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LORETO COLLEGE

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MEMORIES OF LORETO

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FOREWORD

It is now over a hundred years [illegible] Mother Teresa Ball began, in [illegible], the great work of the foundation of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ireland. Looking back across the century which has passed since she established the Mother-House at Rathfarnham, our hearts are filled with thankfulness to God, Who has so visibly blessed her work, and given it such abundant increase.

Rev. Mother Ball was called by Divine Providence to be one of the most powerful influences in the restoration of Catholic society in Ireland during forty years of the nineteenth century. The long dark night of religious persecution and political oppression was well nigh spent, and the country was emerging from its age-long struggle, worn out and impoverished in body, but with its spirit aflame and its soul enriched with treasures of grace. We, who live in happier days, can scarcely realize the difficulties she had to face when

she undertook the high and holy work of providing Catholic education for the girls of Ireland. The Penal Code was still the law of the land, though its severity had been, to a great extent, mitigated, and eight years more of struggle had to be endured before Catholic Emancipation was won.

For the first ten years after the foundation at Rathfarnham, Rev. Mother worked with ceaseless, untiring energy at the consolidation of what was destined, in the designs of God, to become the Mother-House of a world-wide Institute. Her most important task was the training of our early Mothers and Sisters in the principles and practice of the religious life, and of strict observance, and the laying deep and solid foundations of holiness on the bed-rock of humility and self-sacrifice. At the same time, she did not neglect the temporal concerns of the growing Institute. The schools prospered, the novices increased, the house was enlarged, and such rapid progress was made that, in 1833, Rev. Mother had the consolation of seeing five of her spiritual children go forth from the Mother-House to found at Navan the

first affiliation. Since then, this development of the work has proceeded without interruption, and to-day, in far distant parts of the world, the nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary are to be found labouring for the glory of God, their own sanctification, and the salvation of souls with the same devotion and self-sacrifice which inspired our Mothers and Sisters of the early days. And if it is asked how, from such lowly beginnings, results so marvellous should follow, the answer is not far to seek. Aided and sustained by the grace of God, and under the protection of His Blessed Mother, the spiritual daughters of Frances Teresa Ball have been true to the inspiring watchword of their Foundress, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all things else shall be added unto you."

The little volume of MEMORIES now published collectively for the first time, appeared originally in serial form in the pages of the *Loreto Magazine*. This fact will account for occasional repetitions, and for a certain lack of sequence between the chapters. The book has been compiled for the private use of the nuns of

the Institute who will readily overlook these slight defects in a work of such interest and edification, enshrining, as it does, the simple record of the holy, hidden lives of the first Mothers and Sisters of the Institute in Ireland, a record which is our most precious inheritance.

LORETO ABBEY, RATHFARNHAM.

4th November, 1926.

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MEMORIES OF LORETO.

CHAPTER I.

A LONG DARK NIGHT.

WHEN the clouds have swept the sky through the long winter night; when the wind-tossed torrents of thick rain have deepened the nightly darkness; when not a gleam from the blue heavens beyond, nor the glance of a solitary star, nor the pure presence of the soft silver moon, has soothed the terrors of the storm, it often happens that, when the late morning dawn comes on, the gloomy masses overhead begin to roll away, and a clear, delicately-tinted light spreads across the horizon. There is no warmth in it as yet —no richness of colour—and we cannot trust its fair promise, it looks so capable of fading fast; still, it lingers, and grows golden-hued, till, at last, in sudden splendour, "the day breaks and the shadows retire."

For there is a Watcher above the night, omnipotent and loving, and throned in tranquil light. The silence of that Watcher, while the

darkness broods over His children, is the silence of a tenderness which holds unfailing power to gladden and glorify the eternity of those who pass through "the little while" of earth's tribulation. That Watcher's Hand, with one gentle touch, can "wipe away the tears from their eyes" for ever; and that same Almighty Hand can, and does, rest with unutterable compassion on bowed head after bowed head, as the desolate sink down, sadly, at His Feet.

Did ever a land in this changeful world of ours feel the strengthening power of that Hand more repeatedly than Ireland, "the land of sorrows"? Well may we revere the memory of the hours of our country's long dark night, lit as it was by the star of "the everlasting hills," shining in its unconquerable beauty before the eyes of the suffering and the weak. Well may we revere the hillsides and the valleys, and the caves by the seashore, where the Most High God was welcomed in His Eucharistic robes with such eager, self-effacing love. Well may we deem it holy ground where the uncanonized Irish martyrs braved death for the sake of one hour's communion with the Crucified—one lifting-up of the Sacred Host and the Chalice of

salvation. We may have pondered over the annals of those years with hearts that longed for the relief of hot, indignant words, until in some blessed hour of God's sweet mercy, our thoughts were drawn upwards to the thronged ranks of the God-crowned children of Ireland, in the land where "the former things have passed away."

Less noticeable, perhaps, in the eyes of men, was the spirit of solid, deeply-rooted faith which lived on through the very heart of the busy, crowded cities. And, over these thoroughfares of toil and worldly cares and opulence, so often sanctified by the magic touch of charity's generous hand, arose timidly, but steadily, the herald gleams of morning brightness.

The solemn Scriptural praise: "He was a just man," is a truthful portraiture of the heads of the Irish Catholic households in those days. There was a God-fearing loyalty, a strong sense of the claims of the Creator on the creature, a quiet fidelity to the practice of religious duties, an unquestioning reverence for the ministers of God, and a princely-hearted generosity to God's poor, which we look back to now with a sort of wistful admiration.

Yet, the Catholic Church in Ireland possessed nothing—humanly speaking—to attract the eyes of the wealthy and gifted. "The chapels of that day," writes a truthful witness, "were invariably hidden away in the meanest quarters of the city, so that a stranger would find it difficult to recognize their sacred character, and distinguish the house of God from the stables, the hucksters' stores, and the old furniture shops that pressed closely on its walls. Unsightly structures were these old chapels, but sacred as the oratories of the Catacombs. Each had its special traditions, its special characteristics, something or other which made it a place of pilgrimage as well as a place of prayer."

A typical chapel of the time was St. Mary's, in Liffey Street. "The Archbishop, Dr. Troy, often officiated in this lowly edifice, which, not daring to show its front, even in an obscure street, hid itself among a cluster of houses, and could only be approached by a narrow passage, leading from the pathway. The small windows only admitted a sort of twilight to play on the low ceiling, the gloomy galleries, and the one 'thing of beauty'—a lovely Virgin and Child, after Raphael. On Sundays every approach

was filled with an eagerly pious crowd, striving to get as near as possible even to the external walls. From shortly before noon till one o'clock, p.m., at which hours the last Masses were said, the patter of footsteps on the rough pathway was silenced by the clatter of hoofs and the roll of wheels; for, according to the fashion of the day, all who had carriages rode in state to the chapel. It was considered only right and becoming to have one's best horses and liveries seen in the labyrinth of lanes surrounding the parochial and conventual chapels. The going at midday, in full style, to Mass was held equivalent to a profession of faith."

The chapel of St. Michan's, in Mary's Lane, was served for many years by the Jesuit Fathers; and prominent among its parishioners were John and Mabel Clare Ball, then living in Eccles Street.

CHAPTER II.

"BLESSED are they who shall build thee up." This blessing, so often pronounced on the brave supporters of the Catholic Church in Ireland at the close of the eighteenth century, was granted in abiding fulness to John Ball. A man of stainless virtue and stainless honour; genial, courteous, actively benevolent towards those who turned to him for help, he had won universal respect; and his highly accomplished wife was "an Irish Catholic lady of the true type"—the joy of her home, and an angel of pity to the poor.

These, and such as these, were the faithful "builders up" of the slowly-rising Church of Christ; and, early in their married life they found, with gratitude too deep for words to paint, that their work would be carried on fruitfully and gloriously by their children. One by one these children began to show what a noble service of God lay before them in the years to come. And, in the case of John and Mabel Ball, the promise of the brilliant future was given while their young flock was gathered round them in early childhood.

Their only son was afterwards the second Catholic raised to the Bench after Emancipation, as Judge of the Common Pleas. Cecilia, the eldest daughter, was "given to God" with unselfish resignation when she left one of the happiest of homes for the Ursuline Convent, Cork. And, perhaps, her consecrated sisters can hardly claim a brighter crown than that which must have been won by Anna Maria, the universally loved and admired wife of John O'Brien. She was called, at one and the same time, "an ornament to the Irish Catholic circle in Dublin," and "a true Sister of Charity living in the gay world of society." Still more, Ireland looks up to her as the invaluable friend and helper of the two great Irish Foundresses—Mary Aikenhead and her own younger sister, Frances Ball.

Frances was born on the 9th January, 1794. The youngest and dearest pet of a very loving family, she was a lovely, high-spirited child. For nine sunny years she was the darling of the home, and then they determined to part with her for awhile. Her sister, Anna Maria, was spending her last year at school in St. Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar, York; and when she left it Frances took her place there.

Little did the nuns of the Institute of the

Blessed Virgin Mary suspect that they welcomed the future Foundress of the Irish Branch of the Institute, when Frances came to them. In after years they often told the story of her first days in their venerable Convent. Anna Maria stayed with them till her little sister felt at home. It was early in the month of June, and the Convent garden was rich in its wealth of summer flowers. In that garden the first words were spoken which foretold God's special claim on Frances Ball. They were strange words to come from the lips of a young girl on the point of entering on a life of worldly ease and pleasure, stranger still when we remember that they were addressed to a little child.

The sisters were spending their last hour together, for Anna Maria was to sail for Ireland the following day. As they prepared to bid good-bye, Anna Maria said most earnestly: "Frances, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all things else shall be added to you.'" To the end of her life Frances treasured the memory of that evening, and of the words that were her guide and support through many anxious, doubt-laden years.

When, long after, records of the "Rev. Mother-General of the Loreto Order" became

very precious, the nuns of York acknowledged that they had not chronicled many of the sayings or doings of their greatly favoured child. At first, they said, she was their idea of what an Irish child should naturally be—full of life, fond of play, and ready to throw herself into games and outdoor amusements with more zest than was usually shown by her English companions. She was talented, certainly, with a retentive memory and quick understanding, but she disliked being bound too closely to study, while occasionally she surprised the nuns by a sudden evidence of depth of thought which they had never met in one so young.

A word of direction in the right path was never thrown away on Frances. For instance, one day when she was in the act of throwing a discarded toy into the fire, a Sister stopped her, saying that the toy would delight a poor child, and that nothing should ever be destroyed that might give comfort to the poor. Another child would probably have yielded the point, and thought no more about it, but Frances profited by the lesson, and during the whole course of her life—such a life of widespread influence—she taught it over and over again.

A change must soon have come over Frances, for, at the date of her First Communion, 16th June, 1805, she was described as a remarkably pious studious child, always taking a high place in class.

The now perfectly organized sodality of the "Children of Mary" was not yet established at York, but it had its prototype in an Association to which Frances was admitted. Each member was to place herself under the protection of some particular saint. Frances chose the great Benedictine Foundress, St. Scholastica. With two of her companions in this Association Frances formed a life-long friendship. These were Elena Roberts and Christina Gordon. Their families lived in Spain. The latter was afterwards one of the ladies of honour at the Spanish Court, and so deep was the impression her holiness made on those who came in contact with her that there was not a dissenting voice when Queen Isabella observed that in the company of the Señora Doña Christina Gordon de Prendergast she could never forget she was in the presence of God.

Both of Frances Ball's early Spanish friends sent their children and grandchildren to be educated under her care in Loreto Abbey,

Rathfarnham. And, all through Ireland; there are many who hold in veneration the name of Elena Roberts' saintly daughter, Mother Mary Conception Lopez, one of the best loved and holiest members of the Institute B.V.M.

CHAPTER III.

FIVE years had passed away when Frances was unexpectedly called home to Ireland. Her father died, most likely of a short illness; otherwise this one absent child would surely have been with him. His last thoughts followed her, for, after his death a carefully folded paper, "written by Fanny, in the sixth year of her age," was found tightly clasped in his hand.

Her widowed mother longed to have Frances for a comforter, and, so, the child's school-days ended in her fifteenth year. But if her education, in the techincal sense of the word, was interrupted, her mental training could not suffer in the constant companionship of her mother and sisters—Mrs. O'Brien and Mrs. Sherlock—and the frequent intercourse with God's messenger of hope and peace to the Irish Church, Father Daniel Murray.

At once, as though divinely inspired, Father Murray took Frances under the protecting guidance that was to lead her, step by step, to those blessed mountains of God, the summits of which are slowly unveiled to the eyes of

patient faith. It was a trying time for her. The innocent, holily-guarded mind was startled and pained by the first contact with the world and its restless life. Outside her own home there were many things to sadden and perplex her. One saying of hers has been preserved, which gives the keynote to some of her difficulties in society. "I wonder," she said, "how Catholics, and good people who approach the Sacraments, can talk so uncharitably."

Just then, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, the office of Coadjutor Bishop of the See of Dublin was laid on Father Daniel Murray. Hardly forty years of age, he was mature in experience of the troubles of the hunted Catholics of Ireland; and the meek dignity which distinguished him in the episcopacy was apparent from the first years of his ministry, to the favoured few who gathered round him.

He was ordained in 1790, and his first curacy was in Arklow. We read: "In 1798 Arklow was the scene of a terrible fray. The old parish prfest was murdered in his bed, and his curate escaped by a sort of miracle, for he was fired at as he crossed the river at Shelton Abbey. His only safety was in flight, and he rode to

Dublin by a route full of dangers. Appointed curate to the parish of St. Mary's, Dublin, his heart sank within him at the misery accumulated in the crowded lanes of the Metropolis, and he devoted all the strength and energy of an ardent, yet patient nature to the fulfilment of the laborious duties of a hard-worked priest."

Among the fervent Catholic laity none were more zealous assistants to Archbishop Murray than Mrs. John O'Brien and Frances Ball. Souls like theirs knew his worth, and valued the blessing that had been granted to them. From the memorials of those days we take the following tribute to Loreto's father and friend.

"The esteem felt for Archbishop Murray by those in power, and by those external to the Church, was but a faint echo of the love and veneration with which his own people regarded him. He was always at their service. Heaven, which saw the uprightness of his intentions, enabled him to convert even his natural deficiencies into occasions of preeminent success. His slender voice and halting memory led to that calm, and soft, and deliberate enunciation, which, managed with his exquisite taste and skill, so charmed his hearers, making every word tell, and every argument

convince. . . . His presence in the pulpit was so solemn, his demeanour so serene and dignified, his utterance so distinct and impressive, the silence of the rapt audience so profound, that it became at times a very fascination to listen to him. It was a piety the tenderest, the sincerest, wearing the most faultless embellishments of truest art. Plain truths in plain language swayed the multitudes to results which the most able rhetoricians might envy, the most gifted aim at in vain."

That same mild sway exercised its power for the accomplishment of God's designs over the mind and heart of Frances Ball. We do not know how soon the project of her life-work presented itself to the Bishop. For four years he contented himself with encouraging her in the practices of visiting the poor, taking care of the altars in the parish chapel, etc. The only singularity he counselled—for in those days it was a singularity—was frequent, sometimes daily Communion. Later on the reason was made evident. Frances needed to be trained by degrees to the heart to heart converse with the Source of light and grace, which would prove her "only helpful stay."

In the spring of 1812, the first spiritual warning was given. One evening, while Frances

was a centre of attraction at a crowded ball, she suddenly fancied she heard the echo of the words that her sister had spoken to her in the Convent garden at York: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all things else shall be added to you." She could scarcely command herself so far as to finish the dance (for she was taking part in a quadrille), and, as soon as possible, she begged her mother to order their carriage. They drove home in silence, for Frances was wholly absorbed in the thought of what she imagined must be a whisper from Heaven. Often, in her old age, she recalled that evening, and she sometimes said: "I was five years in York, four years at home, and, until the voice of God spoke to my heart that evening, the idea of becoming a nun never, directly or indirectly, entered my head."

Naturally enough, Frances asked to be called in time for early Mass next morning. Her mother objected, saying that over-fatigue would injure her. Frances obeyed, as she always did; thinking at the same time: "How hard it is to serve two masters—God and the world." She said to herself: "If I am to purchase a few hours' entertainment by the loss of the adorable Sacrifice, if such

gaieties as are offered to me are to interfere with what I prize most, it is better for me to leave the world, and go where the service of God can be my first care, for nothing else is half so dear to me."

With the impetuosity that often attends a change like hers, Frances hurried away to Archbishop Murray, and laid her wishes before him. He gently answered: "Wait and pray."

Probably in his own mind he at once decided that Frances was the instrument for the realization of some of his most cherished hopes. "He knew," said his panegyrist, "no one knew better, the well-nigh omnipotent influence for good which the highly-educated Catholic lady can command. He saw that grossness and vice shrink away, overawed, before her influence. He saw how virtue the most brilliant, piety the most heroic, have often shed their light round the steps of such a woman wherever she trod. He remembered that some of the most glorious names on the roll of the beatified earned for themselves the honours of sanctity in the various common, but most momentous relations of mother, and sister, and wife. He counted what splendid facilities for establishing the empire of Christ, in souls but too often the declared rebels to

the Divine Will, such a woman could exercise when no one else would have access to the enemy's stronghold; and he anxiously pondered over the means of rearing up many such women to purify and sanctify his flock. God listened favourably to the yearnings of his heart and granted his desire." (Funeral Oration.)

But the undertaking was not one to be lightly entered on, and Archbishop Murray's prudence was always ready to control his actions. At his request, Mary Aikenhead and Alicia Walsh —the first Irish Sisters of Charity—were preparing to make their novitiate in St. Mary's Convent, York. When their probation was over the Bishop proposed that the same venerated Convent should bring to early maturity the first novices for a branch of its own Institute in Ireland.

"You may have to wait three years for this," said Archbishop Murray to Frances Ball; and without a question or a murmur she obeyed.

Though the large-hearted nuns of York admitted the first Sisters of Charity, for the time being, in order to afford them the necessary training in the principles of the religious life, the aim of the two Orders was totally different; the Sisters of the Institute of the

Blessed Virgin being devoted by their Rule to the education of youth, principally the children of the upper and middle classes of society. But in receiving Frances Ball, with a view to a foundation in Ireland, they would help to extend the grand work they had been engaged in since they made their way noiselessly into Protestant England, in 1669.

Proscribed as they were, they were no strangers. On the contrary, they had been exiles in a foreign country, and they stole home at last from Germany, to which they had fled when tyranny ruled their own faithless land. At their head was Frances, daughter of Francis Bedingfield, of Suffolk, who gave eleven of his children to the Institute. Their first humble dwelling in St. Martin's Lane, London, was soon exchanged for a better house in Hammersmith. In 1686, owing, chiefly, to the reverent protection of Mary of Modena, the "English Virgins of the Institute of Mary" were enabled to purchase the house in Micklegate Bar, York, which remains the property of the Institute to the present day. For more than a hundred years the sister houses of York and Hammersmith were the only Convents of religious women in England.

CHAPTER IV.

In Easter week, 1814, Archbishop Murray made a decided advance. He wrote to Mrs. Coyney, the Superior of York Convent: "Frances Ball has sanguine expectation that she will be able to accomplish her purpose. She means to offer herself as a humble candidate for your Institute, and hopes, though with great difficulty, to gain her mother's consent, unfettered by any restrictions. I cannot give up the hope of seeing a House of your holy Institute established in this country, and I trust that the little treasure we are sending you may give some colour of claim to that blessing, and may eventually facilitate the means of accomplishing it."

Mrs. Coyney's answer was an acceptance of Frances, to be trained in the York noviceship; but she could hold out no hope of being able to contribute in any way towards the Irish Foundation. Neither her staff of nuns nor her pecuniary resources would allow her to attempt a filiation. The whole responsibility should rest on Archbishop Murray.

Too thankful to have secured even one

foundation stone, and with supernatural trust in heavenly aid, the Bishop pressed Frances to break the news to her mother. It was a painful interview, and many heart-breaking scenes followed. Mrs. Ball clung to her child with passionate affection, and her sorrow grew almost unbearable when she dwelt on the trials that were certain to attend the introduction of a new Order into Ireland.

While she was hesitating and grieving, accident brought the mother one morning into the Dominican Church, Denmark Street. An eloquent sermon was preached after Mass, in which the preacher dwelt on the guilt of those parents who oppose their children's religious vocation, and pointed out the misery that was sure to follow such sinful resistance to the claims of God. So impressed was Mrs. Ball by this sermon that she immediately set Frances at liberty to do as she wished, only asking her to pay a farewell visit to her sister in the Ursuline Convent, Cork.

If the poor loving mother entertained a lingering hope that the sight of Cecilia's peaceful happiness might induce Frances to join her, she was soon undeceived. Frances came back unaltered in her purpose. Her young hand was steadily laid on "the plough," and her

eyes were too steadfastly lifted to the eternal mountains whence help comes always, to the earnest soul, to permit her to give even one passing glance towards any path save the one marked out for her by the Hand of the Crucified.

On the 11th June, 1814, the Feast of Corpus Christi, St. Mary's, York, opened its enclosure for the second time to Frances Ball. She was greatly altered. The bright beauty of the child had ripened into lovely, graceful womanhood; and the innocent piety of the girl of fourteen had expanded into the holiness that befitted the future Foundress.

The saintly Mother Austin Chalmers was then Mistress of Novices. She had been in the Convent since her fifth year, and a biographer writes: "Her life reminds us of the old Benedictine Saints, of whom it was said that they never knew the world, rather than that they left it." Those who knew her best were confident that she carried her baptismal robe unspotted to the grave. The keen eye of the pure of heart was noted in her: the clear judgment and the untroubled spiritual insight, which called forth the saying: "The Holy Ghost was in her."

She looked for a constant striving after

perfection in the aspirants to the religious life, a prayerful advance in humility, self-denial, abnegation: She looked for a love of labour, a love of silence, a visible conviction that the lips of the religious should be closely guarded by the strictest law of charity. And all this she found in Frances Ball, now Sister Mary Teresa.

"Her life," wrote one of the Mothers of St. Mary's, "was altogether supernatural in our eyes. Her very appearance betokened sanctity; and her actions little and great, were blended beautifully into one grand harmony—the sole end of her life—the greater glory of the Lord our God."

With their knowledge of the task before Sister Mary Teresa, her superiors were wise in testing her capability and her virtue in every possible way. "Her obedience, meekness, patience, prudence, were often and rigorously tried." She was exercised in manual labour, employed in the Sisters' duties. More than once she was sent to scour a long flight of stairs, and she was often desired to set about these household tasks in ways that seemed to be suggested by the intention of making the work as hard as possible. For she who was to govern should first learn how to obey.

Then, for weeks together she was kept

closely occupied in the schools, at the classes and the recreations. The Community was large enough to admit of other arrangements, but Sister M. Teresa's share of the burden was to be an unusual one, for the "gold" of her sacrifice should be "fire-tried." So sweet and willing was her submission to every trial, so manifest her unbroken union with God, that it was a day of general rejoicing when Sister Mary Teresa made her vows, on the 9th September, 1816.

The nuptial seal of dedication had been stamped on the first living stone of the Irish Branch of the Institute of Mary. The "pearl of great price"—her spousal consecration to the Most High—had been lavishly purchased by Frances Ball, but, in the first hours of bridal joy it required all the fortitude of her brave heart to bear up against the thought that the holy calm of St. Mary's was not to be her portion.

"After her profession," writes Father Coleridge, "she seems to have passed through a time of interior trial, such as is often to be met with in the lives of the servants of God." Under this spiritual cloud "she looked on her undertaking in Ireland as an enterprise of doubtful hope and certain distraction.

Moreover, she was tried by dryness in prayer and in all her communications with God." Our knowledge of this period of desolation is chiefly gathered from Archbishop Murray's letters to her. He wrote :

"When or how, or whether at all, this good work in Ireland is to be established, are secrets which, as yet, God has reserved to Himself. All I require of you, in the meantime, is to be patient, quiet, desiring that God's will, in its minutest details, may be accomplished in you, and to pray that He may not allow you to fall into such misery as to give the slightest opposition to His designs.

"I cannot admit the accuracy of your calculations respecting your greater prospect of happiness in your present state, compared to what your situation here would afford. Wherever we are we cannot command the grace of final perseverance; it is the free gift of God, and the surest way to obtain it is to lend ourselves generously to His purposes, utterly indifferent as to the manner in which He may employ us. . . . A religious can look to no more certain way of knowing the Divine Will than by the decision of the superiors whom God has directed her to obey. . . . Let me entreat you, then, my dear child, not to continue

wearing out your poor mind by anxieties which have no foundation, part of which I attribute to the suggestions of the crafty enemy, who can assume the appearance of an angel of light. You may never be called on to leave your present happy retreat. It may be a comfort to you to know that, in the event of your coming here, I have reason to expect that you will be in the company and under the guidance of some of those seniors whose presence you say would render your happiness complete."

The hope that the Bishop held out was never realized. The Irish Sisters were destined to stand alone.

Another letter discloses more of the difficulties that were haunting Sister Mary Teresa at every step. "Your preparation for Christmas night was not, in my opinion, less acceptable to our dear Lord on account of the time you were obliged to subtract from your usual devotions in order to prepare in the hearts of others a fit sanctuary to receive Him. What better preparation could you make? Every word you employed to inspire them with fervour must have added a new spark to your own flame. At least it must have drawn on you a new grace from God, which, though it may

have stolen silently into your soul, was powerful in fitting you to receive a more abundant share of the treasures of Holy Communion. You seem to forget how generous God is to those who devote themselves to make others serve Him. . . . Your work may expose you to distractions, but God is not unmindful of your weakness, and His grace will be ready to sanctify every effort you make to recall your wandering thoughts to Him. . . . It may impose a burden on you. . . . Need I add that the greatness of the burden will not be forgotten when the hour of recompense comes—when 'they who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.'"

We glean from these letters that some unforeseen delay had arisen as to the foundation in Ireland. It was, in a sense, a revolutionary step to introduce the new Order. Such a foundation was likely to draw into its ranks the daughters of the influential classes in Ireland. Soon—very soon—the girls educated by the nuns would take a foremost position in Irish Catholic society, and their fresh, young affection would never allow the Convent home they had learned to love to be treated with contemptuous indifference. The Institute of Mary should be brought out to the light of day,

in an honoured place, and thus, by degrees, the other centres of Catholic devotion would gradually emerge from the shade that had protected their existence, for they would need such protection no longer.

