Father Joseph Guibert, S.J., described the Venerable Francis Libermann as, "the greatest spiritual director of the last century." It is with a view of bringing our readers in contact with the mind and heart of that wonderful spiritual guide, that we present our first collection in English of his Spiritual Letters.

In the present volume are letters he addressed to various women religious, to aspirants to the religious life, and to his three nieces who eventually became nuns.

Left to himself, Father Libermann would probably never have undertaken the direction of souls. But in this as in every other action of his life, God's will was paramount. Once he recognized that God wished him to undertake this exacting work, he put into practice a constant theme of his letters, surrender to God's good pleasure, and then went ahead undaunted.

He was convinced that the role of the spiritual director was one of removing the obstacles to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and time and again he warns those he directs against becoming in any way attached to himself, when his sole aim is to attach them to Jesus alone.

A note of confidence in God and Our Blessed Lady, and encouragement in the face of obstacles, runs right through all his writings. For him fear and strain are unworthy of a friend of Jesus and Mary. Courage and perseverance in spite of repeated falls are standard recommendations. Once he wrote to Mother de Villeneuve of the Sisters of Castres: "The majority of souls are lost through discouragement."

One who seeks literary elegance in his letters of direction will fail to find it. In writing to souls whom he sought to draw to Jesus, he generally used French, which for him was an adopted language. He wrote under the strain of over-
whelming occupations, and often while suffering from severe
attacks of migraine and other ailments. Many of these letters
were literally dashed off in spare moments and always with
the consciousness that he owed them to his correspondents.
His sincerity, his deep love of Jesus and Mary, his consuming
zeal for the sanctification of souls, and his unfailing encourage-
ment to peace and calm trust in God, shine out in every line.
His aim was to “influence people,” not for economic gain
but for the spiritual benefit of his neighbor.

Although the letters in this collection are addressed to re-
ligious or prospective religious, they also have a message for
priests and layfolk. That message is one of fidelity to the
Holy Spirit and absolute trust and confidence in the love of
Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother.

It is the fervent prayer of the translators that this message
may bring lasting peace to many troubled souls.