent grasping of great principles, but in his evidently genuine acceptance of practical Christianity—regular prayer, strictness and self-denial in food and recreation, carefulness in speech, considerateness to others, loyalty to the Church, and the courageous profession of Catholic life.

Perhaps Henry Owen-Lewis's most