But it was hard for Sister Mary Teresa to cheer herself with a picture like this. Twice, already, she had been deprived of a companion who had held out a promise of much-prized co-operation. Sisters Mary Gonzaga O'Reilly and Mary Austin Sheridan died in York during their novitiate; and it was not until the August and September of 1819 that Anna Therry (Sister Mary Baptist) and Ellen Arthur (Sister Mary Ignatia) offered themselves for the Irish Branch of the Institute.

Archbishop Murray was so eager to begin the work that he begged that these two novices might finish their novitiate in Ireland, under Sister Mary Teresa's care. He wrote to her as follows :—

"DUBLIN, 8 *May*, 1821.

"It gives me real pleasure, my dearest child, that you see, as I do, the secret workings of Providence preparing the way. . . . Why, then, do you not leave everything with entire confidence to the gracious disposal of the

unerring Guide? Why do you allow so many terrors to prey on you? . . . Your courage should rise instead of sink: for, weak as is the little shoot He is going to plant, when watered by the blessings of our good God, it will not fail to spring up and flourish."

CHAPTER V.

THE next news was that Archbishop Murray had purchased Rathfarnham House, once a very fine residence; but from years of neglect it had grown uninhabitable, so there would be a delay of some months before the nuns could take possession of it. Meantime, the Archbishop said he wished them to be at hand, and he desired Sister Mary Teresa to choose between three temporary homes—hired lodgings, apartments in his own house, or "a little corner with the Sisters of Charity in Stanhope Street." She immediately answered, "The little corner"—for there they would be with religious, and could live as religious.

Father Edward Armstrong was deputed by Archbishop Murray to escort the nuns to Dublin; and they left York on the 10th August, 1821.

On the 12th August, Mother Mary Teresa and her companions landed at Dunleary. Its name was changed to Kingstown that day, for George IV. of England arrived in Ireland simultaneously with the Irish nuns.

The repairs went on slowly in Rathfarnham

House. Month after month passed by. Friends had spoken of the aims of the new Institute, and parents came to Mother Mary Teresa to urge the opening of the school. So she rented a small house in Harold's Cross, and the work of the Irish Branch was begun there very humbly and unostentatiously, on the 5th May, 1822.

Yet, in this Nazareth of the future Loretos there was too much of "the beauty of holiness" surrounding the first members to allow them to remain unnoticed. To their friends they were inexpressibly dear; and strangers who were brought in contact with them were speedily converted into friends. The charm of manner, spiritualized by their innate sanctity, the finely cultured minds, the gentle dignity of those who planted the tree of the Institute of Mary in Irish soil, attracted more visitors and pupils to their poor little Convent than time and space would allow them to welcome.

Therefore, although only part of Rathfarnham House was tenantable, they determined to begin their work in it on the 4th November, 1822. Tradition tells us it was a dreary, mist-laden day when the gates of the future Abbey swung back slowly, on hinges rusty from disuse, to admit the three pioneers of the now

world-wide Institute. They passed silently and prayerfully into the scene of their future labours; but surely, from rank to rank of the angelic choirs above, the anthem rang through the rejoicing heavens, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bear good tidings, the heralds of salvation to many."

That evening, we are told, the name of "Loreto" was given to the new foundation. Rev. Mother's thoughts had turned so often to our dear Lady's earthly home and to the Child who "grew in wisdom, and age, and grace before God and man," that, coveting the special blessing of that glorious Child, and of the Mother who watched over the divine Childhood, for the flock which was to gather round her, she felt drawn to give the name of Loreto House to her first foundation, in honour of the holy House of Nazareth, now in Loreto in Italy. The filiations, anxious to maintain the closest union with the Mother House, successively claimed the title of Loreto Convents; so the most generally recognized title of the Irish Branch of the Institute is, "The Loreto Order," and the most familiar name for the Sisters is, "The Loreto Nuns."

Difficulties crowded on the first Loreto. As soon as its reputation spread abroad the very

natural opposition on the part of the secular schools was awakened. "Nuns should keep to their prayers. How could recluses train girls for the world? Was the flower of Catholic society to be coaxed into convents and immured there?" The buzz of vexation was rife round the Loreto Sisters; and they, sharing the quiet stateliness of their Foundress, made no answer. Time would justify them.

Their staff was small, and, in spite of busy antagonists, the nuns were overtaxed, for every available spot in the Abbey was peopled. The best Dublin professors were engaged to take some of the classes; and the courteous co-operation of the Sisters, the excellence of their own teaching, their intelligent supervision of the whole establishment, proved that the power which was fast passing into their hands would be splendidly used.

Happily, too, postulants were finding their way to the Abbey. The first was Margaret Corballis, of Rosemount, Roebuck (Sister M. Catherine), a sketch of whose life will be given in subsequent pages with the lives of the members who formed the nucleus of the Institute in Ireland.

The next postulant was Eliza Blake, of Dartfield, Co. Galway. She was at school in

York when Rev. Mother was a novice, and the Irish nun's heart turned most affectionately to the Irish child, who was a constant sufferer from spine disease. When Loreto Abbey was founded she lost no time in offering herself as a subject. She was admitted, with a warm welcome, on the 21st January, 1823.

We have said that the nuns were overworked. So they were; and still they were not content until they contrived to have some out-buildings within the enclosure fitted up as a free school. The children of the village were very poor, so much so that the nuns could not bear to see them weak with hunger and a daily dinner was provided for them. Considering the limited funds and many wants of Loreto, this seemed almost an imprudent act of charity; but it was the outcome of so much love and trust in God that "the hundredfold" rewarded it. Help came abundantly, and holy, gifted helpers.

As we have said elsewhere, Frances Ball paid a farewell visit to her sister in the Ursuline Convent, Cork, before she left for the York noviceship. There she met Maria and Anna Maria McCarthy, who had a sister in the Convent. Like many others, they were won by the natural and supernatural gifts of the

future Foundress, and proposed to devote themselves to the new Institute.

A convert, Marianne Finn, was the next addition to the ranks. Mother M. Paul's religious life was chiefly spent in Loreto Convent, Navan. She was sent there in company with its first superior, Mother M. Xaveria McCarthy, who followed her sister, Mother M. Aloysia, to the Novitiate on the 31st May, 1825.

CHAPTER VI.

If the Foundress of Loreto Abbey cherished some longings for the extension of her work, these longings were subdued, between God and herself, for several years. Through increasing care and anxiety, the queenly composure that was her most striking characteristic forbade any impetuous expression of her desires. Few, indeed, penetrated into the "garden enclosed" of her privileged soul. Were it not for the partial disclosure of her interior trials, preserved in Archbishop Murray's letters while he was preparing her to take up her burden, we should be inclined to picture her as one whose placid strength was never touched by the weakness of a sinking heart, or taxed by the pressure of a mind that was straining feverishly beyond the daily toil.

Her unequalled friend, now Archbishop of Dublin, was within her constant reach; and these first guardians of Loreto have left no records of their intercourse, while they laboured conjointly in the erection of the Institute in Ireland. It is certain that Rev. Mother merely accepted, instead of seeking, the spreading of

the Order by means of filiations; and she left it in writing that she refused fourteen proposals as to sending out colonies of her nuns. In spite of this prudent repression of over-eagerness in the scattering of the seed, she had to yield to well-grounded petitions, till thirty-three Convents claimed Rathfarnham as their Mother House.

And here we turn to the eloquent words of the only chronicler of her inner life who could do full justice to its saintliness, Father Thomas Burke, O.P., the spiritual counsellor of her later years. The seal of Confession was laid on much that her enlightened director could otherwise disclose; but he was her friend as well as her spiritual guide, and, as he was continually brought into intimate relations with her, he commanded the right to speak as he did when her humility could no longer forbid his praise.

"All the world," he said, "wondered when they beheld religious foundations spring up beneath her sway; and the cross raised on high, and the altar built in the desert regions, and the place of sanctification set up by a woman's hand, and they cried out, 'The finger of God is here!' They were amazed at a woman's strength because they knew not the secret of her greatness. All that God

demands in His instruments is devotedness; and in heart and soul, in thought and word and deed, in great things and in the smallest, she was devoted to God; and therefore God found her a fitting instrument in His hand to do His great and holy work. The least action of a saint lives for ever. 'Their fruits remain,' and 'good things continue with their seed.' 'Their works follow them' to Heaven, and obtain for them there 'the weight of eternal glory!' If, then, the least thing done for God be great, what shall we say of a life made up of such greatness as made the world wonder; and yet, which, in everything great and small, sought God alone—His greater honour and glory; and such was the life of the Mother for whom you are yet weeping. Truly, did she live for God; for Him did she watch from the morning light; and 'when the day was declined and the shadows of the evening were grown longer, she still sought Him and served Him with all her soul.'

"Saintliness is not the destruction, but the perfection of nature. There are certain natural dispositions which fit the soul to receive the highest gifts of grace and holiness. These your Mother possessed in a wonderful degree. There was in her, naturally, a certain grandeur

of soul, which sought high things from high motives, and left her strangely free from the vanity, the self-seeking, the petty revenge, and all the other littlenesses that beset and annoy ordinary mortals. When grace found such a nature, and when Holy Church pointed out to such a soul the highest objects for which man can live, and the highest motives that can influence him, it was natural to expect a great life. She 'exulted like a giant to run the way,' and she was wholly devoted to the Lord in mind and intention, her work was successful, and glorious things are said of her in the city of God. Let others speak of her as the Foundress of many religious houses, as of one whom the Lord 'made to dwell in the house as the joyful mother of many children'; but I will praise her for that her eye looked to God steadily, as the eye of the Mother of Sorrows was fixed on her dying Son; so that she could truly say with St. Catherine of Siena: 'Never, never have I sought my own glory, but only the honour and glory of God.'"

The first accepted proposal for a filiation came from Navan. The sum of £1,000 had been placed by two charitable ladies in the hands of the parish priest, Father Eugene O'Reilly, towards the establishment of a free

school. Father O'Reilly thought that the richer classes of his flock needed instructresses fully as much as the poor did; and knowing that the Loreto nuns could meet the educational wants of all classes, he made so forcible an appeal to Rev. Mother that both she and Archbishop Murray felt they should not refuse the foundation.

Should any ask if the Mother and Foundress, whose eye and hand were everywhere through the rising Institute, was debarred from the serene joys of the interior life "with Christ in God," we take the answer from the lips of her great Dominican confessor.

"Was her daily life in religion equal in perfection to her high and holy aims? To answer this important question let us consider what is the perfection of the life of a religious. Spiritual writers tell us that it is 'the gift of discipline'; or, in other words, a faithful and persevering observance of all the rules and obligations of religion. Hence, in order to become a saint, a religious has only to perform her actions in a true and perfect spirit of discipline. This being the case, in order to answer the great question which I asked above, we have only to ascertain how did your Foundress observe her rules.

"The religious day begins with early prayer. 'Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight,' prays the Psalmist; as it was written (Exod. xxx.), 'And thou shalt set the altar over against the veil, and Aaron shall burn sweet-smelling incense on it in the morning.' So, in the early morning the spouses of Christ come together, that from the altars of their hearts the incense of prayer may go up to God. And whose was the golden censer which was always in its place in the sanctuary, so faithfully sending up its fragrance to Heaven? Day followed day, for forty-seven years, and, faithful as the sun in its rising, was your Mother to say to God: 'O God! my God! to Thee do I watch from the morning light'; and her soul feasted daily on 'the Bread which the Lord had given her to eat.'

"And, as the well-appointed day passed on, each hour bringing its own duty, she was still the first and most faithful in every observance; enlightening and assisting you by her example. As my knowledge of her increased by intercourse, I perceived she was one of an order of minds of whom I have met a few, who seem utterly incapable of deliberately and knowingly violating any, even the least law. There are some such, thank God. I have never met

such a one without feeling the happiness of being near a man of God; and that happiness I have tasted in having known the venerable Mother and friend whose memory shall never fade from my mind.

"For more than half a century she had served God, 'going from virtue to virtue,' and adding grace to grace; mild in reproof, powerful in encouragement, tender in compassion, bright in example. Hers was the downcast eye, which was seldom raised, but sought the earth for her exceeding modesty; hers was the steady, firm carriage which bespoke the stable mind; hers the soft, low voice, long accustomed to converse with God in holy prayer; her whole being showed the virgin as the Apostle would have her 'holy both in body and mind.'

"And this interior life was fruitful also in action. All around her was her own creation; for, as says the Scripture, 'a wise woman buildeth her house'; and to her it was given to build many houses, not for man, but for God. She sent forth her children over the whole world, to water the tender plants of young souls, and 'prepare unto the Lord a perfect people.'"

The Harcourt Street Schools were filled to

overflowing. Pupils came from the extreme north side of the city; so, with great difficulty, owing to Protestant opposition "Loreto Convent of the Immaculate Conception" was founded at 43 North Great George's Street, the former residence of the Protestant Archbishop of Cashel. His study had been left in good order, and Mass was said in it on the 1st January, 1837; but it took a full week of Rev. Mother's active personal exertions before the nuns could inhabit the rest of the house. A few months after, the Methodist chapel adjoining was willingly disposed of to the Community, and a small house beside it was also made over to them.

As the Harcourt Street Convent was still overcrowded, Rev. Mother succeeded in transferring the nuns to 53 Stephen's Green, once the town mansion of Lord Charleville. By degrees such additions were made to the house, in the shape of corridors and classrooms for Intermediate and University students, that "Loreto College" now stretches down at the rere beyond Ely Place. A large National School is built on part of a field belonging to the nuns—a rare sight in this central part of the city, with its trees and grass-plots.

In her financial affairs Rev. Mother was ably

assisted by Mother M. Magdalen Lalor, the Mistress of Novices, a former Loreto child, who, from her entrance into religion had advanced with rapid strides to that blessed union of the active and contemplative life which is so necessary in an Institute like Loreto.

She was the first of the three Sisters whom God in His unsearchable designs, took from Loreto during the year 1839. She died on the Feast of the Annunciation.

That year was signalized by the celebration of Rev. Mother's Silver Jubilee—the twenty-fifth year from her entrance being completed on the 11th June. The " moving spirit " of the preparations for this great festival was Mother M. Gonzaga. She was heard saying : " I think this is the last opportunity I shall have of proving my love for our dearest Mother." But there was no outward sign of failing health in this dearly-beloved Sister, with her serene, ever-ready helpfulness at the disposal of all.

Heavily and constantly the burden of grief was pressing on the Foundress of Loreto. Her heart yearned over those who were " gone " ; and though the ranks that had been thinned were filled by new members, many of them eminently fitted to carry on the work of the Institute, her trials seemed harder to

bear without her first faithful helpers, and her joys had lost much of their sunshine.

The great joy of the year 1840 was the opening of the exquisite Church of the Sacred Heart, in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham. When its beauty was universally acknowledged Loreto was proud to claim Rev. Mother as its architect ; the builders had carried out her plans under her close supervision. It was dedicated on the 15th October, 1840, and consecrated on the 8th September, 1846.

Her success in bringing the church to completion emboldened Rev. Mother to construct plans for a Convent at Dalkey. She secured a site of almost unequalled loveliness, overlooking Dublin Bay ; and her delight in that sweet spot was one of her strongest natural feelings, till she went there, at last, to die. Her letters were full of references to " our new marine Loreto " ; and she appeared to forget the pressure of her cares while she permitted herself some quiet hours on the " Loreto rocks." No place on earth seemed to have the power of drawing out her intense love for the works of God that Dalkey had. Her face used to shine with happiness as she stood looking out over the sunny expanse of blue waters. " Come," she said to a Sister who was standing

beside her on the sea-shore one summer evening, "let us say the *Magnificat.*"

While she was superintending the building of her seaside Abbey negotiations were entered into with Dr. Sinnott, the parish priest of Gorey, which ended by putting the Loreto nuns in possession of a fine new Convent adjoining the church.

Rev. Mother had no hesitation in entrusting this foundation to the charge of Mother M. Benedicta Somers.

Quietly and unobtrusively Loreto was beginning to exercise an apostolate of its own through Ireland. Loreto Abbey, Gorey, showed the first Crib that had been seen for miles around. In Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham, the devotion of the Month of May was inaugurated for the Archdiocese of Dublin. And in Loreto, North Great George's Street, the first Retreat for ladies in the world was opened by Rev. Mother, at the Archbishop's special desire. This was the origin of the Ladies' Retreat now annually conducted in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham.

CHAPTER VII.

It was noticed in Rev. Mother that whenever she was consulted she always paused before she answered; for, "the quick thought of her mind turned on high." The graver the question the longer the pause. Her judgment was never formed in haste; she took full, placid time to balance the reasons for action. And she never weighed a matter longer or more anxiously than she did the applications for nuns for the Foreign Missions.

It required all the pressure that was brought to bear on her by the repeated petitions of Bishops and priests before she consented to let a Loreto filiation attempt to contend with proselytism in India. She gave a decided refusal to Dr. Carew, when he was Bishop of Madras; but, when he was translated to the See of Calcutta, he found himself in the midst of so appalling a scene of heretical influence over the minds of the children, that he commissioned Father Robert Haly, S.J., and Dr. Backhaus to make the long journey to Rathfarnham and lay the whole sad story before Rev. Mother.

Again they failed. Prudence, she said, urged many reasons in favour of restricting the work of the Irish Branch of the Institute to our own country. They begged to be allowed to state the case to the Community, imploring Rev. Mother not to oppose any who would feel inspired by God to volunteer for India. She yielded so far. Almost all the Sisters volunteered, and Rev. Mother withdrew her opposition.

Eleven nuns were selected. Mother Delphina Hart was named Superior, and they sailed for India on the 23rd August, 1841. The reception that awaited them was magnificent in its ceremonious welcome; and their future home was so sumptuously prepared that their first task was to remove its luxurious appointments.

Catholics, Protestants, Armenians, Jews, and even fireworshippers, soon sent their children to the Loreto High Schools. Consequently, a second Convent was opened at Chandernagore the following summer. This house was intended chiefly for an orphanage, and prospered splendidly, until a far better site and most enticing prospects tempted the nuns to Intally. Of Intally Mother Delphina wrote: "I could not count the number of young natives taught,

baptized, and gone to Heaven. The Intally Orphanage must have adorned a part of Heaven with jet ornaments."

The entrance of four postulants, and a reinforcement from Rathfarnham, enabled the nuns to found another Convent at Serampore to serve as a novitiate (since transferred to Darjeeling). Eight converts were numbered among the novices. At Chittagong and Dacca the Loreto nuns smoothed the way for the Sisters of the French Congregation of La Croix. The priests of that Congregation always work in conjunction with the nuns of the same Institute; so, when the Fathers were put in charge of these two Missions, the Loreto nuns were happy to take up, instead, a new foundation at Darjeeling—a glorious mountain home in the Sikkim range of the Himalayas.

Success was ensured by the choice of Mother M. Joseph Hogan as Superior. Affection and respect followed her wherever she went; and she presided over a fine staff of nuns, some of whom afterwards assisted her in the foundation at Lucknow.

The limits of this sketch forbid the many interesting details that could be drawn from the Annals of Loreto in India—the records from Hazaribaugh where Mother Delphina

died, after a life of untiring zeal in God's service; and the "letters home," from Ranchi, where the worship of the devil made it no easy undertaking to promote the religion of Christ crucified. Some years after the last-named foundation a Jesuit Missionary wrote to Loreto, Ranchi:

"At all the stations of our Missions I met with former pupils of the Loreto Convent, and all, without a single exception, are a great credit to the nuns. They preach the true faith by their piety, and are indefatigable in preparing children for the Sacraments. Such a splendid result of your training must be a great satisfaction to you. Next year you shall have 190 girls from Moetolli. The Missionaries rejoice to find your former children steady, practical Catholics, and perfect Christian mothers. What a crown awaits you in Heaven!"

The fame of the Loreto work in India travelled to the Mauritius, and induced Dr. Collier, the Vicar-Apostolic, to beg Rev. Mother to be pitiful to the wants of his island. His representations must have carried unusual weight, for, notwithstanding the drains on the resources of Loreto, a detachment of six choir nuns arrived at Port Louis on the 8th September, 1846.

Closely following came the appeal from Dr. Hughes, the Vicar-Apostolic of Gibraltar. None, he said, could do what the Loreto nuns could do for his diocese; and his persistence was rewarded by the best aid that the Irish Branch of the Institute could give to the Mission on the Rock. The tale of their self-denying exertions in the crowded schools could only be told by those who went bravely through the old times, before the present Convent of Our Lady of Europa provided a beautiful southern home for the nuns and their pupils in the three schools, for boarders, day pupils, and poor children. Another Convent was opened some years ago in Cornwallis Parade, with large day schools.

Pupils came to Gibraltar from different parts of Spain; and many of them, as well as their parents, were so strongly attached to the nuns, that of late years a foundation was made at Seville, in order to be within easier reach of the Spanish children. Loreto, Castilleja de la Cuesta, was once the palace of Hernando Cortez. In that sunny region of Andalusia the nuns are often reminded of Mother Conception Lopez' saying: "You will never know how beautiful Spain is till you go to Heaven."

Hitherto the exile from home and friends had

been softened for the Loreto Missionaries by the warm greetings and eager co-operation of those who welcomed them to foreign lands. But the pioneers of the now flourishing Branch of the Order in America were dismayed at their reception in Toronto, on the 16th September, 1847.

Even the Bishop, Dr. Power, who had often reminded Rev. Mother of her promise to train even three or four nuns for his diocese, seemed scarcely able to utter a word of congratulation. They soon learned the reason. "Emigrant Fever" was raging in the city. Only one priest and the Bishop had escaped the scourge among the clergy, and his Lordship knew well that the angel of Death was coming close to him. The protection he was so anxious to afford the Sisters was soon taken from them.

Several pupils, the daughters of converts, attended the Loreto School as soon as it was opened in Duke Street, and new friends came to comfort the nuns under the shock of the Bishop's death. However, for four or five years, sorrow followed sorrow. Sister M. Gertrude, holy and gifted, and wonderful in patient acceptance of the cross of long-suffering, died on the Christmas Day of 1850. Mother M. Ignatia lingered in constant ill-health till

March, 1851. Never was a Loreto Community more sorely tried, until, at length, everything rapidly brightened soon after the appointment of Mother Teresa Dease as Superior. Postulants entered, pupils filled the classrooms, and a large house was rented in Bathurst Street.

In the June of 1856 a foundation was settled at Guelph. During the first ten years after its foundation thirty-four of its pupils entered the noviceship; so members were not wanting when the Bishop of Toronto, Most Rev. Dr. Lynch, offered a site for a Convent at Niagara Falls, that the Loreto nuns might carry out a wish very dear to his heart, namely, that the voice of conventual praise might unceasingly ascend to God in union with the voice of the great, ever-flowing torrents of waters. Loreto Convent of the Blessed Sacrament was opened at the Falls, on the 4th June, 1861.

Loreto Convent, Hamilton, established in 1865, was patronized by Protestants in spite of active Protestant opposition; and so completely had the Sisters won their way into the confidence of parents in Toronto, that it was absolutely necessary for them to provide accommodation for their classes by purchasing the princely mansion of Lyndhurst, now "The Abbey."

The houses of Lindsay, Stratford, Joliet, and Chicago have been successfully added to the Canadian Branch of the Institute.

Little wonder that Rev. Mother found it impossible to extend her care to Australia. She was obliged to set aside the proposals that reached her from Irish Bishops and Irish Catholics; and leave that hereafter richly-blest undertaking to her successor, Rev. Mother M. Scholastica Somers. Mary's Mount, Ballarat, is the head house of the Australian foundations. It is a model Catholic School of the highest type. And worthy of the training given there are its offshoots, Dawson Street (Ballarat), Melbourne, Portland, Sydney, Adelaide, and Perth, centres of light and love through the Continent that receives so many exiles from "the old land far away."

Not one of those distant Loretos was left without a guiding hand. Rev. Mother's daily thoughts and prayers followed the Missioners. Some of them were very young, and hardly any had the experience which is acquired during years in religion. It so happened that most of the senior nuns were either unfitted by delicate health for a change of climate, or were required in Ireland, so all Rev. Mother could do was to devote herself to the utmost of

her powers to directing the foreign houses by continual correspondence. She entered into the minutest details, and, judging by her answers, the reports that reached her kept her exactly informed of the progress and difficulties in each Mission. Every moment she could spare from her home duties was spent in this anxious effort to help those whom she had allowed to venture into the untried ways where she could not follow them.

Her life grew busier as she advanced in years. In 1847 she thought it important to secure another Convent for such nuns and children as required sea air and bathing; so she purchased Baymount Castle, at Clontarf. For seven years it was one of the favourite schools near Dublin; and then, as Rev. Mother wrote to Toronto: "Two days previous to your writing our sweet Loreto, Baymount, was burned to the ground. *Fiat!* We received twenty-five of the boarders, who had nothing but the clothes they wore."

The Sister who brought the sad news to Rev. Mother never forgot her trustful upward look, and the patient smile that seemed to say to God: "Your Will is mine."

Loreto, Baymount, was rebuilt during the year; but, during Rev. Mother Scholastica's

term of office as Chief Superior, the Community was transferred to the much more commodious Convent at Balbriggan.

The trio of seaside Convents was completed in 1850, by the purchase of Loreto, Bray, with its seventy-two acres ; the Wicklow mountains on one side, Killiney strand in front ; and a distant, enchanting view of Howth and Dublin Bay, from the cemetery hill.

In marked contrast was the next foundation, which was opened in a crowded part of Manchester, in October, 1851. Mother Anne Hickey was its first Superior. Her warm heart and the peculiarly tender tone of her piety always exercised great influence over the children ; and not less remarkable was her capability of upholding a new filiation through trying times.

Rev. Mother had had many trials, and had borne many a cross during her thirty years of superiority ; but her trials had always been shared, and the weight of the cross had never been borne alone. What the Archbishop had been to her no words could tell. The divine promise, "The meek shall possess the land," had been verified in Archbishop Murray. In the cause of God none could be firmer than the courteous Archbishop ; still, his firmness was

beautified by meekness, and the two qualities closely combined, led him to a place of honour in the esteem of those who had formerly put the contemptuous question : "Can anything good come out of the Catholic Church in Ireland ?"

Yet, in the midst of all the demands that pressed on his old age, his fatherly care for Loreto never relaxed. On the 22nd February, 1852, he visited Rathfarnham, and examined novices for profession. On the 26th Rev. Mother wrote to Canada : "Our beloved Archbishop breathed his last at 6.20 a.m., and went to enjoy eternal rest. His Grace was struck with apoplexy while vesting for Mass, on Tuesday morning. Quick circulation in the hand and arm denoted the fatal disease, and bleeding was not allowed, he being in his eighty-sixth year."

Then, with an evident longing for redoubled assistance from the only Friend who can never be taken from us, she continued : "If our words are always true, and kind, and useful ; if we avoid showing partiality and maintain regular observance to the divine glory, God will protect us. If we seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, all things else will be added unto us."

Archbishop Murray's heart is preserved in a silver urn in the Sacristy in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham.

The Loreto Convents of Fermoy and Omagh were founded in 1853 and 1855, respectively. By degrees they grew into the fine educational establishments so well known throughout Ireland.

Rev. Mother had previously sanctioned the first attempt to found a Convent in the diocese of Raphoe since the Reformation. The Bishop gave the nuns his own house and grounds; but the original building forms a very small part of the present Convent. It is close to the beautiful Cathedral of St. Eunan, which bids fair to be the pride of Raphoe.

Rev. Mother yielded to the wish of the priests of the diocese for a foundation in Borris-in-Ossory However, it was plain from the beginning, that the surroundings were better suited to the work of the Sisters of Mercy; and Ossory did not lose the Loreto nuns when they left Borris for Kilkenny, in 1868.

And now we come to the last foundation authorized by Rev. Mother—Loreto, Killarney. Those who were near her as she lay on her sick bed, literally her bed of death, on the 17th October, 1860, often described the triumph of

the strong soul over the tortured body while she discussed the Bishop of Kerry's proposition, and calculated the means at her disposal for forwarding his plans. After consultation with her officials, she handed his Lordship the purchase money for Torc View Hotel, and in the course of a month the Sisters began their work in Kerry.

The year 1860, found Rev. Mother apparently destined for many years of active superintendence of the Order. She had never spared herself. Tradition notes that when she went to instal the nuns in a new Convent in Ireland, and she did so whenever more pressing business did not oblige her to stay in the Mother House, she was an example of energy and deftness in papering, painting, and getting the house into order. Not for one moment was her religious dignity laid aside; and still she was in the midst of the busy throng of workers, well able to give them practical, as well as theoretical lessons in manual labour.

Among the memories that have not faded since her death, we have the testimony of former Rathfarnham children to the impression made on them by Rev. Mother. They recalled the prayerful solemnity of her voice when she led the devotions of the Stations of the Cross

in Lent; or the Christmas Litany at the Crib. They owned that words cannot convey their sense of the honour conferred on them when Rev. Mother came to preside at their school examinations and concerts. They remembered that a word, or even a smile from her, was regarded as something to be highly prized. And they had implicit trust in their power of giving her real pleasure by their success in any branch of their education, her motherly interest extending from their studies and accomplishments down to their little dramatic performances.

So well was this known that her patronal feast, 15th October, was always celebrated by a play got up among the children. The drama chosen for St. Teresa's day, 1860, was "The Martyrdom of St. Catherine." It was one of the happiest days that ever shone on Loreto. Self-controlled as she always was, Rev. Mother's heart seemed to be overflowing with gratitude to the Sovereign Ruler who had crowned His Mother's Institute with blessings. She was noticed turning from group to group of the Loreto children (past and present) round her, with unutterably thankful eyes. The staff of nuns beside her had almost all been drawn from the former children of Rathfarnham Abbey.

Among these were the Assistant and Mistress of Novices, Mother Xaveria Fallon; the Mistress of Schools, Mother Angela Murphy; the Accountant and Mistress of the House, Mother Gonzaga Sinnott; and, in each, the spirit of our first saintly Sisters was perpetuated, in loving union with Heaven, in ardent devotion to the work set before them, and in the daily immolation of nature which is noted so watchfully by the Eye of the Eternal.

With the sunshine of the feast still surrounding her, Rev. Mother went next day to visit her Convents at North Great George's Street and Baymount. She returned to the Abbey about seven o'clock, p.m. After supper she was going down a long stone passage, her foot slipped, and she fell heavily on her side. The hip bone was fractured, and probably there was serious internal injury, though the doctors did not discover that immediately.

In any case, at her age, there was danger enough to excite fears, so a messenger was sent at once for the ordinary Confessor, Father Burke, O.P. From that time he visited her almost daily, and gained that close insight into her interior life which he counted among the greatest privileges of his ministry. One of the Dominican Fathers said: "Father Burke

was, it was thought, the only one to whom she spoke confidingly, but in all humility, of graces received, of gifts prayed for and obtained. We remember the long winter evenings when we used to gather round him to hear something of the virtues that adorned the temple of her sanctity. How much he learned from her! How much he wondered at her! How strong her will! how steadfast her zeal! how great her love of suffering! how unbroken her union with our Blessed Lord! And, in her own sanctity she found her power over souls, to lead them on firmly to God."

"God tried her," said Father Burke, "and found her worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace He proved her, and as a victim of the holocaust He received her! She was not destined to die by a quick or easy death. Such a life and such virtue as hers required something beyond an ordinary end. When the Lord comes to His temple, according to the prophet (Mal. iii.), He shall sit refining and cleansing the silver and the gold. And for seven long months did He sit by the bedside of her who had loved and served Him so well, crowning her with the perfection of patience. Days became weeks, and weeks months, and month followed month, and still she suffered; disease succeeded

disease, and agony was added to agony. All the saints looked down on her with pitying eyes, at their great festival. Christmas came, but its festivities were forgotten at Loreto, and the tears that flowed there on that blessed night were mingled with heavy sorrow."

Well might her children's hearts ache for her. The surgical treatment was a repeated infliction of torture. The doctors shuddered when they spoke of what she underwent at their hands, and more than once they turned aside, while the tears filled their eyes, to nerve themselves to their task. A low murmur—"Jesus"—or a gentle, half-appealing glance was their only clue to the moments when the struggle grew deathlike.

"But," asked Father Burke, "did ever word or look or gesture betray the least impatience? Never. Thanks be to God for the gift of still more heroic patience, she rejoiced in suffering with great joy. We could only know when the suffering became agony by the smile that lighted up her face. I was obliged to put her under obedience to make known a little of her sufferings."

In January, 1861, a great change for the worse was visible. When Archbishop, afterwards Cardinal Cullen was told that Rev.

Mother asked for the Last Sacraments, he wrote to say that he would administer them himself, and that he wished the local Superiors of the Archdiocese to be present. The crisis might pass over; but it was evident to all that Rev. Mother's work on earth was ended.

With confidence so entire that it relieved her of every future care, the dying Foundress resigned her charge into the hands of Mother M. Scholastica Somers, who was named Vicaress.

Freed from responsibility, Rev. Mother rallied slightly for awhile, but towards Easter she entered on a new martyrdom. "O Jesus, love of my soul," she sometimes whispered, "I am with You in tribulation. Have mercy on me." The continual sickness prevented her from receiving Holy Communion; and to her who had been in the habit of receiving It daily for many years, this was a great privation.

At length, by exercising almost superhuman self-control, she was enabled to receive It as Viaticum. "Oh! what happiness!" she murmured, during her thanksgiving. "Never, since my first Communion have I felt anything like this."

The eve of the first of May was the sweetest of spring days that year. Rev. Mother reminded the Infirmarian and her devoted nurse,

Mother Berchmans Lenigan, that, just one and twenty years before, Archbishop Murray had asked her to begin the devotions for the Month of Mary, in Loreto. She begged to have her bed moved close to the window, that she might see the procession of nuns and children to Our Lady's grotto. Greatly as any exertion was to be dreaded, she could not be refused; and the little change, instead of harming her, seemed to do her good.

Then, as the comparative ease from pain continued, the doctors advised a trial of change of air to Dalkey. She seemed pleased! and was certainly submissive to the nuns' loving wishes for it. The drive did not injure her. She slept well that night; but, when Father Burke came to her the next day, she said: "Father, I am dying." All her intense sufferings returned, and with them the signs of fast-approaching death. She spoke very little except to send for Mother M. Scholastica. Once or twice she said to the nuns: "Strive to be a saint, nothing but sanctity is of any avail."

During Friday night, 17th May, she asked for Extreme Unction, and was told that Father Burke would administer it early next morning. He came very early, and found her asleep. "I shall begin the Holy Sacrifice,"

he said; "for sleeping or waking, her heart is with the Lord." She woke soon after, feeling very ill and feverish, but Father Burke's ministrations soothed her at once. "Mother," he said, before giving her the last absolution, "are you not sorry from your heart for everything by which you may have offended God?" "Indeed I am," she answered earnestly, adding, "I am very unworthy—very unworthy."

The sacred rites ended, Father Burke forced himself to prepare her for her last earthly trial. It was a moment that he never could recall without a sharp pang. "Mother," he said, bending over her, "obedience calls me away. I am desired to give a mission in Cork. Will you give me leave to go?" Her dying eyes met his with such sorrowful longing to have him with her to the end, that he could scarcely bear her look; but, summoning up her life-long fortitude, she answered, "Yes, Father; do what is right." Three times she called him back for some parting words; and, at last, drawing Mother Scholastica close to her, she whispered, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." With quick tact Mother Scholastica answered, "Yes, Rev. Mother, it is here," showing her the money that was to defray the expenses of Father Burke's journey.

Whit Sunday, 19th May, rose bright and beautiful, but all through the sunny hours Rev. Mother lay slumbering to death. Once, only, she showed tokens of consciousness, while Father Fortescue, S.J., gave her the last absolution. About five o'clock, p.m., the happiness of coming rest seemed to spread gradually over her face. The prayers for the dying were said for the last time; and then Mother Scholastica began the Office of Vespers aloud. At the first word of the Canticle, *Magnificat*, Rev. Mother's eyes suddenly turned to her successor, with a look of rapturous joy, and the next instant her soul was gone to the judgment seat.

The morning of the 22nd May saw the funeral procession entering the new cemetery in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham. When the coffin was brought to the mound in the centre, the priests stepped forward, took it from the bearers, and laid it reverently in the vault—the crown of eternal peace was laid on the glorious life of Frances Ball.

The *De Profundis*, with its touching supplication for "the soul of our Mother," was heard on earth; but, surely, in the world above, many voices joined in her own last hymn of praise:

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE dead are soon forgotten. It is a fact which we hardly like to acknowledge. It saddens and even humbles us to say that this is true; still, it is the law of life, and, moreover, it is very often a comfort and a blessing to feel that the bitterest grief will grow less with time. But there is one feeling that should grow deeper and stronger as years pass on—the feeling of love and trust in Him who, "when all go away, will not leave us." Whatever brings us closer to Him, whatever warms our hearts with the one true love, which is ours now and for ever, should be always treasured; and for that reason chiefly we are treasuring the memory of those who lived for God while they were with us on earth, and who live *with* Him eternally in Heaven.

This will be a very simple record. It will be written just as if we were talking of "the old nuns" to those who never saw them, and who may never have heard their names. No one will expect much variety, nor any interesting experiences. Their life was the very life we are leading now, and we all know how

little there is to be chronicled in such a life. It is so uneventful and so commonplace that it would be hard to find materials for canonization. But in faith and love and devotedness to God's service, perhaps many of those whom we can claim as our own equalled the Saints and Beati of other Orders, and attained the full measure of that virtue, or sanctity, which the Church canonizes under the title of "heroic."

The easiest way to tell all about them is to begin with those who are buried in the old cemetery at Rathfarnham. It is such a pretty spot now. Lovely rose-trees, shrubs beautifully trained, and flowers reared with the greatest care, make it the sweetest of little convent cemeteries. The new crosses are standing up thickly, and we cannot help thinking that there are real relics underneath some of these crosses, only it is not God's time to work miracles among us yet. Perhaps if our own living faith were stronger, or our lives holier, some miraculous power might be given to the holy dead. For they were *very* holy. Whenever the later generations spoke of the first members, it was with such evident reverence and admiration that we felt they knew that they had been near saints in their early days.

The first who died was Mother M. Baptist Therry. She was born in 1796. She was a native of Cork, and was educated in the Ursuline Convent, Blackrock. We were told that she determined to be a nun when she was only three years old, and she never changed her mind, though she spent some years at home after leaving school. She was a model at school, a faultless girl, and very gifted. At home she spent a great deal of time reading serious books—very serious you will say when you hear that her favourites were the Moralists and those authors who dealt with the study of human nature, or character. The general opinion was that, though she was gentle and amiable, she cared for very few, and rather avoided new acquaintances. She was unusually sensitive to little annoyances, so she was likely to suffer greatly from coming in contact with peculiarities of manner, disposition, etc., which would be no trial at all to others. Grace did a great deal afterwards towards conquering this delicacy. And it did a wonderful work in subduing her passionate affection for her family, which might have caused her many an anxious hour. She crucified it so bravely that when she was dying she wrote to her father: "Since I entered I carefully avoided inquiring into family affairs, lest my heart should be divided." She knew that her loving heart would often be restless and disturbed if she let it cling to her old home, so she cut the ties at once, and tried to live for another world alone. Very likely she felt that her time was short, and that she would soon be called from earth for ever, for she was exceedingly weak and delicate both before and after her entrance. She never knew what it was to feel well, and while she was in the world the continual lassitude made her seem absent and indolent. No one thought her so as a nun, for though she suffered as much as many confirmed invalids do, she was so exact and earnest that languor and listlessness disappeared—weary as she must often have been, and wearier still as years went on. There was a fund of quiet courage in Mother Baptist. Also, without being in any way self-sufficient, she was certainly self-sufficing, for, long after, it was known that she went through the severest spiritual trials without looking for any extra spiritual help, or desiring any spiritual consolation. So well did she train herself on this point that when she was told, on her deathbed, that the nuns were praying for her, she said: "Let them pray for patience for me,

not for consolation." She had been well accustomed to go through a small martyrdom, looking all the while as if trouble were a thing unknown to her. Besides, in the depth of her heart, her whole strong will was entirely conformed to the Will of God. She was devoted to the Institute, loved Rathfarnham specially (and owned she did); at the same time, she said that if the house were to fall to the ground she knew she could resign herself to the Divine Will, and be ready to enter any Order, in any part of the world. She could reconcile herself to whatever obedience would settle for her, provided she could still be a religious.

And then we remember that this life of ours was one of incessant mortification for Mother Baptist—always ailing, always anxious to work hard, and bearing a heavy burden of care and responsibility. There never was a time when the training of the novices was more important than in these early days, for, if the foundation-stones were faulty, what was to be expected from the building? Members were just beginning to flock in when Mother Baptist got charge of the Novitiate, and a better model could not be set before them. All day long she was silently showing them what a nun

should be, externally as well as internally. There is an old steel engraving in our refectory which tradition said was a good likeness of Mother Baptist. Calm, graceful, dignified, just what one would imagine she was—living in such close union with God, but, at the same time, perfectly unaffected, and, as it were, "at home" in the atmosphere of religion.

It is interesting to know that she had to make some little changes in her own private devotions, according to change of circumstances. For instance, she first chose for her motto: "My life is hidden with Christ in God," but, finding how many ways she would be called on to come out of herself and give her time and thoughts to others, she altered her choice to a more inspiring motto: "The charity of Christ urgeth me." Again, at her Profession, she had prayed specially for the virtue of humility, but not long after her special prayer was for wisdom. She wanted all the light that God would give, to do her duty for the rising Institute, and she did that duty thoroughly. First, by example—exact, but not over scrupulous observance—no one could accuse her of being strained or pharisaical. There was an evenly kept regularity of exactness without fitfulness. She was careful

of poverty, for its own sake; careful in the offices of Infirmarian and Sacristan; the kindest of Infirmarians; the most devoted of Sacristans; and, also, the most watchful, that everything belonging to the church and sacristy should be kept in exquisite order, so that vestments, altar-linen, and plate might last, and look well as long as care could possibly keep them so.

Those who felt they were not all so gifted as Mother Baptist were often greatly edified by her submission to Superiors. Quick and penetrating as her judgment was, no one yielded more readily to authority. More than once it was said "When *she* is so docile what should *we* be?" A few little sayings of hers are preserved, which some may like to remember: "To allow ourselves to think, and still more, to say we are unhappy is the way to become so." "Boasting indicates a want of real gifts." "Fewer words and more deeds." "It is a great matter, *even once*, to overcome oneself." "Meditation is our daily means of overcoming every real or imaginary difficulty." "Esteem for friends does not always increase with their presence, for intercourse shows defects which wean the affections." "Even with friends we should not be extravagant in

our demonstrations, for excess cannot continue long, and then even moderation becomes deficient."

She looked so recollected, wherever she was, that she was asked if she was always praying. She said "Not always, of course, though I try, without straining my attention, to keep myself in the presence of God. However, I have some fixed prayers that I say going along the corridors, and I find it a great help to recollection." Her visits to the Blessed Sacrament were spent in telling Our Lord familiarly all she thought, and felt, and wanted Him to help her to do. She advised the novices to pay a visit to Our Lord in the sepulchre for five minutes daily, to study the difficult lesson of the hidden life. She taught them to be patient with the "ups and downs" of the spiritual life, and after each fall, to rise again good-humouredly and courageously, thanking God that, among so many imperfections, there was no danger of vanity. "Well for you," she said, "if you pass your whole lives struggling with nature, and never gain a complete victory till you are on your deathbed. It is good for us to be humbled by failures. An impatient wish to seem perfect often proceeds more from a refined self-love than from the sincere

longing to please God that works on through great difficulty." In little things and great she asked them to be as brave under trials as nuns should be, and to thank God for sending them the crosses that would bring them so close to Him in heaven.

When the nuns were asked their opinion of her, they agreed that the only defect they ever saw was her extreme unwillingness to meet strangers, so that it took some time to convince her that she ought to overcome this reluctance for the sake of the Institute. But when she was desired to consider it as a duty to have some intercourse with seculars, especially our former pupils, she went through the task so sweetly and holily that she gave the greatest edification to those who came to her. If obedience assigned her an occupation no one ever knew if it cost her pain or anxiety, and if she had a choice of duties, we may guess how she would act, by her answer to a novice who expressed a preference for a duty when she was allowed to select between two. "Then," said Mother Baptist, "I am sure the one you prefer is the one you will *not* choose." "May I make three short suggestions to you?" she said to a young nun, who was taking up an office. "First, make an offering to God

of all the crosses, difficulties, and inconveniences you will meet, and prepare to be satisfied whether you are successful or the contrary, thinking only of God's glory. Second, keep yourself detached, so as to be ready to give up the office at a moment's notice, even when it has grown easy to you. Third, never talk unnecessarily of your occupations, particularly at recreation." She practised exactly what she preached, doing her work with the quietest patience, and trying to manage her failing health so as to be able to use the last threads of strength for God. Many a privation she bore as cheerfully as if all were pleasant to her, and as some of these privations might easily be considered forms of self-indulgence she had all the more merit in submitting brightly. For instance, during the last four years of her life she could only go out for a short walk on a very warm day, and the recreation hours were spent by her alone in her little cell. That would have been lonely for some, but Mother Baptist was never lonely, she had plenty of resources in her own mind. She was very fond of flowers and of nice pictures, and made a harvest of pleasure out of them whenever they came in her way—pleasure and profit also, for she found something to bring Heaven

nearer in everything she liked to see. Heaven could never be far off, she was only waiting for the call, though she was at most of the ordinary duties still, and had not been obliged to give up the ordinary prayers and penances.

"I never thought so much of death as I do these days," said a sick nun. "Did you wait for sickness to remind you of it?" said Mother Baptist. "Every day I place myself on my deathbed, and I am hoping that this will lessen the awfulness of that hour when it really comes."

In August, 1825, she expectorated blood, and after a similar attack in 1826 the doctors knew consumption would set in. She was not nervous about herself—she even said that should she die suddenly, without receiving the Sacraments, no one need be uneasy, as she felt the most peaceful trust in God's mercy. One day she told S. M. Xaveria McCarthy that she had been wishing to give her a little present. It was a picture of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, with this sentence from St. Bernard: "Be affable to all, familiar with few, equitable towards all, and flatter no one." "It is a poor little present," Mother Baptist said, "but if you make a right use of it, it will lead you far on the way to perfection. Always

confide your pains and difficulties to these Sacred Hearts before you tell them to anyone else. You may then ask comfort from your Superiors. I have been studying this extract for seven years, and I think it is engraven on my heart, so I may transfer this little copy to you."

She lingered for seven months—an angel of consolation and charity to all who had the privilege of being near her. Weak and worn as she was, she tried to overcome nature to the end, and to help those who came for sympathy or advice. Confidences had always been safe with her. No matter what she thought, no matter whether she approved or not, a secret told to her was "buried." And they noticed that when she was dying she tried to lead the conversation to what God and the Angels could listen to with delight. No one had striven more earnestly to keep the standard of the Institute up to the highest mark; no one had been nore anxious to spiritualize our work, and to draw the line of separation from the world clearly and firmly; yet, these last days on earth surpassed all the former years in angelic fervour. There was a short period of fear of the judgments of God, then her happy peace returned, and with all her heart

she could repeat her old welcome to the postulants—"I only wish that you may be as happy in religion as I am."

She was anointed in July, everyone in the house assisting at the ceremony. The second anointing was in December, and from that day she saw very few, except the Infirmarian and Rev. Mother, who treasured every word of the dying saint. She was a very sweet and grateful invalid, and it was wonderful how she overcame all the little peculiarities attendant on consumption—the fancies about food, the restlessness, and the craving for change of every sort. She never let any of these be seen, and she objected to taking composing draughts, because they would deaden her sufferings during the last precious days of merit. As long as she could she kept to the Community hours for prayer, silence, etc., and wanted very little attendance. "Did we leave you too long alone to-day?" asked the Infirmarian. "Alone!" said Mother Baptist; "do you forget that God was with me? I am never lonely, and I never wish for anyone." "But you might die alone?" "Not unless it is God's will, and if so, I shall be quite content. I often resign my life into His hands, and I make no conditions." All the same, she said

she was very willing to live if she could work as she used, the Community was so small and there was so much to be done. One day, after a few moments of prayer that seemed like an ecstasy, Mother Baptist said to S. M. Xaveria M'Carthy, "I feel that after my death there will be no other death for eight years. One will die that year, and seven postulants will enter." This happened exactly as she predicted.

On the 15th February the great change came. "I expected to be satisfied to die," she whispered, "but I never hoped to long for death as I do now." About three o'clock next morning she rallied a little, and begged Rev. Mother to go to bed, saying she was as peaceful and happy as possible, though in great suffering. "It will soon be over," she added. Even while she was speaking they saw she was in her agony, sent for the Chaplain, and while he was saying the prayers for the soul departing, Mother Baptist went to rest, after her long struggle. It was Friday, 16th February, 1827. She was in the thirty-first year of her age, and the fifth of her profession. Looking back through long years, we feel as though she were one who had grown old in God's service, and a sort of surprise comes over us as we count the days of

her short, beautiful life. We add a few words written by one of her companions in religion:

"Whatever may be the designs of God in visiting us with this affliction, we most humbly adore His All-Wise Providence. We acknowledge ourselves unworthy to be any longer the companions of her whom God adorned to be His, so soon, in eternal glory. As the beauty of a picture is sometimes better seen at a distance, so, perhaps, God has withdrawn her from us that even the most thoughtless may be roused to imitate an example which hitherto they were content to admire. Her most minute word and action was an impressive sermon, animated with the true interior spirit. A more delicate frame could hardly be found, yet, our dearly-loved Sister was never heard to complain and was a model of regularity at every duty. Still, the doctors said that the regular, religious rule prolonged instead of shortening her life.

"As you never saw her, you will like to form some idea of her personal appearance. She was middle-sized, a perfect figure, and an interesting face, pale, with regular features. Every movement was graceful. She held herself perfectly erect, though her excessive weakness sometimes made her feel as if she could not live till the end of the day. Her

voice was low, but clear and exceedingly sweet, and she so exerted herself in speaking and reading that every word was distinctly heard. Her senses were so guarded and her motions so religious-like that even the most unobservant noticed the evident marks of sanctity. This portrait does not do her justice, but it is far more necessary for us to trace the resemblance of her virtues in our hearts and minds. No one can plead inability to imitate her, for it is doubtful whether anyone among us has to contend with stronger passions, more acute sensitiveness, or a greater inclination to self-indulgence. But efforts to overcome nature must be, like hers, uninterrupted, otherwise they will be fruitless. Our conscience tells us that we have said nothing of her but what we know to be true. We are more inclined to pray *to* her than *for* her, we are so sure that her blameless life, perfect performance of religious duties, and most patient suffering left little, if anything, to be atoned for in Purgatory."

CHAPTER IX.

THE only nun mentioned in our little sketch of Mother Baptist Therry was her first novice, Sister M. Xaveria M'Carthy; and, strange to say, her name comes next on our obituary list.

She was the third daughter of Justin M'Carthy, of Cork, and entered Rathfarnham on the 31st May, 1825. She was ripe for religious life when she entered, accustomed to prayer and mortification, and alive to whatever good could be done. For instance, she was mainly instrumental in re-establishing perfect order and discipline in an Orphan Home in Cork, where she had noticed that several improvements were necessary. She not only brought her own energy to this work, but succeeded in interesting others who carried on what she had begun.

When Rev. Mother Ball had examined Anna Maria M'Carthy's vocation thoroughly, she said there was only one objection to receiving her. What was it? The girl had contracted a habit of stooping, and Rev. Mother was so anxious about the children's carriage and deportment, that she always drew the nuns' attention specially to these points, saying, "Example is more powerful than precept." In this instance the postulant immediately saw the reason for admonition, and earnestly promised to correct herself, which she did, from that day, till no fault could be found with her.

Sister M. Xaveria set a very high and even an austere ideal before her, but not a gloomy one, for she was bright and active, and intensely happy in her vocation, often saying that she did not know how a nun could be sad. She had a very wise guide in Mother Baptist, traces of whose gentle wisdom will be seen through the development of S. M. Xaveria's life, though she lost her best friend soon after her Profession. That ceremony was the last public duty that Mother Baptist was able to attend. The day she died, S. M. Xaveria felt as if her own life died out also, though she was determined not to show her feelings, thinking it would be wrong to give way. All through the Requiem Mass her sweet clear voice was heard above the rest of the choir, and she read her lesson in the Office of the Dead without a falter. She went to recreation as usual, and talked of every subject except one, for it was many months—perhaps years—before she could bring herself to mention Mother Baptist's name.

Long after, she told a nun that on the day of Mother Baptist's interment she put her whole heart into the prayer that God would detach her from all created things, and that she never again felt any marked attachment to creatures.

Certainly, she kept up most faithfully to the standard of perfection that Mother Baptist had set before her—the spirit of devoted labour for God, ennobled and sanctified by angelic purity of intention, looking up to the Throne above as the Angels do.

"Always in action and always in repose." That was the fundamental principle of S. M. Xaveria's interior life (the constant purifying of her intention); and she had continual opportunities of exercising it among all her active duties. She was Dispenser, Infirmarian, Procuratrix, and Garment-keeper. She taught work, writing, arithmetic, geography, and music, and had charge of the choir. In fact she did the work of five, and got through her business so quickly, quietly, and methodically that she pleased everyone. The children were very fond of her, and loved to have her at recreation, she made it so pleasant; at the same time, nothing escaped her; and though she would not spoil their sport by correcting them then without absolute necessity, they

knew she had a very keen eye for the slightest fault, and that they would surely hear of it afterwards. She seldom had to penance them; a displeased look or a few reproving words, seemed to be penance enough; for, along with their love, she had won their respect. They had such an opinion of her holiness, that when she slept in the dormitory they sometimes tried to stay awake, that they might watch how fervently she prayed when she thought herself alone with God.

The nuns were just as edified by her manner in choir. She knelt quite motionless, her eyes closed or cast down, and evidently forgetful of everything but Heaven. In the remembrance of God's presence she seemed to equal Mother Baptist, and, one would say under greater difficulties, for S. M. Xaveria's duties kept her always on the move, though they said she went through the house as if it were empty, seeing no one she was not obliged to see, simply intent on her own business, and taking no notice of anyone or anything else. She did not even know the novices and postulants by sight, unless they were sent to help her; but if they were, then she was kindness itself, and full of indulgence for mistakes, while she usually kept the most troublesome part of the work

for herself, so that her assistants often got more praise than they deserved.

It was greatly in S. M. Xaveria's favour that she had a natural gift of order and punctuality. The children called her "The Clock," for she was at every duty to the minute, and drilled them into the same exactness. Recreation, class, music lessons, began and ended to the second, and they might depend on seeing her going, like clockwork, round their cabinets every morning, taking strict note of disorder, and insisting on its being remedied immediately. But no one could be angry with S. M. Xaveria's strictness, for her good, kind heart was only too anxious to make everyone as comfortable as possible, without caring for her own comfort. Besides, she had a way of coaxing the children to see that she was acting for the best. In the cold winter mornings she would try to rouse the fires in the dormitories, to make it easier for the children to get up, and then say to the sleepy ones, "Won't you be glad to think that the first act of the day was one of sacrifice for God?"

She was the means of introducing many devotions among the children; for instance, the First Friday Communion. To the "Hail Mary," which we say when the clock strikes, she always added the prayer "Most amiable

Mother of God, life passes away and death approaches; when that hour comes be to me a tender Mother, and dispose the Heart of thy beloved Son favourably in my behalf."

At 3 o'clock p.m. she made a short commemoration of the Crucifixion, to obtain the grace of a happy death, and four times a day she made a most heartfelt renewal of her vows. Her aim was to unite the active and contemplative spirit as closely as possible, and every advice she got on that subject was carefully treasured. She advised a novice to recollect herself for a moment before manual work, and try to imagine how perfectly our Divine Lord helped His blessed Mother to sweep and dust the Holy House of Nazareth. She said that little practice had been taught her by a Saint (Mother Baptist).

In another line of household duties her own plans are mapped out by the advice she gave to the assistant dispenser. "(1) Never let your work injure your spirit of prayer; for if you neglect your prayers, God may interfere by letting things turn out contrary to your expectations and wishes. (2) Keep in mind the continual danger of offending against holy poverty, remembering the account you will have to give of what belongs to God. (3) Never

be fussy, but try to do everything so quietly that no one may know who does the work. (4) Have a place for everything, and put each thing exactly in its own place, so that you may be ready to give up the keys at a moment's notice."

In these directions you have a rapid sketch of Sister M. Xaveria. She was the same all her life—prudent, thoughtful, liberal to others, sparing to herself, thinking nothing of trouble, provided she could oblige and help. She excelled as a garment-keeper, turning the smallest pieces of cloth, etc., to advantage; and sometimes when the nuns were almost sure that their clothes were completely worn out, S. M. Xaveria took them, and mended them so beautifully that their owners were glad to get them back instead of getting new things.

As Mistress of Schools, her devotion to her duty seemed to place both parents and children entirely in her hands, with full trust that she would do all that anyone on earth could do to make themselves and their homes happy and holy. Yet, at that time she said, "If I died now, people could hardly help saying, 'After all, she was not of much use to the Institute.'"

In May, 1833, there was an epidemic of influenza through Rathfarnham, but the only one who did not rally quickly was S. M.

Xaveria; so, as well to give her change of air as to secure a good beginning for the foundation at Navan, she was sent there as Superior on the 31st July.

It was not exactly the home one would select for an invalid, but Mother Xaveria's was an exceptional case. She thoroughly enjoyed the difficulties and contrivances; and in the fine summer weather the nuns could make merry over the state of their residence. There was no ceiling in the upper parts, and only a clay flooring in the lower ones; no grate in any room, and very few chimney-pieces. The garden consisted of a gravel pit, a sandpit, and a few old trees; it was ornamented with the ruins of old cabins. The Free School took up the largest room in the Convent.

But the worse things looked, the happier the nuns seemed to be, and the brightest of them all was Mother Xaveria. She did wonders, delicate as she was, in organizing the Free School of three hundred children, and then she settled every detail for the Day School, the first conducted by nuns in Ireland. Mother Xaveria taught work, writing, and Italian. She also had an hour's teaching in the Free School, and helped to instruct the adults on Sundays. They came to her as to a saint, and

she, with the strength of the missionary spirit conquering her growing delicacy, devoted all her powers to that best loved work, leading these poor ignorant minds to the light and love with which her own soul was filled.

She spent the most loving care on the chapel and altars, but indeed, every part of the house was showing signs of her superintendence, just as when she was trying to have everything in beautiful order in the Abbey, in her stronger days. Her days of health were over, and she showed her consciousness of this by submissively taking the nourishment that hitherto she had refused. She humbly said that she was much better attended in religion than she would have been had she remained in the world. "Part of the hundredfold, you see, given even to those who do not deserve it." Often and often she repeated, that the longer she lived the happier she grew, no matter how much the body suffered, because she daily felt a keener appreciation of the great blessing of being in religion. "Only," she added, "I must dread the account I shall have to give. So many graces received, so many abused. The obligations of a religious are greater than we know. To be a religious and a saint should be one and the same thing."

Mother Xaveria had given a grand example of labour, and now she was just as bright a model of patience. To see her at recreation, no one would imagine that she often came to it quivering with pain and weakness. "I should not like you to be fretting for the large circle at Rathfarnham," she said to the nuns. "We must make one another very gay here." Not until the last survivor had passed away could Navan ever forget the holy brightness which its first Superior brought into the poor little home that was so abundantly blest under her care. And if Mother Xaveria's free heart could have clung to anything on earth, it would have been to her first mission, "her godchild," as the nuns called it, when they named it "St. Anne's," in memory of her baptismal name. But neither herself nor those around her could be blind to the fact that another Home was opening to her, and other friends waiting to welcome her across the River of Life. Through the busy days, through the sleepless nights, she was never free from suffering, and seemed to be only warding off her rapid decline by very painful remedies. "She hides it all from us as much as possible," the nuns wrote to Rathfarnham, "since she saw how we were fretting about her. We never

know now when she has a blister on, and we feel that neither we nor the doctor can do anything to save her." Rev. Mother thought there was one last chance by putting Mother Xaveria under the Dublin doctors' care. So she desired her to come up to Loreto, Harcourt Street, and appointed her Superior.

There was a heart-rending scene the day she left Navan. The old parish priest cried bitterly, and the nuns, children, and friends of the Convent could scarcely let her go. She was very ill for awhile after she went to Dublin, and had to spend the winter in Rathfarnham. Then Rev. Mother promised St. Francis Xavier, that if his client lived to found the Dublin Day School, the devotion of the Ten Fridays should be annually offered in his honour. The prayer was granted, and Mother Xaveria returned to Harcourt Street on the 12th March, 1834.

During her ten months' superiority there, the nuns said of her: "She governed rather by insinuating and carrying out the wishes of the Chief Superior than by giving commands of her own." The words that Navan was familiar with were always on her lips: "If we differ from Rathfarnham, even in trifles, nothing will go right, we shall soon lose the semblance of a filiation."

No matter what position she held, nor how successful and esteemed she was, she was always as humble as when she was a novice, always as ready to take any duty in hands. And her decided attraction for domestic employments continued even in her failing health, while she was trying to make Harcourt Street as like a Convent as possible.

This Day School was a splendid success, thanks to Mother Xaveria's undoubted genius for organization. The numbers, the social standing, and the talent of the pupils raised convent education immediately in the eyes of the world, and Mother Xaveria felt pardonably proud of the new Loreto, for the sake of the Institute. Still, she was considered fonder of Navan, with its struggles and its simple country life; and two or three letters of hers to S. M. Stanislaus M'Donnell, who was then in Navan, will confirm that idea. The fine, clear writing is as legible as it was sixty-two years ago.

"Loreto, Harcourt Street,
"30*th September*, 1833.

"My Dear S. M. Stanislaus,

"Is it necessary to tell you that your last letter was truly welcome? I assure you with sincerity that neither time nor absence can ever diminish my interest in St. Anne's and its

dear inhabitants. On the whole, I think you are getting on well without M. Xaveria. It is true, you say there is a change in the happiness, but my dear Sister, believe me, we shall never find peace or rest, if we look for it in persons or places—we must seek it where alone it is to be found, that is, in the faithful discharge of our duties, whether agreeable or disagreeable, when sick and well, when *in* and *out* of humour; in a word, at all times, in all places, and with all persons. This life is very short; is it not a pity to place our contentment here below, when an eternity of delights will reward the patient endurance of the little trials of this passing life. You will say it is easy to preach, and indeed, I join with you, for I often find that my words and actions do not agree; however, it is never too late to mend.

"I was sorry to hear that the novice had not arrived, and that you are alone at beads. Who knows but that we shall say our beads together one of these days; but let us neither ask nor desire anything but the perfect accomplishment of God's holy will.

"Mr. Timmon called to-day. I should have been most happy to see him, but as I had not been quite well, Mother Aloysia would not

allow me downstairs, and went herself to receive him. I am scribbling this billet by candle-light, to have ready for him in the morning.

"Dearest Rev. Mother and all her children are very well, and labouring with great zeal to promote God's glory and the salvation of souls. Already there is plenty to be done here. I had no notion that children would crowd in so quickly; but, thank God, we have splendid accommodation for many more. I was delighted to hear that the number of children at St. Anne's is increasing so much since my departure. You are all working actively, but not overburdened, I hope. Remember me most affectionately to Mother Francis and M. Paula, and tell them I am accused of being too partial to Navan. We must pray constantly and fervently for each other, for on sweet, sweet prayer is all my dependence.

"Ever your attached Sister in Jesus Christ,

"M. Xaveria."

Loreto House, Rathfarnham,
28*th October*, 1833.

"My Dearest S. M. Stanislaus,

"Though I am not in your debt, I could not let Mr. O'Reilly depart without a line for each of you, lest you should think I had forgotten

you. This, indeed, would be possible, but not probable, and most certainly would be very ungrateful.

"All your Loreto friends are very well. Are you drinking the bitter cup of separation cheerfully still? You certainly have a greater field for promoting the A. M. D. G. at Navan than you could have here or in Dublin, and remember your labours are not overlooked by the God who rewards each according to her works. S. M. Paula told me you are the gayest of the gay, and this speaks volumes in favour of body and soul. I hope you have no trouble in the Free School, and that all goes on according to the written rule. Also I hope you guard against cold. Health is an invaluable blessing, especially in this delicate age.

"We are adding nuns and children to our numbers; so, in four or five years, please God (if we live to see it), we shall have a fine Community for more foundations. Do you pray for me? Are you making the Ten Fridays?

"It is almost dark, so I must bid you adieu. That we may meet in our heavenly home, is the prayer of

"Your attached Sister in Jesus Christ,

"M. XAVERIA."

Later on, she wrote:—

"The remains of Monsieur Cough have never left me, nor do I think that cough ever will, during my exile, which may be long or short, *as God pleases*. All here (Harcourt Street) are well, and as gay as we used to be in Navan, and, I must add, all are very good. I often think of the Missioners in St. Anne's, and pray for them. Perhaps you and I may yet set out on another foundation, when Rev. Mother gets rich!

"Only room to add how affectionately I am

"Yours, in Christ,

"M. XAVERIA."

In August, 1834, Mother Xaveria had a farewell visit from her aunt and sister (Ursuline nuns) on their way to Charleston. They found her greatly changed in appearance; but she laughed over her deathlike looks, and gaily said: "I have lost my commanding air. See how we change! I was told once that the reason the girls of a large Free School gave for being unusually quiet, was—'Mrs. M'Carthy looked at us.' I don't think I am very awe-inspiring now."

She would not let them talk of her health saying: "Why should we sadden our few

minutes together ? Well for you, to whom God is giving what I don't deserve, the opportunity of helping to gather in the foreign harvest, where there are so few reapers. You will be far above me in heaven, still I must not be jealous." She bade them good-bye in her old, self-contained way, not letting a tear be seen, though she had idolized that sister once. But earthly ties mattered very little to her now ; they were soon to be broken for ever, for the great final parting was at hand.

Nearly five months went by. The doctors could do no more for her, and each day brought a marked loss of strength, though she still attended to all the business of the house, presided in the school, and went like the rest to the refectory and choir duties. Sometimes the nuns begged her to rest more, and not to leave her invalid sofa so often to go to the chapel; but she generally answered, " How can I be so near the Blessed Sacrament and not pay It a visit ? "

The same letter that warned Rev. Mother of a decided change for the worse in Mother Xaveria contains this loving little memoir. " She has literally spent herself for others, seeming to have neither time nor thought for her own gratification. She practised the great

art of suffering without complaining of it, of being tired and exhausted without showing it, of amusing herself without being dissipated, of mortifying herself without letting it be perceived. We say to each other (for we dare not say it to herself), ' the Institute is losing a treasure.' "

The old, oft-repeated words, " God knows best," were all that Rev. Mother could answer. She desired Mother Xaveria to come out to Rathfarnham as soon as possible, and with the sweet, unselfish spirit that never forsook her, Mother Xaveria told the nuns, " Just say good-bye to me for a few days. I shall come back soon if I can, for I know you would be sorry for me."

She was able to hear Mass in the church on the Feast of St. Brigid, but the next day she went to the infirmary. About a fortnight after the confessor cautiously hinted that the end could not be far off. She listened quietly, and said afterwards to Rev. Mother, " There was no need to take such pains about breaking that news to me. I wish everyone knew how sweet it is to die." By degrees this spirit seemed to pass into those who visited her; they actually lost all fear of death while they watched her going home. She told them that when she was a novice she spoke to Mother

Baptist about her terror of the last awful passage, and that Mother Baptist had answered, "Eight years hence, from protracted illness, you will be very glad to die." "And so I am," added Mother Xaveria. "I am most grateful to God for making me feel so happy, and for the sort of illness He sent me; letting me work on till a month ago, and now giving me every comfort in my last days on earth."

From the moment she entered the infirmary her motto seemed to be, "Ask nothing, and refuse nothing." She was like a docile child yielding to every suggestion, trying to make up for her inability to pray or read by perfect submission to God and her Superior. When she was asked what gives most comfort to a nun on her deathbed, she said she believed perfect obedience included everything that could make that moment sweet. "Surely you would not leave us so soon, if it depended on your own will," said a nun. "Ah, no!" said Mother Xaveria, "I would rather live, and work hard for ten years establishing Day Schools. Every second year I should like to go on a new foundation. But I shall not forget you. I think, as I have been so anxious for the extension of the Institute on earth, I shall do all I can for it in heaven."

"She is a noble woman," said Dr. O'Connor, Bishop of Madras, when he paid her his farewell visit. "All her life long the spirit of immolation and devotion to God's interests lifted her above all that could bar her way to heaven. You were privileged in possessing her, and you are privileged again in offering up such a soul to God." Alas! for poor human nature; even saintly eyes grow dim while they try to pierce the shadows round the Cross, but in spite of the sorrow at losing her, there could be no gloom near Mother Xaveria's deathbed. They thought of "the Valiant Woman," of the Proverbs, who "shall laugh in the latter day," for Mother Xaveria was *more* than peaceful, she was almost playful in her cheerfulness. There was a kindly smile for everyone; a few gay words if it were possible to talk, and she gave a delighted welcome to the choir, who came to sing for her the last evening of her life. Two favourite pictures were always before her—Our Lord falling under the Cross, and the Immaculate Conception, with the words underneath "Show thyself a mother to us." She could just look at them from time to time, and that look was a prayer.

Every hour she sank visibly. Violent fits of coughing exhausted and almost suffocated

her, till she dreaded falling asleep, as one of these attacks was sure to come on when she woke. After a quieter night than usual a great paroxysm of coughing hastened the end at 5 o'clock, a.m., 5th March, 1835. She prayed fervently to her last breath. "My God, do not forsake me. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me." As she said these words all was over. The Institute had given up one of its holiest children, one of its most indefatigable workers, into the hands of Him who "gives and takes away," and it was with a struggle that the Foundress who could so badly spare that strong heart and willing hand, finished the *De Profundis* with "Thy will be done."

The poor worn body bore the marks of its brightly-endured martyrdom, reminding more than one of the Figure on the Crucifix. "No one but God knew how much Mother Xaveria suffered." So the doctor said; adding, "I never saw patience like hers—she was a Saint."

"May her memory live among us," wrote the nuns; "for she was a shining example of the union of the active and contemplative spirit, so necessary in our Institute; and those who live like her will surely have a death like hers, comforted, cheered, and glorified by the light of the great glory to come."

CHAPTER X.

THE Convent at York prepared a treasure for Rathfarnham in Sister M. Catherine Corballis, second daughter of Richard Corballis, of Rosemount, Roebuck, Co. Dublin.

Margaret Corballis went to Micklegate Bar Convent, a beautiful clever child, full of life and full of talent. She left it a highly-accomplished girl, with a lovely voice, and such facility for using her many gifts that the nuns were delighted to welcome her back to the Noviceship. But God must have determined that she should help the Irish Loreto, for she became so delicate that she had to leave St. Mary's; and though she grew quite strong in Cheltenham, she changed her mind so far as to decide on entering Rathfarnham, 21st November, 1822. She was professed on the 5th February, 1824, being one of the first eight members who were dispensed from the second year's novitiate by the rescript of Pius VII.

She came to Rathfarnham like a sunbeam; the sweetest, sunniest spirit that ever cheered the wintry days of a new foundation. Hard work was her delight; crosses and disappoint-

ments were " God's gifts ; " the sowing of the seed was a weary time, but what of that ? —she saw the spring at hand, the summer was certain to come, and the rich harvest would follow.

It did not seem to matter much how she was employed, for she did everything well. She sang and played with perfect taste ; her exquisite voice getting fresh strength and sweetness from her devotion, till even seculars who had been at " Singing Mass " in Rathfarnham, longed to hear the " Quam dilecta tabernacula tua " again. Lovely, indeed, were God's far-off tabernacles to her, and lovely in her eyes the earthly tabernacle she was helping to build up for His sake.

Through all these first members of the Institute there was the same deeply reverential feeling of the grandeur and majesty of religious life. That feeling ennobled every action in their minds, and made them eminent in humility and in gratitude to God for their vocation. So Sister Catherine went from duty to duty like one who is always in the immediate service of the King, and must attend to little things and great with equal care.

She was an admirable teacher ; the children learned whatever she taught, well and quickly ;

and, not satisfied with what she already knew, she spent every spare minute improving herself in what she had to teach. Many a time the nuns laughed at her positive passion for compelling Loreto girls to practise French conversation. It was " the rage " of the day to speak French fluently, and Sister M. Catherine wished Loreto girls to excel in this useful accomplish ment. She took possession of each new child the very day of her arrival, to teach her all the sentences in ordinary use. Then, a French dictionary was always in Sister M. Catherine's pocket, and, at recreation, if a child were at a loss for a word, the dictionary was handed to her to instruct herself. Each child was to send Sister M. Catherine a French letter during the vacation ; she would not answer an English one ; and they were so glad to get a line from her that they went through the task for the sake of the reward.

Sister M. Catherine was every way attractive, so her influence was very great, and she used it most holily and wisely. She could never be accused of favouritism ; the dull, the heedless, the thankless children knew that she tried to do as much for them as for the best and cleverest girls. Without being suspicious, she was vigilant, and nothing could go wrong

while she was in charge of the school. All the while she had higher aims than merely keeping order, for she tried unceasingly to teach the children to realize the presence of God, to live beneath the eye of God. She told them that the habit of seeing Him everywhere would be a safeguard in many future dangers, a comfort in many sorrows, a preservative from many sins, and the surest means of lifting them above the petty feelings of human respect, jealousy, and curiosity, which so often embitter life.

And then, with all the love of her heart, she left nothing undone to make them *real* children of Mary. No saint that we read of seems to have surpassed Sister M. Catherine in warm devotion to our Blessed Lady. No fond child ever showed more eager, watchful love for an earthly mother than she did for our Mother in heaven. It was the one sensitive point in her. Mary should be queen everywhere. Her altars should be lovely as hands could make them. The gardens should be robbed of their best flowers for her feasts. There was no pleasing Sister Catherine in music and singing when Our Lady's hymns were to be sung. For many an August after Sister Catherine's death the nuns spoke of the "Assumpta est Maria," and the glorious voice that sang it as, perhaps, it

would never be sung again. They remembered, too, that when they asked Sister Catherine why she took so long to say the hourly Hail Mary, in Advent, she acknowledged that she added the *Angelus* to it in honour of Our Lady's Expectation. Her eyes would light up at the very name of Mary, and her sweet, winning ways were never so engaging as when she was leading the children to see that, in all the wide world, they would never find one so beautiful, so tender, and so true as the Mother who would never forget and never forsake them. This was the secret of Sister M. Catherine's influence in forming so many for religion. She trained twelve Rathfarnham girls for the noviceship, and sent them to it already far advanced in the spiritual life. Thanks to her, they were the most docile of children, affectionate, and respectful to all their mistresses, kind and helpful to their companions, strictly conscientious, honourable, and high-minded. Thanks, again, to her power of early guidance, they became most fervent novices, most holy nuns, always following the star that she set before them, when, as little children, she taught them to "look up steadily to Mary."

Hearing so much of Sister M. Catherine's

accomplishments, and of her work in the schools, no one would expect that the greater part of her religious life was spent in domestic duties, literally *spent* in them, for when she was Mistress of the House, the Sisters were new to their work, and she had to go step by step with them, showing them how to do everything. She was efficient and energetic everywhere. Kitchen, laundry, dormitories, were thoroughly attended to. She had to do more than look on for a long time, but (just as it had been with the children) the Sisters were easily led by her, and though she got them to work hard, and was "very particular," they were so fond of her, and so anxious to please her, that she blamed them for the delight they showed when she was reappointed to her office. "You can't be working for God alone," she said; "if you were, one Superior would be the same to you as another." She often asked them, "For whom are you doing that? If not for God, how sorry you will be on your deathbed." And often, too, she repeated, "Oblige yourself to look on whoever is placed over you as representing our Blessed Lady, and receive the orders as coming from her, the real Mistress of Loreto. If you do this you will never fail to obey."

She herself was delicately careful about obedience, and so thoughtful, too, in her refined way. There was a permission which she would have been glad to get, but she would not ask it, saying, "I think Rev. Mother would not like to give that leave, and still, she might not like to refuse, so I shall not put her in such a position. It is not fair to Superiors to ask permissions that they feel difficulty in giving."

When she had to teach the novices anything, she generally began by saying, "I'll show you the way Rev. Mother likes it to be done"; Rev. Mother's wishes being a law to her, and carrying them out a labour of love.

One of her old children, afterwards a nun, left us Sister Catherine's favourite sayings:—
"Pray, pray well, and everything will succeed."
"The perfection of our ordinary actions depends on the way we perform our spiritual duties, especially on the way we confess and communicate." Through all her happy life, the spirit of prayer drew her heart to heaven.
"Wait a minute." she said to the portress, who was calling her to the parlour in a hurry, "I never leave my cell without asking a blessing from my guardian angel."

Holy and lovable as Sister M. Catherine was, she was not faultless. She had not the angelic

serenity of Mother Baptist, nor the unconquerable good humour of Mother Xaveria M'Carthy. She had a hot temper, and was quite capable of a quick flush or a hasty word, but the reparation was beautiful in its humility, and more than made up for the impatience. When Mother Baptist was dying she promised that, if she had power with God, she would beg Him to give Sister M. Catherine grace to devote herself unreservedly to the pursuit of perfection; and certainly the promise was kept, for no one struggled harder to overcome nature, and perfect in herself what grace had begun.

The struggle was not long. On the 1st January, 1835, she turned to one of the nuns after Vespers, saying: "This will be my last year for our Blessed Lady's Office, so I must say it as fervently as I can."

She went on as usual for some months, working away spiritedly, and when she was told she was not able for what she was doing she answered: "Oh! my dear! let me alone, I shall not be long here. Let me do as much for God as I can. I am only sorry I can't do more." About nine weeks before her death she exerted herself doubly to put everything in her charge in perfect order, especially the school-rooms—she was so good to the children

to the last. All was settled to her satisfaction just three weeks before she went to her long rest.

When Dr. O'Reilly examined her throat (from which she had been suffering), he found it in such a state of ossification that he said he had not met so distressing a case in his twenty-five years' practice, and that he was "amazed at Sister Catherine's fortitude, for it must have been torture to her to swallow any solid food." But she—well accustomed to self-denial—made little of her sufferings, said they were nothing like what she deserved, and that she was gaining heaven so easily she could not believe she was dying. The sunny disposition that blessed her short life made her deathbed as radiant as if she were done with pain. "What a joy it is to die in religion," she said. "I love Loreto better than ever." She grew worse rapidly, and began to answer, when they asked how she felt, "Very bad, thank God." But she said it quite contentedly, as if it did not matter. "Do all you can for God while you are well," she added, "for one can do very little in sickness. However, God does not require much when we are dying, except the last great sacrifice. I should like, I think, to live for one year more, to work a little longer, and

do penance for my sins; but the great Physician knows best, and I leave myself in His hands."

She was anointed on the 16th December, but received Holy Communion fasting till the 28th instant. That day her lifelong friend, the Archbishop, came to say good-bye to her. She was as peaceful as ever, though in great pain; at least they knew she must be in agony, though she gave no sign of what she went through. All the next day the difficulty of breathing was so great, that she had to be propped up in bed, and could barely answer in the shortest words. That evening one of the nuns was supporting her head, when Sister M. Catherine heard the *Angelus* ring, and gently whispered: "You know I must not keep you from Office." So even that little relief was quietly put aside.

The night wore on without much change. Now and then she roused a little, as when the Infirmarian whispered: "She is worse," Sister Mary Catherine said: "Not worse, but nearer seeing God." She thanked those who were with her most gratefully, saying that if she were a princess she could not be better served. At 2 a.m. she saw Rev. Mother beside her, and said, so earnestly: "Rev. Mother, don't stay

up with me. Your health is very precious, and you must take great care of it, for the sake of the Community." Towards morning they saw that she was going fast; but she answered the Litanies and prayers distinctly, and then, with a last effort, composed herself for death making a most fervent offering of her life. As if God had waited for that offering, her eyes closed softly, and she was with Him for ever.

Loreto's third sacrifice was made to heaven at 5 a.m., 29th December, 1835.

Sister M. Catherine was in the thirty-ninth year of her age, and the fourteenth year of her religious life.

CHAPTER XI.

THIRTEEN years had gone by since the Abbey gates had opened to admit its first pupils. Already, several of these had passed from the School to the Novitiate, and had returned to the school to take their places as the consecrated helpers of the glorious work which had been so abundantly blest since their own childhood.

One of these had been a special pet with the nuns since she came to them, a motherless little creature of ten, half-spoiled by notice and indulgence. Mary Clinch was a very pretty child, and promised to be very bright and witty; but she was a wilful fairy, and her father gave her up to Loreto just in time to save her from being a cross instead of a blessing.

Proud and disobedient as she was, at all events she was truthful, her word might be relied on, and she could never do a mean or sly thing. Also she was intelligent enough to see her faults, and to respect those who were firm with her. She was naturally pious, and fretted over the distractions which tormented

her at her prayers. When she prepared for her first Confession, she cried out, "But this is my first and last too, I'll only have to go once."

"Many a time," she was told.

"No," said Mary, positively, "if I am sorry for my sins I will *never* commit them again."

She could learn very quickly, but she was exceedingly idle, though passionately fond of reading. Anything in the shape of a book fascinated her, and if a story got into her hands she devoured it. Well for her that her reading was under control; and it spoke volumes for the child's character that she took a doubtful book immediately to one of the nuns, saying that she had begun it, and thought she ought not finish it.

The nuns could have made a brilliant pupil of Mary with very little trouble—by working on her vanity—for she was eager enough for display; but that was not the training Loreto wished to give. It was time to begin the preparation for First Communion, and this gave the opportunity of doing the work in the right way, by impressing on her the first and greatest reason for trying to "use God's gifts according to His wishes." Mary was not spared during her preparation, her faults were

all put before her, and until she proved her anxiety to correct them she knew she need not hope for the Treasure that, at last, rewarded her efforts.

From the day she received It there was a decided change in her, but the real turning to "God alone" was reserved for the day of her Confirmation. At the actual moment of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the voice of God spoke to her heart, asking her to leave all and follow Him. In an ecstasy of delight she gave the promise, and how faithfully she kept it both heaven and earth could tell.

Resolutely determined to be a nun and a saint, she battled with her passions, subdued them, crushed them down unsparingly, and thought all she could do and bear too little to prepare her for the honour and happiness to come. She kept her secret still, because she did not know how the nuns would listen to *her*, who had been so troublesome a child. However, they could not help seeing what was in her mind, and just as they were wondering whether she would leave Loreto without speaking of it, all was settled unexpectedly. She was brought to death's door by small-pox, and then her hopes and longings were told out. She need not have feared the answer;

Rev. Mother and the nuns gave her a warm welcome, and she entered on the 19th October, 1831—the third who had entered from the school that year.

School discipline is a tolerable preparation for the novitiate, and generally makes the first steps easier, especially to one like S. M. Patricia, who had been trying to ground herself in obedience, exactness in observing rules, punctuality, and order. She brought "the great heart and willing spirit," which creates such a difference in religion between those who are saddened and worried by trifles, and the calm, sensible natures which would wonder if life, anywhere on earth, were perfectly smooth. S. M. Patricia had already "fought the good fight" with self, so she was rewarded now by being free from scruples or nervousness. She saw clearly what she ought to do, and was conscientiously anxious to do it.

"I know I am very faulty," she said. "Indeed, no one is so faulty as I am, still, I love our Holy Rules so much that I cannot bear to see one of them broken."

Of course, she was by no means dead to natural feelings. How could she kill nature so completely as not to be hurt—as meeker spirits

could never be—by corrections or humiliations. Of course she felt them—and felt them keenly—but she bore them with the true, religious devotion which would be disappointed were there nothing to be borne. She was one who would say to God, if He gave her only consolations in religion:

"Nay, but I will buy it (religious life) of Thee at a price, and I will not offer to the Lord my holocausts free cost."

She was delicate, too, and we all know that weak health is a never-failing source of mortifications, when one is trying earnestly to keep up to regular observance. Very likely her own delicacy taught her how to be a kind, thoughtful Infirmarian, even while she was a novice. She seemed to know, by instinct, how to help and comfort the sick.

Never was there a more loving, faithful friend, though she did not permit herself to indulge her affections, except by praying frequently for those she loved. She had been exceedingly fond of one of her companions—a little Spaniard—but after her entrance she never spoke to Elena, did not even say good-bye when the child was going home to Spain. She said, "My daily prayer for Elena is that she may carry her baptismal robe unspotted

to the judgment seat. At all my Communions I offer her little heart to God, and beg Him to take entire possession of it. No one on earth is worthy of her love. She is too good for this world."

Some time after she heard of Elena's death, quite suddenly (at recreation), and, to everyone's surprise, S. M. Patricia burst out crying as if her heart would break.

"If I could only go into Purgatory, to suffer for her, and release her," she said, as soon as she could speak. For the warm heart was as true as ever, in spite of the steady exercise of self-control.

It was often noticed in the noviceship that, when the time for Profession drew near, difficulties and obstacles of one sort or other turned up; like a last effort on the part of the devil, to prevent the consecration to God. In S. M. Patricia's case a delay was about to be caused by family affairs, but she stormed heaven for help, and, to the usual advocates added an unusual one, St. Simon Stylites, whose life she was reading. She promised to take him for one of her patrons, and to have his name engraved on her ring. Whatever intercession was made, it proved successful, the necessary arrangements were satisfactorily

settled, and she was professed, with six others, on the 18th February, 1835.

Soon after, she got her first class in the boarding school. She promised to be a great acquisition to the teaching staff, for she had tact, energy, and penetration, with a large amount of solid good sense, and no notion of sparing herself—her whole strength would be used for God. Certainly He seemed to treat her like a favourite child, giving her a great deal of sensible sweetness at prayer, for it was noticed that the Communion towel and her prie-dieu were often wet with her tears. She said: "Holy Communion would be too much happiness for earth only we dread profanation."

Her constant meditation on the Passion drew her close to the Mother of Dolours, and she was the first who took for her motto, "Unica spes mea Jesu, et post Jesum Virgo Maria." She wanted to unite them closely in her heart.

She had every quality for community life. She was universally charitable and cordial, keeping clear of showing preferences or the contrary, so that everyone learned to like and trust her. With all her natural discernment of character, she was generally one of the last to see faults, and she never *imagined* them where they did not exist. In the first

place she had no attraction for watching others—she was too high-minded for that—and, again, if a fault came directly before her eyes, she made it a rule never to judge the act severely, hoping that some motive which she could not see would be more or less an excuse in the sight of God.

Unwilling to blame others, she was always ready to hear what faults were noticed in herself, and correction was so sweetly received by S. M. Patricia that no one even detected the sign of wounded feelings in her looks or words. One of her companions afterwards wrote: "I think true humility was her favourite virtue, and the one she tried hardest to perfect herself in. She did her best to hide her good qualities and her talents, and quietly tried to let her deficiencies be seen. We used to say among ourselves that she had never lost her baptismal innocence, but in her own eyes she was the greatest of sinners, and she was sure she should have a long purgatory. She had given herself such a thorough training in obedience, that it did not even occur to her to exercise her will and judgment." When she was dying a novice asked her for some short rule of life. She answered, "I believe we can never do wrong if we obey."

Side by side with this picture of S. M. Patricia we are inclined to put a sketch of her dispositions when a child, and to ask ourselves was her nature completely changed by becoming a nun.

She was delighted to get the name of Patricia, she felt so grateful to St. Patrick for what he had done for Ireland, for S. M. Patricia was a born lover of her country. It was a delightful task for her to draw up a compendium of the lives of the Irish Saints; and she induced a great many to have recourse to their intercession, often telling the novices that she believed she owed her life to St. Ita, whom she invoked when she was thrown from her horse, just before she entered. However, when it was observed that her enthusiasm extended from the saints to the uncanonized patriots, she was warned that too much heat on this subject was liable to prove unpleasant to others, who, for various reasons, might not subscribe to all her opinions; and to remember we are enjoined to be on our guard on this point. That was enough, she checked herself at once, and those who shared her ardour will be the best judges of her self-restraint.

And now, just when she was a joy and comfort beyond words to those who had been her

truest earthly friends; just when she could begin to be to others what our first Sisters of the Institute had been to her, they had to see that "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts," for they found that S. M. Patricia's days were numbered.

Then, the gradual wasting began; the useless remedies tried over and over; the doctors' advice not to worry her by too much solicitude; and the gradual stealing away of the young life, that had seemed so full of promise. Her own heart was ready to say a thousand *Te Deums*, "Oh! will He really take me so soon," she said. Still, when Rev. Mother desired her to join in a Novena for her cure, she answered, "As many Novenas as you wish, but I should much rather die."

Very soon it made the nuns' hearts ache to watch her, for she hardly ever had an hour's rest, day or night. She could not lie down, fearing the feeling of suffocation that always followed, the cough shook her terribly, and every effort to eat sickened and exhausted her. But never a murmur, never an impatient look escaped her, and when she was told that perhaps God was giving her her purgatory here, and leaving her till she had fully satisfied for her sins, she smiled, and said if she were to be

left till she had made satisfaction for them she should never die.

Rev. Mother wished her to say a few parting words to the nuns whenever she was able; her voice was nearly gone, but she generally tried to say: "If you wish to be happy in religion, never scrutinize or judge the actions of Superiors. Keep God's will before your eyes."

She repeatedly spoke of our Blessed Mother's goodness to her. "She has always taken such care of me, and, unworthy as I am, I know she will take me to heaven at last, I was always her own child—born on her feast, called Mary after her, and kept in white, to remind me of her, for seven years, so no fear that she would ever let me be lost. I hope to die during *her* month."

The month of May was nearly over, and S. M. Patricia was beginning to feel disappointed at the delay, when, at last, the call came. Like a tired child, going happily to sleep, without a care or a fear, S. M. Patricia went to God, at 3 p.m., 26th May, 1836.

For a long time after the nuns used to tell her story to successive generations of children, and bid them see how true the words are: "For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."

CHAPTER XII.

SCANTY as are our biographical materials, the very attempt to sketch the first members of the Institute in Ireland has brought them back, after long years, as types of spiritual loveliness. We feel a growing pride in them, a growing conviction that we need not look enviously on other Orders that possess chronicles of their "Canonized."

Perhaps we do not sufficiently realize how much we owe to the Dead, nor how far they sacrificed themselves for the sake of the generations to come. Had they yielded to their inclinations, they might have taken rank among those who are saints in the eyes of the world. We have a clear proof of this in the Archbishop's petition to the Holy See for a Rescript forbidding the Religious of our Institute to pass into more austere Orders.

This "Petition" throws a light on the Community at Rathfarnham in the year 1836. The Abbey was a scene of labour for God, a scene of active self-abnegation and incessant devotion to the work appointed. It was a most holy work—"a divine work"; the nuns were

penetrated with that truth in a fuller measure than we can put into words, yet, here and there among them, it is evident there were some who, in their thirst for the external marks of the Crucified, may have been pressingly tempted to embrace the perpetual silence, the fasts, the watchings, the wholly contemplative life of the most rigid Congregations. Long prayer would be their rest, and corporal mortification was their great attraction. We know that they lost no opportunity, within due limits of practising the latter, but they were wise women, and they soon perceived that prudence on this point was absolutely necessary while their strength belonged to the Institute. Its work should be done thoroughly, and such work was a constant drain on their physical powers. Elsewhere, they could apply themselves more to the externals of "Religion." Would that be "the better part?" Canon Law would permit the change, on a simple notification of such a desire to the Archbishop of the diocese—and his consent.

But Archbishop Murray was the confidant of Rev. Mother Ball, and of all the Loreto nuns. He knew their mental history, and hence we may conclude that he saved the Institute from great losses by protecting it

with the Rescript of Gregory XVI, who, acknowledging his anxiety that the Congregation should be sedulously preserved intact, ordained that "Those who have already associated themselves, and those who may hereafter associate themselves to this Institute, cannot depart to another, even though observing rules of a more rigid discipline, without the permission of the Apostolic See."

And so an unmistakable seal of God's love was set on Loreto, 30th June, 1836.

Meanwhile, the innocent peace of the children of God was reigning, undisturbed, in the Novitiate—the home of that young, sacrificial fervour which so strongly and so sweetly disposes the hearts beneath its sway to realize that they are "no longer strangers and foreigners on earth, but fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God." And one, especially, of the Loreto novices—called by Rev. Mother Ball "our St. Stanislaus Kotska"—was unconsciously treading closely in the footsteps of the saint who was "made perfect in a short time."

We may glance back to the year 1825, when Julia Ferral and her elder sister lost their mother (who died of rapid consumption), and the orphans, aged eleven and nine, came to

Loreto, Rathfarnham. Julia was the younger, had been greatly petted, and was by no means a docile pupil, until the gentle influence of Mother Baptist Therry, supported by Mother Xaveria M'Carthy's kind but firm control brought this child, in whom they were particularly interested, to be all that the fondest hearts could desire. Over and over, Rev. Mother Ball pointed out Julia Ferral as a proof of the great importance of our work and the far-reaching power it can exercise. "Care bestowed on the children," she often said, "is never thrown away. Sooner or later we shall see the fruit of our labour. Remember, it is only after repeated waterings that the hard earth becomes soft enough to allow the tender seedlings to spring up."

As soon as her sister's education was finished Julia's schooldays came to an end, for their father thought his eldest daughter would be too lonely in their country house in the West without her bright, gifted companion, but the seeds of a religious vocation had taken deep root in Julia's heart, and she was never happy at home. Their father's sudden death drew the sisters more closely together, Julia being always the comforter, until, after a few days spent in the Abbey during the children's

retreat, she felt too powerfully drawn by God to Loreto to resist His call, and she entered Rathfarnham on the 26th December, 1832. For her sister's sake, she was coaxed back to the world soon after, and then the will of God was clearly seen. She left Loreto a strong, fine-looking girl, but anxiety and fretting did their sad work at once. She grew thin and pale, too weak for exertion, too broken-spirited to care to exert herself; opposition to her wish was slowly killing her, and at last she was left free to follow her choice.

No sooner was she settled in the noviceship than she was her old gay, healthful self again, and took up her studies with double eagerness to make up for lost time. Her first aim was to try how she could best fit herself to help in the work of the Institute. She had great natural taste for music, and, being sure to succeed in that branch, she was more anxious to apply to the drier occupations of perfecting herself in arithmetic, grammar, etc., putting away every thought of her own gratification. Talented as she was, she was so simple and unassuming—more than that—so humble, and with such a positive thirst for humiliations, that she would have been willing and glad to allow even her pupils to believe her more

ignorant than themselves were she not warned that it was her duty to let them feel they might have confidence in their teacher. However, as this obligation was not laid on her with regard to the novices, she generally contrived to give the newcomers the impression that she knew little or nothing, till, later on, when they were sent to her to be helped in some study, they found, to their great surprise, that she was well qualified to direct them. And her help was so readily given that her companions saw it was a pleasure for S. M. Baptist to know that she could be of use to them.

The same sweet simplicity and humility made her very dear to her Superiors, towards whom, to the last, she was the candid, affectionate child whom Mother Baptist and Mother Xaveria had trained so tenderly for God. The spirit of true and solid piety had been breathed into her fresh, young heart, and now, in later years, she was remarkable among the fervent novices for her deep reverence for holy things. They often noticed at recreation, how, when the conversation turned on spiritual subjects, S. M. Baptist's peculiarly happy face grew grave with the intensity of her devotion, while her whole heart and mind seemed to be riveted immediately on the world unseen.

She was distinguished, too, among those practical lovers of silence, who never (or rarely) find occasion to say more than the few words which business or charity requires, except when the Community meets for recreation. The day was short enough for S. M. Baptist without spending time in unnecessary talk, as she was both teaching and studying with energy and perseverance.

Day by day, she was labouring to perfect herself in the science of the interior life, noting every defect, and humbling herself before God and her companions for the slightest failure. "Surely," they said, "she will leave nothing to be expiated in Purgatory, she is so severe on herself in this world."

From the time of S. M. Baptist's clothing, on the 16th February, 1833, Rev. Mother had been speaking of her as a model for general imitation, and after her Profession, 18th February, 1835, she was appointed "Angel" of the noviceship—meaning that she had charge of initiating the new probationers into the habits and customs of religious life. And an Angel, indeed, they found her, angelic in patience and charity, untiring in her thoughtful ways of leading them to what would make them full sharers in her own fervour, her

happiness, and her trustful peace. With an insight rare in one so young she divined the existence in different natures of the struggles and weaknesses which she, herself, had never experienced, and quietly met and opposed the tempter of souls, in whatever guise he was trying to effect an entrance.

Though S. M. Baptist had often been warned that she might have inherited consumption from her mother, she was certain that she had quite grown out of the threatened delicacy. Always feeling well, and always able for duty, it was a great change and a great surprise to her when her health suddenly failed. On the 2nd January, 1837, she was struck down with inflammation of the lungs, followed by a very troublesome cough, and though the doctors agreed that she would rally, decline soon showed itself by loss of appetite and increasing weakness. The first sign she gave that she felt herself in danger was her proposing to begin a general confession. She made it by degrees, adding her faults against one of the Commandments to her weekly Confession, and continuing her Communions as usual. Everyone who visited her in the infirmary was asked: "Will you pray that I may have contrition and love?"

At one time she had had a great fear of death, but it left her completely when her last illness came on, and she talked about death as quietly and expectantly as if she were only going to another very happy—even a happier—home. It is generally part of the disease with consumptive patients to be fanciful about their food;—their likes and dislikes continually changing. S. M. Baptist was an exception to this rule, she appeared satisfied with everything.

The March winds tried her greatly; so did the variable weather in April, but May was mild and sunny, and though she was wearing away to a shadow, she believed and said that she should not die till her favourite Feast of the Visitation, 2nd July, the day our Blessed Lady went to bring sanctification to St. John the Baptist.

The one earthly thing that roused her interest to the last was news of her former pupils, were they improving, were they particularly good and studious. At anything relating to them she brightened up, and was glad to hear all that could be told of their progress, but otherwise she seemed inclined to put away every thought of earth, and plainly showed that God and our blessed Mother were enough to fill her mind and heart. An in-

stance of this was often quoted After Mother Xaveria M'Carthy's death S. M. Baptist had delighted in thinking and speaking of her, looking on her as a saint gone to God. One of the older nuns, who had noticed this, thought she would now give her dying child a little pleasure by introducing Mother Xaveria's name. To her surprise, S. M. Baptist answered, "I don't care to talk about her now. Talk to me of God." And then she fervently repeated her favourite aspiration, "O Mary! best gift of a dying Saviour, show thyself a Mother to me."

The weeks went on, with very little alteration. S. M. Baptist was worn to a skeleton, her large, bright eyes and thin cheeks were shining and burning with the hectic glow of constant fever, yet she was not in actual pain. "If she is dying," said the infirmarian to the doctor, "she is not suffering as much as one would expect." "That is quite possible," he answered. "Death is not as painful as is generally supposed. People often suffer more from the fear of what they expect to go through when dying than from death itself."

In S. M. Baptist's case there was only the sense of perpetual weariness, while she lay for weeks almost motionless, her mind quite clear,

but the slightest exertion an impossibility. Then the slumbering, which showed complete exhaustion, became incessant. "The sleep of death," she called it, and she said she knew it was a signal to make the last preparations, and to keep the indulgenced crucifix near her, that she might be able to lay her hand on it at once if the agony came on suddenly.

These were the last days of June, and the weather was specially lovely, so nearly every day S. M. Baptist was lifted into a little basket-car and driven round the grounds, stopping at each grotto to pay a visit to our Blessed Lady. On the 1st July they found her too weak to be moved, and next morning it was evident that she was sinking fast. About 11.30 a.m. the Chaplain was sent for. He was left alone with S. M. Baptist for a minute, but she simply said she had nothing to trouble her—no pain of mind or body—and the nuns were called back just in time to begin the prayers for the soul departing. Her lips moved at each Amen. Just as the *Angelus* rang, she looked up, as though the bell were bidding her join the prayer with her last earthly salutation to our Mother in heaven; there was one short spasm, then she smiled, and with the smile still on her lips she was gone.

They said there was so little to be judged in that gentle, guileless life that they thought the Judge bent down to judge her "with a smile," and she, answering His look of love, was united to Him for ever. It was noon, on the 2nd July, 1837, the anniversary of the day that had brought such glorious gifts to her blessed patron, St. John the Baptist, and the day that brought her her fair, eternal crown.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE two first children whom Loreto trained for the noviceship and for heaven—Sisters M. Patricia Clinch and Baptist Ferral—were types of those we meet every day in our schools, but Maria Lalor, afterwards Mother M. Magdalen, was an exceptional girl—"One in a thousand."

Left an orphan very young, she was sent to the Ursuline Convent, Thurles, but, soon after, being threatened with blindness, she was taken by her guardian to a secular school in Dublin, that she might be within reach of the best oculists. Maria disliked this school greatly, and in a quaint, old-fashioned way, was continually contrasting "the world and the cloister," till, thoroughly out of humour with the former, she managed to make her way to the Abbey at Rathfarnham, and was happy again.

For awhile, she was somewhat of a puzzle to her companions, who thought her bewilderingly perfect; and she, on her side, confided to one of the nuns that she liked to sit near whatever nun presided at recreation,

because the girls' conversation was "so insipid." It was great sport for her equals in age to hear Maria asking to be told every school-rule immediately, as she was "so anxious not to break one." Imagine the teasing that was likely to follow such speeches! but she never resented it, for she was a solidly good little thing, though curiously mature, for her twelve or thirteen years.

When she became at home in Loreto, it was even more perplexing than annoying to the wilder spirits around her to find that Maria thought herself bound to admonish her companions of their faults. She did it very gently and simply, but it was not a practice that the Mistress of Schools liked to encourage, so it brought a severe correction on the little censor. Her humble apology for her mistake went far to show the child's real virtue, and from that day she was respected, and called "the Saint."

She soon acquired influence in the school, and whenever she ventured to say a word to those who were inattentive at prayer, or careless about frequenting the Sacraments, they listened to her, and yielded to her, perhaps even more readily than they would to the nuns in charge of them. For, after all, though different from

many, she was one of themselves, and they had learned to do justice to her steady piety. Laugh at her as they might—in their hearts they were edified at the quiet devotion which was for ever showing itself. For instance, when Maria was in the infirmary she persevered in trying to hear Mass spiritually every morning, no matter what noise was being made round her, or what remarks she drew on her "spirit of prayer." There is a nobility in the absence of human respect that is always admired, and Maria invariably kept to her own course, in complete independence of that of others. Besides, it began to be whispered that she had a vocation, and it altered matters to feel that she was "preparing to be a nun," so, at last it was generally acknowledged that she was the kindest and most charitable, as well as one of the best of girls.

As for the nuns they never had a fault to find with her, she was so docile and respectful to all; and, if she did show special affection for one, it was because she had heard that this Sister had gone through a great many sorrows, and was never free from pain.

Her companions had guessed rightly; Maria was longing to enter Loreto, and both her prayers and studies were constantly directed

towards that end. Every spare moment was spent over her books—going as far as she could beyond the regular classwork—and when she found she could not excel at music she asked to be allowed to give it up, that she might have more time for other studies.

Greatly against her will she was obliged to leave Loreto when her guardian considered her education finished. She went back to the world for awhile, but there was nothing of the world about her during her short stay there. She prayed and meditated like one of the Contemplative Religious, and she was like a Sister of Charity to the sick poor. She visited them, instructed them, made clothes for them, and nearly supported several poor people, who were broken-hearted when she told them her brother would provide for them for the future, as she would soon say good-bye to home. She offered herself most humbly to Rev. Mother, saying she knew she was by no means an acquisition to the Institute, but that she would do her very best, poor as it was, to prove her gratitude, if she were accepted, and she was delighted to be able to make over her whole large fortune to Loreto, only regretting that she could not bring millions, to be used in God's service.

She was professed in 1832. She had gone through her novitiate with all the fervour she promised, trying, especially, to put in practice St. Francis de Sales' teachings and to make herself "all to all." In doing this she had to conquer her tendency to low spirits, and train herself, by degrees, to the sweet evenness of temper which afterwards became so habitual that it could not be distinguished from natural composure. She was gentle by nature, but her sensitive feelings—easily touched—might have led her towards occasional pettishness, had she not taken herself seriously to task whenever she felt the signs of weakness ready to appear. She said, long after, that she owed her acquired self-command to her habit of saying the *Memorare* when she felt un-nerved.

There was no lack of warmth in Sister M. Magdalen's disposition. The one great struggle of her religious life was to subdue her attachment to the Novitiate, and the Mistress of Novices—Mother Gonzaga Corballis—when Archbishop Murray and Rev. Mother decided that the novices were to join the Community immediately after Profession, instead of remaining in the Noviceship for the customary three years. This regulation was made for the

time being, as the Community was then very small, and the Noviceship was overcrowded. Never, before or after did Mother M. Magdalen fail in prompt submission to her Superiors, but she combated the above decision so urgently, that, to the end of her life, she looked back on her resistance with sorrow and shame beyond expression, humbly acknowledging that she had been ungenerous and unfaithful to her voluntary renunciation of her will when she attempted to assert her wishes in opposition to the judgment of the representatives of God.

It was only a passing failure—this fault of hers, so bitterly lamented—and when the Bridal Day was over, and the great vows made, it was with sincere delight at being able to offer speedy reparation, by sacrificing her affections, that S. M. Magdalen heard she was to leave Rathfarnham for the Branch House in Harcourt Street.

The Day School was a large one, and there was no interruption in the teaching from 10 a.m. till 3 p.m. In addition to this, S. M. Magdalen was Sacristan and Procuratrix—later on, Assistant. It was a peaceful, though a busy life—no responsibility, no worry. And so the shock was all the greater when, one day, after Confession, the Confessor told her that Rev.

Mother had commissioned him to tell S. M. Magdalen she was to go back to Rathfarnham that evening, to take charge of the novices.

In submissive silence she received the order, and God, alone, knew how her heart sank as she took up the task that her humility whispered was far beyond her strength. All she could do was to keep her eyes steadily fixed on Him who could help her, and try to learn from Him, each day, what He wanted her to do and teach.

The novices soon grew familiar with Mother Magdalen's visits to her Teacher. Her firm, quiet step used to quicken a little, going to Him, as though she were going to a great friend and support. That was all the support she needed now, for even the slight little figure and delicately pretty face were marked with an expression of power to stand alone. Little did the novices suspect the clinging affection in her heart that had once disturbed Mother Magdalen's own novitiate days.

She was very self-possessed now—with the self-possession of sanctity—and the sanctifying influence, inseparable from a saint, soon spread through the Noviceship. She asked nothing extraordinary, checked any attempt at singularity, continually impressed on them that the unostentatious "common-life" is the surest

way to peace on earth and happiness in heaven, and, yet, the novices felt that the perfection she desired could not be attained without many efforts and much fervent prayer.

They had freely "*chosen* poverty and abjection in the House of our Lord Jesus Christ," —therefore, privations and humiliations were to be their companions through life, by their own choice and desire. They had "*chosen*" to dwell in the House of the Lord—therefore, they should walk holily in His sight, and in the sight of others, lest His House should be profaned by levity or worldliness. They were willing and eager to take up the yoke of obedience—with its ever-recurring restraints—till death, therefore, they should expect to feel the pressure of that yoke, in sickness and health, in sorrow and joy, in the all-sufficient strength of middle life, and the weariness of old age.

Obedience, indeed, was set before Mother Magdalen's novices in every possible light—the undeviating obedience that so often confers a degree of heroism on the most ordinary religious career—obedience resting on the principle of our first supreme surrender of the precious gift of liberty into the hands of Him who will be our "reward exceeding great"—

obedience that looks up steadily to the Throne on High, saying, "At the head of the book it is written of me that I came (here, to religion) to do Thy will, my God"—obedience which feels in very truth, that the heart of the Sovereign Master must yearn over those who, once for all, lay down the spirit of independence at His blessed Feet, until their oblation is crowned by the death that leads them home.

"Be simple and straightforward" were Mother Magdalen's parting words to a novice who was going to the Harcourt Street Loreto. "Avoid singularity, act purely for God, and keep up the spirit of the Mother House by strict obedience to the Chief Superior. Never allow human respect to prevent you from carrying out Rev. Mother's wishes."

Afterwards, she wrote to this novice: "Place your happiness and find your strength in increasing your spirit of obedience. Remember what sweetened the sojourn in Egypt to Mary and Joseph. The same God who was with them in exile is with you in Harcourt Street, and with us in Rathfarnham."

Next to instilling the habit of supernatural obedience, Mother Magdalen's closest attention was devoted to forming in the novices the spirit of charity in word and deed, and the

loving, unalterable perception of the presence of God which were so noticeable in the first members of the Irish Branch of the Institute. Her veneration for her former Mistresses was as great as it had been, when, as a child, she felt the charm of the holiness that perpetually lifted our Sisters into the higher paths of the spiritual world, without unfitting them for the earthly work which demanded incessant diligence and care. And, following in their footsteps, Mother Magdalen, herself, had advanced far in the practice of that blessed union of the active and contemplative life, which is the perfection of a religious in an Order like ours.

With some surprise we learn that she was Accountant-General as well as Mistress of a large Noviceship. Quick and clever as she was in financial matters, the mechanical part of the business could not be done without constant exertion. Her account books were beautifully kept, and those who were brought into intercourse with her—solicitors, tradesmen, workmen—did full justice to Mother Magdalen's clear head and kind heart. She was upright and courteous with all, most generous and grateful to those who were liberal to Loreto; at the same time, her eye caught every point in a transaction, and she always proved herself

thoroughly competent to look after the interests of the Institute.

It was Mother Magdalen who saw to the contract for building the additions to the "red house" of the Abbey, and it was she who succeeded in getting possession of the Dublin Convents in Stephen's Green and North Great George's Street—no easy matter those days, when Protestant landlords strongly objected to having nuns for tenants, and when Protestant prejudices were on the side of considering nuns undesirable neighbours.

Coming to household details, Mother Magdalen was esteemed a treasure of a Procuratrix. Her good management usually kept the purse tolerably full for all reasonable expenditure, and it was only when self was concerned that she showed anything like parsimony. Her clothes were worn threadbare (she would be sorry to see others so shabby) and all her little belongings were the poorest in the house.

So she went on—a gentle, placid, earnest little saint—with a heart unvaryingly and tenderly fixed on God, and a kind thought and word for everyone round her, till October, 1838, when signs of an internal disease appeared. From the first symptoms she knew she should have a sore struggle, and began

to pray continually : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word." For the little while that she was still able to stay with the novices she was more devoted to her work than ever, in fact, even brighter and more energetic, as though some promise of coming happiness had been given to her. But soon she could work no longer, and a great martyrdom began.

The Sister who nursed Mother Magdalen during her last illness gives a harrowing description of it. The medical treatment was sometimes more distressing than the disease, which took its slow course all the same, no matter what painful remedies were tried.

On Friday, in Passion Week, the pain suddenly ceased, for mortification had set in. Mother Magdalen thought she was cured. Her sleep improved and her appetite returned. On the 25th March she sat up for awhile, feeling well, and glad to take a little nourishment. Just as the Infirmarian had given it, Mother Magdalen fell back—dying—and before the first prayer for the soul departing was finished, God took His faithful child, quickly, to her crown. Never, perhaps, had a heart been truer to Him than hers had been, from the cradle to the grave.

It was the Feast of the Annunciation, 1889.

CHAPTER XIV.

THOSE who learned to know and love Margaret Corballis—afterwards Sister M. Catherine—through our short sketches of the first members of the Institute, in Ireland, will welcome the name of the sister who was bound to her by the closest of earthly and heavenly ties.

Margaret was born April 15th, 1800 ; Eliza, May 9th, 1801.

Years ago, it was written : " Many have been the holy and gifted girls who were formed for an honoured place in society, or for the immeasurably higher honour of admission to religious life, in St. Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar, York ; yet, it may count as one of its proudest boasts, the training of the early days of Eliza Corballis. "

Affection followed the Corballis family wherever they went. Father, mother, and children, all had the same power of winning the friendship of those who came in contact with them ; and, when Rev. Mother Ball was a novice in York, Eliza Corballis was one of the best loved children in the school. The brightest, sweetest disposition, united to very rare mental

powers, marked her out as a child of promise, and that promise was richly fulfilled before she left St. Mary's.

Rosemount, near Roebuck, Co. Dublin, was an ideal home when Margaret and Eliza Corballis returned to it. A letter is before us now, dated "Rosemount, Dec. 12th, 1897," in which the writer says: "I think reading Dr. Butler's *Lives of the Saints* of which I have the first or second edition (the *best thumbed* book in the house) made the three sisters nuns." The third—Anna Maria—founded the Presentation Convent at Mountmellick.

The true spirit of Catholicity reigned in Rosemount, and that at a time when Catholic privileges were few. The many helps to devotion that we now enjoy were luxuries unknown. But there was one frequent visitor, whose meek sanctity seemed always an outward sign of the invisible Presence of God—and to no friend was so warm a welcome given as to the venerated Archbishop, Dr. Murray. Eliza, especially—all warmth and earnestness as she was—gave him her full, affectionate confidence.

As Rosemount was some distance from the city, there was a difficulty as to weekly confession; for the priests' attendance in the

Dublin confessionals was either too early or too late to suit the family arrangements. So, the girls, though most anxious for the weekly Communion, to which they had been accustomed in York, were often deprived of their desire until Eliza ventured to ask the Archbishop to be their confessor. No doubt he consented gladly—all the more so, as it was evident that the Hand of God was leading these chosen souls towards His own Sanctuary —His Mother's fold.

The story of Margaret's return to York, as a postulant, her illness and slow recovery, her conviction that the new Irish Abbey was the spot appointed for her, has been told before. The moment the Star shone out, she followed it with quick, decided steps. But Eliza delayed.

Yes—it was hard for her to leave her beautiful home; hard to leave the dearest of fathers and mothers, knowing, too, that it was infinitely harder for *them* to part with their second treasure. If God wanted her, they would not refuse; but *He* would have her for long years to come, and would He deny her to them for a little while? And still the Archbishop repeatedly asked: Was it wise—was it safe to neglect the call of God?

At last, Eliza told him that the sacrifice was made, and that on the 20th June, 1825, she would say good-bye to the world. The Archbishop took her to Rathfarnham. As they left Rosemount a strange black dog tried to jump into the carriage. "Your Grace," exclaimed Eliza—her eyes sparkling through the tears she was keeping back with a determined will—"is that the devil coming to see the last of me?"

The moment she entered the Abbey gates she was "like a bird let loose from a gilded cage," though her loving heart gave way as she met her sweet sister's long, delighted embrace, and Rev. Mother's warm welcome. "At last, Eliza," said her future Superior. "At last," repeated the Archbishop—adding: "Teresa, take great care of this child, for she has cost me very dear." All reunited now, in the Better Land, they know by what prayers and care that soul was won for God alone.

It was a soul worth winning for the service of the Heavenly King, though much remained to be done before the light-hearted postulant was transformed into the subdued and sanctified religious of later years. As a natural reaction, after the struggle that preceded her entrance, Sister Gonzaga's spirits

rose almost too high, and, though no touch of levity ever rested on her, she did not immediately acquire the serene, recollected air that drew so many to God. Still, from the very beginning, she was greatly loved in Loreto. She was not like her beautiful sister. Mother Gonzaga was low-sized and decidedly plain-looking; but she had the same candid, kindly expression, the same indescribably fascinating charm of manner, the same peculiar grace of motion that distinguished Sister Catherine. An atmosphere of refinement surrounded these sisters wherever they went.

On the 29th September, 1825, Sisters M. Xaveria M'Carthy and Gonzaga Corballis received the Habit from the Archbishop. The ceremony was quite private, for Ireland was still living under the shadow of the penal laws, and great caution was necessary lest any public demonstration of religion should draw the notice of bigots on the Irish Church. But it was a day of great rejoicing in the Abbey, for the fervour of the new novices created a soft, spiritual sunshine that was remembered with gladness for many future years.

Sister M. Gonzaga was made Sacristan the next day—it was her first office, and, no matter how many other charges were added, she was

Prefectress of the Church till her death. There was a universal feeling that she should not be taken from the direct, personal service of the Blessed Sacrament.

It was a period of marked and abundant graces; and the little chapel—not more than an oratory—was the shrine of such fresh, tenderly rewarded fervour that, after the present beautiful church was built, more than one was heard to say: "But we love the memory of our first little chapel better than any spot on earth."

And Sister Gonzaga's whole soul was absorbed in her labour of love. The children often spoke of her striking reverence; both then, and when they were far away in very different scenes. The novices, whom she trained for this duty, never forgot her lessons. "Keep before your mind," she said, "that you are doing what our Blessed Lady did in the House of Nazareth—taking reverent care of the *Word made Flesh*. Think, too, of the legions of adoring angels who are round you, offering their glorious homage to the hidden God; think of their awe-struck homage, day and night, and ask them to help you to imitate them. Be careful also, about three external points—have everything in order before public

prayers commence. Walk very lightly, and do everything as noiselessly as possible, at all times, so as not to disturb the Sisters who may be in the choir. I think the less the footsteps of a religious are heard the more edifying it is—and this religious-like gentleness should be enforced especially on oneself when going about the altar. Then—keep strictly to the established customs, that irregularity may never creep in. It *does* sometimes creep into Convents, through very small openings in the beginning."

Among the assistant Sacristans, the one who seemed to follow Mother Gonzaga's teachings most closely was our saintly Mother Benedicta Somers. "Our Angels of the Altar" was the usual name for them while they were together at this duty.

There were three exquisite voices at this time in the Loreto choir. Sisters M. Catherine and Gonzaga's splendid soprano and contralto, and Sister M. Xaveria M'Carthy's plaintive treble notes completed a gloriously prayerful homage. We may well call it prayerful, for the hearers often almost forgot the beauty of the voices in the deep religious feeling that sanctified them.

Mention has already been made of the Rescript of Pope Pius VII, allowing the first eight

members of the Institute in Ireland to be professed after a year's novitiate ; but, long before the close of the year, Sister Gonzaga was looked on as a formed religious—spiritualized and strengthened, and with that holy serenity which never repressed but elevated her earnestness in doing God's work.

She made her Vows on the 21st November, 1826, and for the four following years nothing altered her duties. Then—as postulant after postulant had left the school for the Noviceship (beginning with S. M. Stanislaus McDonnell, in 1828)—Rev. Mother saw it was time to establish a regular Novitiate, and to distribute the offices, which she had hitherto been trying to discharge. She appointed Mother Aloysia M'Carthy, Assistant ; Mother Xaveria, Mistress of Schools ; and Mother Gonzaga, Mistress of Novices.

Among the novices were the future first Superior of Loreto, Darjeeling, Mother Joseph Hogan ; a future Mistress of Novices, Mother Magdalen Lalor ; the future Superior of three Houses of the Dublin diocese, Mother Gertrude Lambert ; and a future Superior of Navan, Mother Frances Murphy. A bright, beautiful model of every religious virtue was placed before them in their dearly loved Mistress. But

she, with her more than ordinary graces, her thirst for perfection in little things and great, her deeply-rooted conviction that her unworthiness unfitted her for the responsibility of leading these aspirants to "the fulness of their age in Christ," grew painfully anxious lest the future of the Institute should suffer through her incapacity for her office. Her sweet charity would never let her despondency or anxiety be apparent to her subordinates, but Rev. Mother and one or two of the senior nuns knew something of the strain, and they said : "Mother Gonzaga must not be left long in her present post, or her life will be the forfeit."

The novices only knew that she asked nothing from them that she was not practising in a far higher degree, and that her angelic patience set self aside in every way. One of her sayings was : "A religious will never regret, at the hour of death, having seen little, having heard little, having spoken little." Another : —that she often repeated—"The secret of holiness is to know how to retire into one's own heart, and to live there with God alone. . . . . Our happiness should be to converse quietly with our dearest Lord. Our treasure is sanctity, which we must seek and find in the Sacred Heart."

An extract from a long letter from one of her novices will tell us a little more of Mother Gonzaga : " Sister Gonzaga was not long professed when I came to school, but the first day I saw her I felt she was a saint, and I soon found that this impression was common to all my companions. What is called the ' halo of sanctity ' seemed always surrounding her, and peace and happiness followed her. She charmed everyone, but quite unconsciously, for we felt she thought nothing of herself. Years went by, and I left school, but, when I found I had been favoured with a vocation to religion, and began to think where I should enter in order to become a great saint, the same thought always recurred to me, ' What sanctity can be greater than Sister Gonzaga's ? If I go where *she* is, and do what *she* does, I shall be a saint.'

" I well remember my delight when I heard she had been appointed Mistress of Novices, and how I longed to be under her guidance. I was not many hours in the Noviceship when I knew that our childish estimate of her holiness was far beneath the reality ; and, all the while, there was a gentle simplicity about her that was wonderfully winning in one who truly belonged to the most favoured children

of God. I owe her all I know of the science of the saints. I shall never forget the day she taught me how to make the general and particular examination of conscience ; she made her own aloud, and often since, when I come to the point where we are to thank God for the benefits bestowed on us, I name among them the privilege of having had our beloved Mother Gonzaga for my first spiritual guide. In her presence we could never for an instant forget that we were Religious, and yet, she laid no unnecessary restraint on us. But she led us on to the tone and manner that are worthy of those who are trying to live in spirit in the House of Nazareth—the holy House of Loreto."

Mother Gonzaga's special gift for speaking on spiritual subjects came into full exercise in the Noviceship. Her devotion, so tender, and so solid, nurtured for years by meditation and spiritual reading, seemed to give incomparable efficacy to her words, and she had a store of sweet and holy thoughts for every festival of the Church, with many loving memories of the saints whom she had chosen for her particular heavenly friends. Therefore, even while she was Mistress of Novices, she had also charge of the religious instruction in the schools. This gave the children an opportunity of knowing

her, and certainly, in her case, "to know her was to love her."

That it would be a great trial to the novices to lose Mother Gonzaga was unmistakable, but Rev. Mother thought her even better suited for the training of children; and it was most desirable that she should be brought into intercourse with the parents and other seculars who were beginning to appreciate the Institute, for they were sure to set a higher value on its work after an interview with her.

There was no need to prepare her for this change; she was one whom nothing could take by surprise. The 30th August, 1832, was the eve of the annual Retreat. Mother Gonzaga had arranged everything connected with the Noviceship for the next eight days, and was just going into the choir for the opening meditation, when she was stopped by the Mistress of Schools, who told her Rev. Mother said she was to take charge of the children during the Retreat. With her own peaceful smile, graver than it used to be, but still always cheerful, Mother Gonzaga bowed her assent, and went direct to the school, without a word of farewell to the novices, though she understood immediately that her stay with them was ended.

Her reception by her new charges was described afterwards by Mother Christina O'Reilly:—"We, girls, who were to be in Rathfarnham during the eight days' retreat, were all anxiety to know which of the nuns would spend the week with us. Great was our astonishment when, at 8.30, that evening, Mother Gonzaga opened the class-room door, and told us we might give her a welcome. A welcome, indeed, she got—an enthusiastic one! And on those who, like myself, were hoping to consecrate themselves to God, the lesson she silently gave was not thrown away. She came among us as naturally, as composedly, as though the duty of the moment where her only thought, and that it was quite as acceptable to her as the office she had left. Jane Gibbons (then first in class) and I had often envied the novices the happiness of having such a mistress; and, now that it was our turn to enjoy that blessing, we determined to watch the novices closely, and see how they would bear the loss that should surely be a trial to them.

"With no small edification we found that not the slightest sign of want of submission to the arrangements of Superiors was shown by any of the novices, who came in distant contact with dear Mother Gonzaga in our schools.

They saw her constantly at her classes; but that was all: they were entirely separated from her, and they bore the separation with perfect resignation to God's will. I afterwards heard that the Community were equally edified by the respectful and cordial reception the novices gave their new mistress, Mother Aloysia M'Carthy. Dear Mother Gonzaga's teachings had borne abundant fruit in the hour of trial."

Mother Gonzaga had classes for English, Italian, and Arithmetic, a good deal of superintendence, and general directions to help the Mistress of Schools, Mother Xaveria M'Carthy. When the latter (whose "missionary" spirit was noted) was sent Superior to Loreto, Navan, Rev. Mother appointed Mother Gonzaga Assistant and Mistress of Schools.

"We shall watch her closely now," said one of the delighted senior girls, "to see how a saint goes on." The closer the watch the greater the admiration. She was "a real mother" to those children; tender and anxious as their own mothers could be—and still, there was no effeminacy about her or her training. Life was before them—an uncertain perhaps a cross-strewn life, and she was bound to fit them for it. It would be "cruel

kindness" to indulge those whose characters, if left undisciplined, would bring suffering on themselves and others hereafter. She was meekness itself, they all acknowledged, and she was prudent, also, in choosing the right time and manner for dealing with the rebellious and hot-tempered, but she was too strong a character to be inactive with girls who required control; and, with all her mildness, there was a calm gravity about her which commanded obedience and respect. Many of these children afterwards owned that, all their lives, they had had reason to congratulate themselves on having had a friend like Mother Gonzaga—who had carefully taught them that humiliations haunt the proud, and that self-denial must enter into the brightest and happiest careers, if we would have true peace.

It was her delight to prepare the little ones for First Communion—it was "the very dearest" of her duties. She made them love the preparation, instead of growing tired of it, and—more remarkable still—girls of all ages enjoyed pious conversation when Mother Gonzaga promoted it, at recreation. She was so much in her element, talking of God, that she drew her hearers after her. But she used this gift with moderation, for she attached great

importance to healthy exercise and intellectual conversation.

Her advice to those who had left school was so wise and helpful that it was no inconsiderable portion of her duty to give the former Loreto children the guidance they claimed. "I prized a few words from her beyond everything on earth," wrote one, "and I put myself entirely into her hands when the question arose of my entering Loreto. She answered: 'Do not picture religious life as a life of ease and pleasure, but rather as one of self-denial and death to self. If you become a nun, and do not die to self, you are only a nun in name. Our very habit should remind us that we are dead to self, and should mourn for life over the Passion and Death of our Divine Lord. If you become a nun you must be obedient, silent, hard-working, dead to all but the desire of pleasing God; but you will feel that the living death you are preparing for will result in a glorious life, for ever.'"

When this girl was on the eve of entering, Mother Gonzaga said to her: "My child, you will soon be under better guidance than mine, but I shall say a few last words to you to recommend the study of one virtue during your future life. That virtue is silence—silence

according to the Rule. Silence in word, silence in action, silence in your interior. The footsteps of a nun should never be noisy—always gentle. Every action—for instance, the closing of a door—should be done in silence, that is, with religious gentleness. When your duty requires you to speak, the words should be spoken in religious silence—that is, in a low voice. And, above all, your heart should be silent—that is, given to recollection, so that you may hear the whispers of the Holy Spirit."

Mother Gonzaga was involuntarily drawing her own portrait, for the most unobservant would recognize this holy silence in her calm, recollected manner, and the religious modesty and reserve that had transformed the sunny-spirited Eliza Corballis into a visible follower of the saints.

She followed them not only in prayer and toil for God, but in the paths of rigid self-denial, and in the practice of all the austerities our Rule admits. In the latter forms of penance she would have gone far beyond the ordinary limits had not obedience restrained her. Not even St. John Berchmans was a greater lover of the mortifications of "the common life"—and, winter and summer, her seat in choir was rarely vacant at 5.15 a.m.

"We should do well to take note of Mother Gonzaga's perfection in little things," said Rev. Mother; "for instance, you may remark that when she has to leave a memorandum of some business for us, no matter how small the scrap of paper may be, the writing is always exquisitely neat." And yet, while strict with regard to her own doings, no one was more indulgent and more affectionately charitable in judging others. And though overladen with duties—for she was now Accountant, in addition to her three other offices—she was an angel of kindness to everyone who turned to her. "I am sometimes ashamed to call on her," said Rev. Mother, "but she is so willing and one can rely so fully on the quiet, thorough way the business will be done, that I am afraid I often overburden her."

It was probably about this time that the letter of hers, from which we copy, was written to her father. After going into details regarding the finances of the Abbey, as to the investment of which Rev. Mother continually consulted Mr. Corballis and his son, John, Mother Gonzaga says her little private word: "It is a long time since I wrote so much about money, therefore you must excuse any mistakes in the terms I have made use of. I was

delighted to see you and my mother looking so well. Do, my dearest father, take care of each other, as to soul and body, and keep all around you good and happy. Let them do what they ask you to gain heaven, for time is short, and nothing is of any value but a glorious eternity."

From the beginning of the year 1839, it is probable that Mother Gonzaga felt a change coming over her. The children had always known that if they wanted to bring out her sweetest, happiest expression, they had only to mention "the Blessed Sacrament," and now the same bright look flitted across her face if they spoke of death. "Oh, children!" she said, "how little you enter into that beautiful sentence in your night prayers, 'I desire to be dissolved, and *to be with Christ.*'"

Then—with a very sharp pang—the nuns got reason to fear that this dearest of Sisters would not long be their comfort and their joy. When the preparations for Rev. Mother's half jubilee began, Mother Gonzaga let fall the remark, "I think I am not long for this world, and that this is the last opportunity I shall have of proving my love for our dearest Mother." She was afraid Rev. Mother would object to what they wished to do in her honour;

but an appeal to the Archbishop resulted in his desiring Rev. Mother to give Mother Gonzaga *carte blanche* for three months; so the festivities were carried out on a grand scale, on the 11th June, 1839.

That evening, Rev. Mother, knowing who had been the moving spirit of the whole, said to Mother Gonzaga, "You have done a great deal for *me*. What can I do for *you*?" "May I make a three months' retreat?" asked Mother Gonzaga. "Let it be three weeks," answered Rev. Mother, "and you must come to us for the evening recreation. We would miss you too much." Very seldom did Rev. Mother permit herself to say so tender a word to her who was perhaps the best loved of all, but the long, faithful affection *should* make itself felt for a moment, as she thought of all that Mother Gonzaga had been to her since the early days in York.

Mother Gonzaga left no notes of her thoughts or meditations during this season of "recollection" except one little prayer in rhyme. It is very simple, but it is all we have to give us a glance into the depths of one of the holiest souls that God ever granted to our Institute:—

O Wounds of Jesus! source of grace!
Permit me here to take my place.
I find on earth no rest so sweet
As in those Hands, that Heart, those Feet.

You know, dear Lord, how oft in pain,
I've sought, elsewhere, repose in vain,
But when You sweetly drew me here,
Increased my hope, and calmed my fear,
I found new courage to go on,
To take the pathway You had done.
O Sacred Wounds! in You I'll live,
In You I'll die—my last sigh give.
And when my Judge before me stands,
And makes for graces just demands,
I'll try to screen me from His Eyes,
By hastening here, where mercy lies.
I shall not seek my faults t'excuse,
Nor suffering yet will I refuse,
But try to move that pitying Heart,
From which I never will depart,
Till He who bears these Wounds has given
A promise to His child of Heaven.

* * * * * •

Heaven was nearer than she thought when Mother Gonzaga finished her retreat. She told Rev. Mother that she did not feel well—and a remark of that sort from her was so unusual that Rev. Mother was startled enough to insist on Mother Gonzaga's giving up every fatiguing duty. Then Rev. Mother took her for a few days to Loreto, North Great George's Street. She had never been outside the Abbey gates from the day of her entrance, and this little visit brought quite a revelation to her of the work to be done in the Branch Houses. "I have been wishing to die," she said, "but I see there is so much good to be done, and so few to do it, I should not ask to go to rest."

It was evident to all that her strength was failing, day by day, yet, the shock was none the less, when, on the 20th August, a violent fit of haemorrhage came on suddenly while she was walking in "the paddock"—(now the playground, near "St. Anthony's Wing")—and she was led in—dying.

"Let me get a last blessing from Our Lord in the Tabernacle," she whispered. They could not refuse. She was helped to the chapel, knelt there for a moment to make a free and loving offering of her life, and a few minutes after they laid her on her bed of death.

On the evening of the 22nd August the nuns were told that there was no hope. For four long weeks Mother Gonzaga lay almost motionless, generally holding a crucifix in one hand and a little statue of the Blessed Virgin in the other. She spoke very seldom, smiled patiently when asked was she in pain, and only once made a little request, in answer to Rev. Mother's constant question: "Is there anything you would like?" "Yes," she said, "I would love to have the *Magnificat* and *Memorare* sung for me."

Delighted to please her, the choir all came, and a harp accompaniment was played. Mother Gonzaga seemed so much brighter that evening,

that Rev. Mother, remembering how devotedly she had cared the young souls entrusted to her, took advantage of this rally to ask had she any last advice to give concerning them. "Oh! yes," said Mother Gonzaga. "Will you impress on the nuns that they cannot be too exact in superintending the children when rising and going to bed—and tell them also, that it is most important to attend carefully to the *order* of everything about the children—their persons, clothes, books, etc."

Very little change for some days, till, one evening, about the middle of September, notice was given that Mother Gonzaga was to receive Extreme Unction, and that the nuns were to go in procession to the infirmary. "It was a scene never to be forgotten," wrote one who was present at it. "We felt as though we could not bear the farewell, and tried to keep our eyes and hearts fixed on the Blessed Sacrament, as Father Byrne carried It at the head of our sad procession. Our dearest Sister was so utterly prostrate that we feared she would die before the holy rites were over. Her closed eyes and helpless hands showed no signs of life, and her breath came in short, fitful gasps. The anointing ended, Father Byrne, wishing to know if she was able to

realize the presence of Our Lord, said, ' Mother, all your life long, God bestowed many great graces on you, and now, at its close, He comes to give you His crowning gift—He, Himself, has come to be your guide to heaven.' Mother Gonzaga gave no sign of consciousness. Every head was bowed while Father Byrne raised the Blessed Sacrament slowly, saying, ' Domine, non sum dignus.' A slight rustle was heard. We started and looked up. Mother Gonzaga had risen, unaided, on her knees, her face glowing with her last welcome to her hidden Lord. We trembled with awe, and no one dared to help her, but when the Host was laid on her lips, she sank back very gently, and lay there like one lifeless."

The nuns withdrew as quietly as possible, leaving the Infirmarian with Mother Gonzaga. A few minutes after a bell was rung to let the former know she was wanted. "Mother," she said, "I can't bear to leave you alone." "But I shall not be alone," whispered Mother Gonzaga. "Our blessed Lord is with me, and He is everything to me."

To the surprise of the doctors she lingered for a few days. Hearing it said that she was to receive the Viaticum again, on Friday, she answered: "I hope to be admitted into the

Sacred Heart that day." Now and then she said a few words, such as, "How little we care on our deathbed whether our duties were thought important or not, when all was done in the House of God." "All we did looks the same in our sight when we are dying, if we have tried to do our work well."

Thursday evening she said: "Don't ask me to receive Holy Communion as Viaticum before the customary eight days. Let me do as others do. I can manage to fast." And so she did, crowning her life of love by this last act of self-denial. Father Byrne, whose kind heart was pained to feel she was making such an effort, insisted on bringing her Holy Communion at 5 o'clock, a.m. We may imagine the night she spent—parched with thirst, and sinking with weakness—but with superhuman self-control she lay perfectly still, following the Stations of the Cross with the Sister who sat up with her.

When 4 o'clock struck Mother Gonzaga whispered that it was "time to make ready," and asked for her Communion veil. Just as it was put on, a sudden change terrified the Infirmarian; she sent quickly for Rev. Mother and Father Byrne, but, almost before they were on their knees beside the bed, the short,

sharp agony was over. "Rev. Mother," said Father Byrne, "she will see heaven to-day. She was a perfect religious." Stunned and heart-stricken as Rev. Mother was, she could only answer: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

It was the morning of the 20th September, 1839. Who would deny us these last words—"*Dearly loved Sister, pray for us.*"

CHAPTER XV.

In these sketches of the lives of the first members of the Irish Branch of the Institute, we have hitherto felt ourselves brought in contact with souls who, at one period or other of their lives, were very much in touch with the struggles and weaknesses of poor human nature, and who had to conquer it with more or less effort. But of Mother M. Euphrasia, it was said that she was made only "*a little less than the Angels.*" She just passed through earth, carrying her white baptismal robe, unspotted, to the world where she was to live for ever.

Her home was in Castlebar, Co. Mayo. She was quite a little child when she went to Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham, and there, after a few years, we hear of her as "first in class," and with a decided religious vocation.

Probably, her mother died young, for it is her father who was mentioned as making all the arrangements for Margaret's entrance. She went home to him—when her education was finished—one of the sweetest girls that Loreto ever sent back to the world. But she

could not bring herself to stay there—not even for awhile—and her first letter to the Abbey was a petition to be received as a postulant.

If the child was "an angel," the father acted like a saint, for, when his daughter was accepted, he wrote to Rev. Mother that, though his heart was breaking, he thanked God repeatedly for the great honour conferred on him, and "felt prouder that day than if a king had come to ask Margaret's hand."

And then Sister M. Euphrasia began her religious life, by putting a picture of a saintly novice before her.

"I am so worthless," she said, "I can do so little, but I will try to devote myself to 'the perfection of the *common life*,' as Venerable John Berchmans did, and perhaps I may hope to follow him at a distance."

Abnegation and self-denial had the same attraction for her as ease and self-indulgence have for others. Her acceptance of humiliations was perfect in its submissive sweetness, and her patience was as serene as though she never had anything to try it. After her death, Rev. Mother often said that Sister M. Euphrasia's corporal mortifications had shortened her life—for they had gone beyond the bounds of prudence—still, it had been

observed that penances brought her such positive happiness that the few who had the opportunity of seeing something of her endeavours to crucify nature, learned what spiritual joy mortifications can bring to a soul like hers.

Nearly fifty years after, some of the older nuns were talking together of the first members of the Institute, and Sister M. Joanna Dowling said, "Was there a holier nun among them than Mother Euphrasia Gibbons?" "No," answered the rest unanimously. "She was a perfect religious and a very lovable companion." And Mother Aloysia M'Carthy—who had been her Mistress of Novices—added, "I don't think Mary Euphrasia ever saw Purgatory—I feel that her charity and simplicity took her straight to God."

Mother Aloysia's attention was called away just then, and Sister M. Joanna continued: "I was afraid of Mother Aloysia, when I was a novice—she was 'a stern-path-of-duty' woman; and indeed, I was in awe of all the elders, except Mother Euphrasia. They were grand women, with a great spirit of heroism, and they had so high an idea of exactness to the Rules that, we, juniors, could hardly fancy them ever committing a breach of one, but

though they were kind, they appeared rigid also—except Mother Euphrasia. She was like an angel—who loved everyone for God's sake: and she was as gay as a bird at recreation. Any other time she seemed rapt in God."

That expression—"rapt in God"—was repeated by many—both choir nuns and sisters; and yet, Mother Euphrasia's life was a busy one. Always intent on her work, her favourite maxim was "*Attende tibi.*" She did, indeed, "*attend*" to herself, and to her duties, in the highest sense of the word, but nothing could distract her attention from Him who was so infinitely dearer than self, or than any other creature. The meaning of this often repeated saying was—in her case—that her absorption in the service of the unseen God would not allow her eyes to wander to anything that charity or her own business did not call on her to notice.

It was taking her completely out of her element to appoint her Superior, but Rev. Mother thought Sister M. Euphrasia's example would do great good, and that something of her spirit might be infused into her subjects by her constant communication with them—so she was put in charge—first of Loreto, Harcourt Street, then of Loreto, North Great George's

Street. And in the latter house she remained almost to the last; for, though she went there so delicate and suffering that she said: "It sometimes requires more fortitude to live than to die," the nuns knew that a saint had been given to them—and a saint so humble, so self sacrificing, so devoted to the task of obedience laid on her, that they kept her with them, by their entreaties to Rev. Mother, until there was barely a thread of life to hinder Mother Euphrasia from dying any hour.

Though the strain on the nuns had been somewhat lessened by the entrance of several postulants from the Loreto Schools, the work was still almost overwhelming, and, moreover, there was the splendid spirit of labour which had been imparted to their younger associates by those who had led them forward into the "ways of God." There was a holy eagerness for participation in the general mission that often overcame bodily weakness, and even invalids were ingenious in contriving expedients to supply for failing strength.

We see this in Mother Euphrasia. When her eyes became seriously affected, so that she could neither read nor write, she took instructions in polishing furniture, and shortly she was able to exhibit her handiwork with

innocent pride in being "*an expert.*" Violent haemorrhage soon stopped her teaching. She was forbidden even to speak long at a time; but no precautions could avert consumption; it made rapid progress, and for four months—from the end of July till December—Mother Euphrasia's peaceful martyrdom added the last bright jewels to her crown.

She was more than resigned—she was "delighted" to die—and, often said, "None ought to be so happy as those who are near heaven." The moment she saw God, she said, she would ask for two favours, namely, that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception might be made an Article of Faith; and that Venerable John Berchmans might be canonized. These favours are now granted.

She hoped to die on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception; and on the 7th December, 1839, it seemed as though her wish would be granted, for, after Extreme Unction, the prayers for the agonizing were said beside her. However, she lingered in great torture, till midnight, on the 9th December, when—between the two great feasts of Our Immaculate Mother—Mary Euphrasia went "rejoicing" home.

In the faint hope that change of air to Rathfarnham might preserve her precious life for some years, she had been brought there, and anxiously cared. Nothing could avail—nothing could save her.

Almost before the nuns realized that she was gone, a few words, written by Rev. Mother, went round our houses—a touching tribute to "Loreto's true Child":—

"Hers was a singularly noble nature. She forgot herself and lived entirely for others. From her entrance till her death, her life seemed to be an exact transcript of that of her saintly model, Ven. John Berchmans. Like him, the practice of continual self-denial was so habitual to her that no one could know what occupation she preferred. She chose the poorest garments and the most unpalatable food. Sanctity was made attractive in her, and her loving fidelity to her Superior was proved by many trials. During her seven years as a Religious, every action was perfectly performed, and her virtue shone brightly when she was tried in the crucible of suffering. Whenever the Cross grew heavier she repeated oftener, and with great ardour: 'Who is like the Lord our God!' In short, her one aim seemed to be to perfect the oblation that she had made so generously. All we can

say is far below what she deserved, for we scarcely hope ever again to meet one so precious in the sight of all who knew her."

One of the last survivors of that time of great graces and great sanctity—Mother Ursula Dwyer—applied to Mother Euphrasia the words that Cardinal Wiseman wrote of Cecilia—the blind Martyr of the Catacombs: "The very queenship of virtue is—Innocence crowned by penance."

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN an Order is securely established, highly esteemed, and prosperous, it is evident, that though the sacrifice of home and friends, and that dearest possession of all—one's own independence—may be both painful and meritorious, yet, it cannot be compared to the heroic act which starts the pioneers on an untried and more or less embarrassed undertaking. In the former case, the road is mapped out, and has been trodden—and smoothed—by the feet of those who took the first brave steps, but *they* went out on their life-work uncertain what might be in store for them, except that they well knew they might expect to live for many a day under the shadow of the Cross.

This was what Ellen Arthur did when she offered herself for the Irish Branch of the Institute. She inherited her courage from her father, for Francis Arthur, of Limerick, had been imprisoned for the open exercise of his religious duties, in the penal times, and powerful influence had to be exerted to obtain his release.

The world offered Ellen Arthur a life of luxury; every wish of hers could have been gratified, and she was surrounded by friends, who loved her dearly, for her gentle, retiring ways. But her heart had passed out of her keeping, into the great Heart of Eternal Love —and, inspired by that Love, she asked admission into York Convent for her Novice-ship, that she might be prepared for reception into the Institute of Mary, soon to be founded in Ireland.

Sister Mary Ignatia received the Habit on the 8th May, 1820. In the August of 1821 she returned to Ireland, with Rev. Mother Ball, and Mother Baptist Therry—and was professed in their little Oratory at Harold's Cross, on the 15th October, 1821. She always said she did not expect to feel happier on the day of her entrance into heaven than she did on the day of her Profession. She looked like the living picture of a saint as soon as she put on the Habit. It was remarked that, as she and Mother Baptist were, naturally, great objects of curiosity to seculars, God seemed to wish "the beauty of holiness" to be seen whenever the first Loreto nuns came in contact with the world.

In community life S. M. Ignatia was remarkable for her union with God and her active charity. No one ever heard her say an unkind word, and no one ever heard her refuse to do a kind act. Her silence was guarded by the most unbroken religious recollection, yet, she was sweet and winning as she had always been.

She never lost a moment. She was always either teaching, studying, or copying manuscripts on spiritual subjects, for the stock of books was small in those days, and Rev. Mother was anxious for translations of French and Italian ascetic works. S. M. Ignatia was mistress of both languages, and her writing was as legible as print—so she always had some literary work on hands.

The foundation at Harcourt Street required talented teachers, and S. M. Ignatia was in the midst of a busy scene there, when, one day, while she was at her class, she fainted. She did not rally quickly, and this was the beginning of chronic delicacy, which forbade all work in the schools. She was taken to Rathfarnham, and, after awhile, was able to be Sacristan—an office for which her exquisite taste in decorations especially fitted her. She was the first to decorate an oratory for the Children of Mary.

But her health was most uncertain, and sometimes, for days, she was completely prostrate. Then, recovering, in a measure, she busied herself with her manuscripts and her Sacristy duties; bending with angelic patience to take up each fresh cross of pain, till dropsy confined her to her cell, and bed. What a different life it was from the picture she had put before herself. She had counted on long years of hard work, privations, self-denial; and she had delighted in the prospect. She went through the first struggles, bearing a full share of the burden, and never feeling the weight—it was such happiness to help in the building up of Loreto. The reward had come. The beautiful Abbey home was a joy and a pride to its first children. None could ever love it as they did, for theirs was a sort of creative love—the strongest and tenderest of all. Then she was wanted elsewhere. No matter. It was always Loreto; always the same Institute, which was cherished with such entire loyalty by those who prepared the way for us. At the very moment when it seemed to want her most God laid her aside. She need do no more. The vision of the busy years to come had been only a dream. But the faithful heart bowed down in quiet resignation to the disappoint-

ment, the sufferings, the weary, helpless waiting—till the end came, in peace, on the 5th January, 1842.

Sister M. Ignatia was buried at 5 o'clock, p.m., on the Feast of the Epiphany. It was a lovely calm evening. The little cemetery was flooded with the clear moonlight; the leafless branches of the lofty trees, and the low clustering evergreens, were silvered over as if some invisible hands had done honour to the burial of her who went to her grave in all the purity of her childhood; the stars came out, quickly and brightly, as if heaven wished to celebrate her first night under its typical skies, and as the nuns stood round her grave their tapers burned like lesser earthly stars in the darkness—emblems of the steady flame of faith, hope, and love that, through many sufferings, heavily burdened days, lived on in the inner sanctuary of her soul, while her life was "hidden with Christ in God."

CHAPTER XVII.

With Sister M. Ignatia Arthur's death we feel as though we had closed the first chapter of the Memories of Loreto. It was the twentieth year of the foundation. The "old order" of things was passing away. Time and death had worked many changes, most noticeable in the days when every new step was an important factor in the organization of the Irish Branch of the Institute.

The Abbey, itself, was greatly changed. The church stood partly on the ground formerly occupied by "the minister's house," and partly on the site of the old chapel. Speaking exactly, the chapel was never *old*, for it had only a short lease of life. Very few of the present generation know what it was like—or where it was built.

Fancy yourself at the left side of the red house, near the lower passage, leading to the nuns' refectory. If you then went down two steps, and along a short narrow passage, and opened a green baize door, you would find yourself in the chapel. It was lighted by three Gothic windows on one side. The organ

gallery was over the altar, and the children's choir was partitioned off by a large wooden grating. In this grating were two doors, which were opened when the Sisters and children communicated. The former heard Mass in the organ gallery, for there was barely room in the chapel for the nuns' stalls. For the same reason—want of space—the ceremonies of reception of the Habit and Profession always took place in the entrance hall of the red house, which was easily converted into a temporary chapel. The last ceremony in it was the Profession of Sisters M. Alexia and Benigna Egan, who were among the first volunteers for the Indian Mission.

Now that the Memories have partly restored our family portraits, we think we can almost draw a life-like picture of those who peopled the old chapel in the early days of Loreto Abbey—Mother Baptist's spiritual face, telling plainly that her stay on earth would be a short one; Mother Xaveria's motionless figure, offering the homage of its whole strength to God; Mother Aloysia, with every earthly thought hushed by her vivid perception of the Hidden Majesty before her; Sister M. Ignatia's earnest eyes wistfully fixed on the Tabernacle; Sister M. Bernard, praying, audibly, in the fervour

of her petitions ; Mother M. Magdalen, with the depth of her devotion visible only to the Eternal eye ; Mother M. Euphrasia, with her habitual expression of innocent, peaceful, companionship of heaven, and the two most loved and saintly sisters, Mother M. Gonzaga and Sister M. Catherine, whose fervour was openly named "seraphic."

There have been many heartfelt prayers offered in our Abbey church—many, many hours spent in adoration, trust, and supplication, but none, perhaps, to equal the burning, anxious, yet most resigned converse with the Ruler of all that drew down the fulness of His blessing on those who sought Him in the old chapel.

A straight, steep stairs led up to the organ gallery, from which a side-door opened into the infirmary. That, too, was hallowed in its way. There Mother Baptist's holy counsels did more for the rising Institute during her days of helplessness than many an active worker would do during years of labour. There Mother Xaveria's bright presence transformed her sick-room into a glad porch of heaven. There the chosen ones of the Noviceship came to perfect their sacrifice in the short space that God decreed for them. There the

nuns trembled with awe at the ecstasy of Mother Gonzaga's last Communion. And there Father Byrne—one of the holiest priests of that century—knelt for hours in prayer and praise beside the corpse of our "angelic" Mother Euphrasia.

Of Father Byrne, himself, much might be said. For some years he was a Professor in Carlow College. Then he was appointed to a curacy in Dublin, and, at the same time, was Confessor to the nuns in Harcourt Street and North Great George's Street. He was afterwards Chaplain and Confessor at Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham. The Chaplain, at that time, lived in the detached house looking out on the front lawn, which is now used as an infirmary.

Father Byrne's sanctity was of the sort that is unhesitatingly acknowledged by all who come in contact with it. He was a tall, thin, dark-complexioned man ; *looking* the ascetic that he undoubtedly was, and he was not reluctant to train his penitents in the severities of the spiritual life. Hair-cloth and disciplines, fasts and watchings, were familiar to him, and his own practice of corporal austerities, and all-embracing mortification, was more or less reflected in his direction of souls.

He preached every Sunday—and on other occasional days—in the Abbey church. His sermons were what should be expected from such a man—grand, solemn discourses on the eternal truths. Always mild and accessible, he devoted himself unselfishly to his duty, as Chaplain and Confessor, and it was in discharging that duty he met his death.

Sister Lucy Conlan was dying slowly, but there were no signs of immediate danger. During the night of the 29th January a sudden change came. A postulant ran for Father Byrne, who hurried over to the Convent in his thin soutane. Before he left, he felt that the chill night air had done its work, and said to the portress, as she opened the hall-door for him, " I hope Sister Lucy will pray for me, for I shall be the next to follow her."

Pneumonia set in before morning, and though he rallied sufficiently after the attack to go to his brother's house in Carlow, he died there in a few weeks—the death of a saint.

Father Byrne was, surely, another added to the circle of intercessors for Loreto in heaven. Even the Novitiate had sent its tribute of earnest young labourers, who were called home before they knew what it was to bear " the heat and burden of the day."

Sister M. Xaveria Mooney died two years after her Profession. She came to the noviceship from the Loreto day school in Harcourt Street. The nuns wrote of her: " Mary has been a treasure at home. Her dying mother left several brothers and sisters to her care, and it is a wonderful vocation that impels her to tear herself away from them, and from her father. She has been a devoted daughter to him, wise and thoughtful beyond her years. And while she was a model of affectionate attention to the wants and wishes of the motherless household, she was also a model girl at school. We cannot help feeling proud of our postulant, for she is going to the Noviceship well fitted to be useful in every branch of teaching."

This praise was well merited. S. M. Xaveria was found to be highly gifted, and solidly pious, with a peculiar talent for giving religious instruction. Young as she was, everyone respected the calm holiness which grew to perfection during her novitiate. Her health was excellent till the autumn of 1839. And then, after a few weeks of delicacy, she died very peacefully on the 9th November.

Another novice of great promise was Sister M. Agatha Smith. But she was always fragile

—a sweet graceful little thing, who loved Loreto too well to stay in the world, though many inducements were held out to her.

She was an orphan—heiress to a large fortune, and very attractive. "Are you sure," asked the Archbishop, before her entrance, "that you would not be happier in the world, for you would have every means of enjoying yourself—and every luxury you could desire?" "No, Your Grace," said Mary, "I can't bear to think of staying in the world. I would rather be the last in the Noviceship."

It was a time when the Novitiate was a centre of fervent revival of the memories of the Roman "Sant' Andrea"; when Saints Aloysius, Stanislaus, and Berchmans seemed always before the eyes of the Loreto novices; and when the atmosphere of their first religious home was the spirit of faithful, tender, personal love for the Lord of the Sanctuary. Therefore, many singularly holy souls passed through it unnoticed. But what distinguished S. M. Agatha was that it soon became evident she was marked out for an early call to heaven.

She knew it well—and it surprised many of her companions to see that she was anxious to live. The reason was—that if she died before her twenty-first birthday, her large

fortune would go to distant relatives—whom she had never met.

"So," she said, to those who had her confidence, "can't you understand my longing to make my little gift to God—whom I love—and how hard it seems to me that if I do not live for awhile, strangers will get it."

"Don't fret about it," said an infirmarian, "He can take it if He likes."

"I'd like to give it to Him though," persisted S. M. Agatha, "for it is the only thing I can ever do for Him."

She literally grasped at every remedy the doctors proposed—quite indifferent to pain—until her twenty-first birthday came and went. Then the *will* to live gave way, and the body could hold out no longer. A few days more to complete her early-won crown, and on the 19th November, 1841, she turned away quietly to sleep when the winter evening set in, and never woke again.

S. M. Clementina McKeon had won golden opinions in the school at Rathfarnham, and she had carried out the promise both in the Noviceship and (after her Profession), in North Great George's Street, when an attack of inflammation of the eyes undermined her strength, and she never rallied. She was a

true lover of religious poverty, and full of the spirit of labour, so it was nearly impossible to prevail on her to take the change in her health into consideration till she was actually dying. She kept up a sort of sweet sunshine round her to the very last—and, yet, the sunshine grew brighter when she heard the end was near on the 18th April, 1843.

As far as we can judge from the short "Notes" that guide us, those of whom we have been writing were peculiarly fitted for religious life. They seem to have had but one cross to bear—their last illness—and both nature and grace helped them to bear that cross either placidly or joyously. It was not easy to disturb S. M. Agatha's natural sweetness, nor to depress S. M. Clementina, while S. M. Xaveria was too steadily serene to be at the mercy of small worries.

Very different was Sister M. Celestina Rorke, who is set before us as a type of self-conquest. A few days in the Noviceship were enough to show her natural character—haughty, self-reliant, and averse to restraint. Her superiors soon agreed that neither piety, talents, nor other external advantages should be allowed to weigh against the want of the essential qualities of submission, humility, and forbearance.

Bitterly sorry, but still unsubdued, S. M. Celestina went back to the world. There everything went wrong with her. She was utterly indifferent to its pleasures, and if she made an attempt to take part in amusements, some disappointment was sure to follow. It was a mystery, even to herself, why God so persistently desired she should embrace the life that would crucify her proud spirit, but He *did* claim her unconditional surrender to His will, and her first step in humility was to own that she was unworthy of His choice of her.

She begged for a second trial in Loreto. Rather reluctantly she was re-admitted, and, to the astonishment of all, her whole being seemed transformed. She was the humblest, the most obedient, the gentlest of novices. If she had her struggles still, no one saw or knew them. It was a grand victory, and it was royally rewarded, for although S. M. Celestina looked forward to a long life of self-abnegation and discipline, God called her again—and, this time, it was to the rest that could never know a change. She died on the 28th June, 1846.

The Loreto Schools continued to be a nursery for the Loreto noviceships; and the greater number of postulants owed their vocation to

the wise and holy example and teachings of the first members, but S. M. Rosalie O'Meara had neither seen nor heard of the Loreto nuns till she accidentally visited our Convent at Stephen's Green.

Her father was in the army, and wherever his regiment went, Mrs. O'Meara and Joanna went also. Paris, Malta, and Sierra Leone were the successive stations, but Africa's fatal fever brought Joanna to the brink of the grave, and Colonel O'Meara never recovered. The impression made on Joanna by her father's death never faded away, and, in the midst of a London season, some years after, she wrote in her diary: "Every pleasure in this world is purchased at a price, and there is no such thing as an unmixed blessing. The black and white squares of a chess-board are emblems of this chequered life, and the happiest of lives is just an April day—alternate sunshine and showers."

After her mother's death Joanna's only prayer was that she might live for God alone. Her confessor advised her to offer herself to the Sisters of Charity at St. Vincent's, Stephen's Green. Joanna turned, by mistake, into the Loreto Convent, beside the hospital, and was so attracted by what she heard there of the

duties of our Institute, that she drove to Rathfarnham the next day, and asked Rev. Mother to accept her. She entered on the 6th January, 1845.

"My life has been full of changes," she wrote; "may God give me grace to persevere to the end in this holy state. Many bright and many sorrowful hours have been mine, but Thy Hand, my God, has been with me in all my trials. May nothing ever separate me from Thee."

If there were any fears that years of independence had unfitted S. M. Rosalie for religion, they were soon set at rest. She was *a nun* from the first—exteriorly and interiorly. Her gentle, gracious manner was very attractive, and further acquaintance showed the mental and spiritual maturity that made her a valuable friend. Punctuality and silence cost her no apparent effort.

Her time was fully occupied with pupils for Italian, music, and singing, and her lovely voice, beautifully trained as it had been, was a great acquisition to the choir. As she finished singing the *Nunc dimittis* on the Feast of the Purification, she fancied she heard a voice saying to her, "Make haste and be professed, you will hardly pass the Lent." She dis-

missed it, as a fancy, for she felt very well. Nevertheless, some slight impression must have lingered with her, for the motto she chose for her ring, was, "Into Thy Hands, O Lord! I commend my spirit."

Her death was almost a sudden one. She woke one morning in the first stages of fever, and, after a few days of intense suffering, she died—on the 13th May, 1847.

* * * *

And now we come to the long line of Nuns and Sisters of whom we have scarcely any records—those whose lives might be summed up in a few words, for minute details would only weary by repetition. In heaven we shall see them "differing in glory," but on earth the uniformity of life resulted in many traits common to all, so the biographies would be nearly similar.

The first Sister who died was Sister Lucy Conlan. She was generally called the "old man's staff," for she was ready for perpetual changes of duty, according as this was convenient to others. One week she was portress, the next kitchenmaid, the next laundress—and she gave perfect satisfaction whatever she did. When—after many years of hard labour—her

strength gave way, she sat sewing from morning till night in silent attention to the Divine Presence. At last, one evening, the needle fell from her hand. "Thanks be to God," she said, "I can do no more." She died that night.

The following little anecdote has often been told. Sister Anne Flanagan had been refused the Habit because she could not read, and she had no hope of being able to learn even to read the ordinary prayers of rule among us. She begged Sister Lucy to ask God "to change Rev. Mother's mind about the reading," and promised to offer nine Masses and Communions for the repose of Sister Lucy's soul if her intentions were gained. A day or two after the death Rev. Mother sent for Sister Anne and said, "You must have got some holy soul to intercede for you, for I feel it is the will of God that I should give you the Habit."

When we go "behind the veil" we shall see the full beauty of the spirit which for many years had been passing lowlily among successive generations of Sisters. It had been instilled into them, in the early days of the foundation, by Mother Xaveria M'Carthy, and perhaps, in a fuller measure, by Sister M. Catherine Corballis. She—with her quick spiritual instinct—looked upon the Sisters' life

as a smoothly spread field for holiness. Those who were apparently the "Marthas" could, in reality, be the "Marys" of the Institute. Their minds were free to "sit at Our Lord's feet," and, if their hands were busily employed working for Him—in humility, patience, and silence—what more perfect service could be rendered to Him, hour by hour, and day by day?

Short as was Sister M. Catherine's stay among them, her work was done. In her bright, persuasive way she called out that spirit, and it lived on through years to come. All felt its influence, and many possessed it in the highest degree. For instance, Sister Elizabeth O'Brien —of whom her companions said that she never lost sight of the Presence of God; yet, she worked incessantly, and, in addition to the usual run of duties, she was expected to do all the necessary upholstering and to train the postulants to take it up in the Branch Houses. Humble, submissive, and a visible lover of holy poverty, she was a silent, unobtrusive apostle in her own sphere.

Sister Paula Convey, too, who took to heart Rev. Mother's words: "Your work is your prayer; you must earn your heaven over the wash-tub and in the kitchen. There ought to

be a great many saints among you, for you have no anxiety and no tasks that might easily distract you from God."

Sister Paula, in her various duties of cook, baker, chandler, laundress, housemaid, and sempstress, often said to her assistants, "We can't spend our time in the church, when God's work is waiting for us, but we can pray through everything. There is nothing in washing and baking to hinder us from saying our prayers." It was not easy to count the number of *Rosaries* she got through in the day.

After Sister Paula's death many favours that had been recommended to her prayers, when she was dying, were granted, especially a most important intention, the friendship of some influential persons who had not, up to that time, been willing to promote the interests of the Institute.

Several of the Sisters carried on household trades with great dexterity. Sister Ambrose Cousse was constantly busy at shoe-making, in a dark little old house among the trees in the back lawn. That house is gone—and so is the walled-in well-pond behind it, which was popularly called "Hell," and was erroneously supposed to be bottomless. The Grotto of Lourdes stands now in the place of "*Crusoe's*

House," which owed its name to some of the younger children's attempts at saying "Cousse."

Turning back to take up the bead roll of the choir nuns, we find several new graves opened in the old cemetery for Sisters M. Winefride Conran, M. Juliana Lawlor, M. Alphonsa Harrison, and M. Anastasia Mooney. They were types of the true Religious, prayerful, charitable, devoted to the work of the Institute. S. M. Juliana was noted for her thoughtful kindness, while she was in the midst of the busy life in Loreto, Harcourt Street. It was a very happy home—and its happiness was none the less because the nuns were obliged to live as economically as possible. From the Abbey downwards—or, rather, onwards—there was a cheerful, sensible acceptance of the fact that in each beginning there should be the peculiar difficulties brought on by trying to meet many necessary expenses with limited resources. No doubt it was an ever-present stimulus to feel that the seed of a rich harvest for the glory of God was being sown through these privations.

Those nuns who remained in the Abbey faithfully remembered their absent Sisters in their prayers. Among them we must mention S. M. de Sales Byrne, and S. M. Walburga

Moone, who never left the Mother House. Sister M. Walburga wrote: "We put all your wants and wishes into the chalice, at Mass. Pray to St. Anthony of Padua and to the souls in Purgatory, especially the most abandoned soul—their prayers are powerful and they are found most grateful."

A very able directress of the new foundations was found in Mother M. Gertrude Lambert. She was about fifty years of age when she entered, but hale and active as the youngest in the Noviceship. There never was a dissenting voice as to Mother Gertrude's ardent, demonstrative love of God. She had been His faithful servant in the world—an uncompromising one, without a particle of human respect; and that in a circle whose aristocratic tendencies were averse to any show of piety. Miss Lambert, however, often seemed to forget that there were any eyes on her but the Eye of God, or that she had any listener but Him.

She acted the same way in religion. It was little use reminding her that she was praying in the midst of a Community. The next instant her voice was heard again, repeating the same sentence over and over, as though she were never satisfied with the perfection of her prayer.

She embroidered beautifully—and taught

crayon drawing in her seventieth year; but it was as a housekeeper and general manager that she excelled—notably when the Branch Houses were struggling through the opening days of their existence. Her kind heart led her to spare no pains to stretch their small means to the best advantage for the nuns. And she was accustomed to encourage them in their mental trials by saying that when she was a postulant she had such battles with herself that she often had to rush out and walk as fast as she could round the lawn, as a sort of vent to the interior commotion.

Her hard fights with self went on to the last. Grace merely gave the support that was needed to conquer a very masterful nature, and God seemed to trust her love for Him so fully that He could depend on her fidelity without repaying it by special favours. Even in her last illness, when our Sisters usually rested in the spiritual peace which seemed a foretaste of heaven, Mother Gertrude could scarcely control the feverish desire to fling away the languor that clung to her for the first time in life. With all her efforts to be passive in His Hands, she thanked God with unbounded fervour when she was told she was really "standing on the threshold."

"May God send down the great Archangel for me," she prayed—on St. Michael's eve. Next day she was gone—8th May, 1854.

The ranks that had been thinned were more than filled up by new members—many of them eminently fitted to carry on the work of the Institute; even so, it was always sad to look back on the losses. It was a feeling, which, in submission to God's unsearchable ways, would, perhaps, have to be subdued with some difficulty, when such gifted Religious as S. M. Augusta Haskins and S. M. Scholastica Clarke were taken from us. Of the former, Rev. Mother said, "It was a pleasure to look at her, and to know she was dedicating all her natural gifts to the supernatural life." And, as to S. M. Scholastica, the strictest local Superiors could find no fault with her. A great deal was expected from the newly-professed—fervour, good sense, patience, and energy, cheerfulness and prudence, punctuality and readiness to oblige, with the promptest obedience to every order that was given. It was no easy matter to win the approval of the seniors and the watchful Superiors, but S. M. Scholastica fulfilled all their requirements. Equal to any duty, entirely to be depended on, at once active and gentle, self-controlled and gay, she never caused

anyone a moment's pain or disappointment. "She was too good for earth," they said, when she died—on the 28th September, 1856.

During the preceding spring Mother Philomena Frizelle came home from India—evidently marked for death. It was too late to hope to save her. She had an exquisitely tender, pious mind, and so unselfishly sweet a disposition that during the slow decline of which she died it was such a pleasure to spend awhile with her, that the nuns had to be on their guard lest they should overtax her failing strength. Her delicately conscientious observance of Rule was noticeable alike in health and sickness, for hers was the saintliness that is unchanged through sorrow and through joy.

She had not needed a word of inducement to offer herself for the Indian Mission, so her delight and gratitude when the proposal came to take her "home" were very touching. While the Abbey that she loved so intensely was looking its loveliest in the soft spring sunshine, Mother Philomena closed her tired eyes, in the peace of God's tenderness, on the 29th April, 1857.

One of the first Loreto children died in 1859—Sister M. Baptist McDonnell—of Killeen, Co. Dublin. Her father was one of Loreto's early benefactors. When the Abbey was being

put in order he made continual useful presents; and when the school opened he took his daughters to Rev. Mother, and put £1,000 into her hands for their education. Anne (S. M. Stanislaus) never left Loreto. Ellen (S. M. Baptist) was delayed by delicacy, but she was received on the 15th August, 1840.

She led a very humble, hidden life, always at the call of the sacristan, infirmarian and portress, and helping everyone who turned to her, with the greatest patience and gentleness. She went about noiselessly on her errands of charity—so peaceful, so ladylike—that she was very dear to the Community. Her prayer was continual. She could do nothing, she said, for her friends on earth, but she hoped she succeeded in doing something for her friends in Purgatory.

A fall brought on inflammation of the knee, and the remedies and confinement soon told on her weak little frame. Childlike in life and death, she made all her preparations calmly, and went to heaven without a sigh or a struggle on the 18th October, 1859.

The old cemetery—small as it is—had to receive the Sisters from the Houses of the Archdiocese, as well as those from the Abbey. Sisters M. Berchmans Murphy, M. Teresa Ryan, M. Bernardine Moore, and M. Alphonsa Devlin,

were laid in the last unoccupied spaces—one little corner being reserved, by her own particular desire, for S. M. Bernard Blake.

A life of sixty years is not a very long one, but Sister M. Bernard seemed of the patriarchal type, partly because she had seen the beginning of the rapidly developed work, and partly, perhaps, because she was a noted upholder of the original discipline of the Institute.

She was born in 1799 at Dartfield, Co. Galway. She was a hot-tempered child—and her tendency to spine disease helped to make her pettish. At all events she obstinately refused to stay at a secular school, and set her fancy on going to St. Mary's Convent, York. Rev. Mother Ball was then in the Noviceship, and Eliza Blake grew enthusiastically fond of her. The affection did not die out; otherwise Eliza would probably have chosen St. Mary's for her home—for she grew up an earnest, holy, most mortified girl, quite unlike the wilful child she had been.

As soon as Rev. Mother was settled in Rathfarnham, Eliza came up from Dartfield, and arranged everything for her entrance on the 21st January, 1823. Her "ruling passion" in religion seemed to be to keep strictly and rigidly to the regular observance of Community life. It was a torture to her to see the

slightest departure from the established customs, and she disliked dispensations, without positive, serious cause. But, let her be satisfied in that respect, and she was the kindest of the kind, especially to the sick. Her humility even surpassed her charity. The youngest children—and those who were slow at learning—were the pupils that Sister M. Bernard coveted.

She had a very soft heart for animals, and any unkindness to them roused her indignation. She regularly inquired whether the animals belonging to the Convent were well cared, and if anyone was amused by this solicitude she defended herself by citing the example of the saintly and learned Father Paul Segneri, who was never content in the afternoon until he was sure the dog had got its dinner. She heard what she called "great fuss" one day about a priest whose horse had fallen under him. Sister Bernard immediately asked if she might send a bandage for the horse's knees—because, she explained, "No one is thinking of the horse." And in fact, the priest was more grateful for her thought of the horse than for all that was done for himself, and said he was "tempted to keep the bandage; for it was sent by a nun, who loved all God's creatures—for God's sake."

But the one strong earthly tie was her affection for Rev. Mother—and she aged visibly during the months while Rev. Mother lay dying. During the Lent of 1861 Sister M. Bernard was told that disease of the heart had made rapid progress. She was quite placid—quite content. On Spy Wednesday she was in the choir at the early morning meditation, took the fasting collation in the refectory and refused any extra indulgence. Next day she was so much weaker that she had to beg a Sister to help her to the church.

When her stall was seen vacant at the Morning Service on Good Friday, the word went round that Sister Bernard must be dying. Her strength must have ebbed rapidly, for when the Infirmarian desired her to stay in bed, she yielded, and spent the morning saying the Divine Office and other prayers. A little later Mother Berchmans Lenigan came to tell her that it would comfort Rev. Mother to hear that S. M. Bernard had made an unreserved offering of her life to God. After an eager inquiry for Rev. Mother, S. M. Bernard said: "Let me know my own state now, for I think I am a bad case." Mother Berchmans answered, "I hope you will soon be well and happy." S. M. Bernard raised her eyes to

heaven, and prayed silently for some minutes, her face changing by degrees, as if suffering were already passing away from her. At 2 o'clock p.m., she received the Last Sacraments. Then she dressed herself and lay down on her bed, where she prayed for hours.

All day she kept to the fasting fare—having desired the Infirmarian to bring her tea without milk, and "a bit of dry bread, like what you would give a beggarwoman." The Infirmarian disobeyed her, but S. M. Bernard cried out, "Oh! Good Friday! Buttered toast! The Lord deliver us from such things. Life is not worth that." A few days before she had said—when a young nun tried to make her rest, "Stay, dear, all my life I never sought the easiest things, and I'm not going to begin now."

At 9 o'clock she went to bed—with a last request to be called at 5 o'clock next morning. The Infirmarian said she should not even attempt to be at Mass, but S. M. Bernard, holding out her hand, said, "This is for the worms, but my soul is my own, and the hearing of that Mass might save it." Sister M. Borgia said no more, but determined to watch her closely through the night About 2.30 a.m., S. M. Bernard gave a low sigh, and without

even opening her eyes, gave up her soul to God. A few hours before she had repeated: "O truly blessed night! The night shall be as the day, and the night is my illumination in my delights." It was the morning of the 31st March, 1861.

For the last time, the gates of the old cemetery were opened, to admit Sister Bernard into the blessed company of those whom it sheltered in their unbroken rest. Year after year, the great world outside had gone on through busy, troubled paths, and the lesser world within the Abbey walls had been touched by the human hopes and fears, the human joys and sorrows, which had passed for ever from the quiet sleepers, in their grand, eternal peace.

They shall not wander from that blessed way,
Nor heat, nor cold, nor weariness, nor sin,
Nor any clouds in that eternal day
Trouble them more who once have entered in.

And yet, in the far ages to come, there will be a sudden light in the skies, and a quickening all round, and the great Archangel's trumpet shall break the long stillness; while these lowly graves burst open, and with all the speed of fearless love, our first Mothers and Sisters shall rise, gloriously and radiantly, to answer the summons to the last Judgment Seat of God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was in the early spring of 1861 that a plot of ground adjoining the garden was set apart as a new cemetery. Those who were then watching by Rev. Mother Ball's sick bed had little hope that the months would glide into summer before she would be the first to find her holy rest in the home of those who are "gone before." There were many days, from time to time, when her minutes seemed to be numbered, and each crisis as it passed over, left her less able to struggle with the suffering which was always so hard to bear, and which often became agony.

Although, strictly speaking, she had been freed from her burden of responsibility in the January of that year, when Cardinal Cullen appointed Mother M. Scholastica Somers Vicaress, it would have been impossible for Rev. Mother not to watch to the last over the work which had been so magnificently fruitful in her hands. There was nothing in the thought of that work which could interfere with her preparation for eternity. Self never had had, and never would have, any share in

it. It was God's own work, and her portion of it had been much toil, much weariness, anxiety, and care, closely hidden, for the most part, from all but Him who had called her from earth's bright and tenderly-guarded pathways into what was, in the spiritual sense of the word, an almost "uncultivated land."

For we, who have only known the better days of Catholic liberty of action, can scarcely realize the gravity of the task that was set before Rev. Mother by Archbishop Murray. What little had been done for Catholic education had been accomplished, in a manner, by stealth. The nuns who first attempted the undertaking hid themselves from the notice of their enemies. They dared not expose their holy habit or their religious ceremonies to the unfriendly eyes of the oppressors of anything that would tend to exalt Catholicity. So there were many who were ready to warn Rev. Mother against the danger of letting the "light shine before men," and there were very few to encourage and cheer her. Her calm stateliness under trials may, also, have deprived her of a certain share of sympathy from those who looked on her as one nobly formed to tide over difficulties, with a strength that needed no earthly assistance.

We can remember the astonishment excited by the publication of a few words from Archbishop Murray's letters to Rev. Mother when she was in York, preparing for the introduction of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin into Ireland. He alludes to the doubts and fears, the "terrors" she had evidently laid before him; to her reluctance to exchange the peace of St. Mary's Convent for the burden which was waiting for her in her own country; and he desires her to pray that God might not allow her "to fall into such misery as to give the slightest opposition to His desires."

Until these "confidences" were made public, after her death, our Foundress was never credited with the heroism that triumphed over the struggling of her mind and heart against the peculiar cares and labours which, once taken up by her, would weigh on her for long years to come.

Now, in the lingering sunset of her grand life, it was natural that she should speak as no one else could speak, of the past times that were already growing "old," and which are so quickly forgotten. On each anniversary of a new step in the development of the Institute, it was easy to see that Rev. Mother was looking back in spirit to the rising of the

" light," which gradually advanced into steady radiance under the sweet protection of the " Star of the Sea."

She was the only one who, when the 5th May came round while she was lying on her death-bed in 1861, could describe the first evening in the little old house in Harold's Cross, " thirty-nine years ago." She described herself, Mother Baptist Therry, and Sister Ignatia Arthur, settling the tiny schoolroom to the best advantage. " There never was a humbler beginning," she said, " than our beginning of Loreto."

One day, when Mother Angela Murphy mentioned some friends who had been great benefactors to us—Mr. Corballis and Mr. McDonnell—Rev. Mother answered :—

" Yes, and some others also. I have had some unequalled friends, some on earth and some in heaven. St. Anthony was one of my first benefactors, when we were very poor. And St. Gertrude helped us spiritually. We had constant hard work, and her little offerings and her aspirations sanctified the work, without hindering it."

Very few children left Loreto Abbey without the special devotion to St. Anthony of Padua, which has spread so wonderfully of

late. When his name began to be widely invoked it was new to many, but it was like the name of a familiar friend to those who had been Loreto girls, fifty or sixty years before.

St. Gertrude's suggestions as to intercessory prayer were propagated by Rev. Mother wherever she had influence. The Saint's *Prayers and Exercises* were well-used favourites in Loreto. So was Father Faber's, *All for Jesus*, when it made its appearance in later days. And among the books circulated through the Loreto children, a foremost place was held by Miss Caddell's *The Virgin Mother and the Child Divine*. Many of the girls knew long passages of this beautiful little life " by heart."

It was introduced to Rev. Mother's notice by Mother Anne Hickey, a personal friend of the authoress. Mother Anne often quoted from it in her exquisite spiritual instructions, as well as from the touchingly written *Fruit and Flowers, or The Use of Tears*.

Rev. Mother's deep piety was so unobtrusive that its tenderness and simplicity were not readily seen on the surface. Probably, people without a hundredth part of her spiritual gifts displayed much more of their stores, and yet, in the world and the convent, alike, the venera-

tion that is won only by a servant of God followed her everywhere, and gave weight and efficacy to the few words which were treasured as the words of a saint. More than one anxious restless soul, pouring out its hopes and wishes to her, felt a sudden touch of the peace that leads to holiness at Rev. Mother's gentle answer: "If it be the will of God."

Occasionally, she would direct her listeners to one of her own dearest devotions—homage to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—or she would invite them to say a short prayer in "our Abbey church—the first church in Ireland dedicated to the Sacred Heart." That quiet guidance, coming from *her*, was often enough to stamp the seal of the higher spiritual life on a soul, and change its indifference into the fervent, unnoticeable intercourse with the world above which is not so uncommon among Irish Catholics as externals might lead us to believe.

But the time for active service, in "little things and great," was over now, though Rev. Mother's slow martyrdom left her the perfect use of all her faculties. "A living martyr"—the doctors called her. Their practised eyes saw more than others did of the torture that racked every fibre of her frame. But the least

skilful of her attendants could not but wonder at her unbroken self-control—her sweet, supernatural patience. Internally and externally she suffered without ceasing. Her back was one large sore, and a change of position was nearly impossible, for the fractured bones of her leg and foot had never strengthened since the fall which literally laid her on the cross.

Perhaps the nearest approach to a sign of what she bore in silence was when she turned one day to an infirmarian and whispered: "I should like to follow the example of the holy Rev. Mother in York, and ask that the Sisters should be taught how to suffer before they come to die."

And still, "faithful unto death," whenever the opportunity of exerting her influence with regard to the Institute presented itself, the earnest summoning up of her powers showed the love that was warm and living while she went slowly away to be another advocate for us in heaven. Mother Angela Murphy—then Mistress of Schools—found that nothing seemed to give such relief to Rev. Mother's hours of prostrate suffering as the news of religious vocations developing among the elder girls. The low whisper: "Thanks be to Him who

calls them to Him," was the usual answer. And then followed the glance round the Convents of the Irish Branch of the Institute that were waiting for additions to the staff.

In spite of Loreto's needs, Rev. Mother had always been most careful to avoid the faintest suspicion of pressure into religion. It was only when the vocation was clear, and when weakness or other temptations were drawing the mind and heart into a wrong direction that her gentle support was given to the cause of God. Again, when, as sometimes happens, parents put forward the idea of their child being "a future nun," Rev. Mother was heard to say, "I think not. I think A. will represent Loreto in the world." Simple as the answer was, it set a high standard before the child's eyes, as if Rev. Mother expected her to uphold the honour of the Order, by living up to the noble title of "Child of the Queen of Loreto."

The thrice-told tale of Rev. Mother's last weeks on earth need not be repeated here. Every detail preserved for us has been chronicled—the short period of distress when she was often heard to murmur, "O Love of my soul, I am with You in tribulation—have mercy on me"; her rapturous reception of our

Blessed Lord when a lull in her sickness allowed her to receive Holy Communion; her one request, that her bed might be moved to the window that she might look for the last time at the procession of nuns and children to Our Lady's Grotto on the eve of the 1st of May; then the succeeding days of comparative ease, which led to a hope that she might be preserved for a while to Loreto, if she were to attempt the change to our Convent of St. Anthony, Dalkey.

Brave and trustful as ever, she yielded to the proposal. We know the rest. The journey that was her last stage of the "Via Crucis"—the rapid sinking—the last Mass celebrated by Father Burke in her room, previous to the last anointing—the eve of Whit-Sunday spent in suffering and prayer—finally, the slumber that stole over her, until, while the glorious May sunshine streamed into her little room, she woke suddenly to hear Mother Scholastica saying the Vespers—"*Magnificat*"—beside her bed, and with a bright, heartwarm smile, as if she were joining in the hymn with the first unalloyed fulness of heavenly delight, she closed her eyes to earth for ever.

About nine o'clock, p.m., on Whit-Sunday

the nuns' prayers in Rathfarnham were interrupted by the messenger from Dalkey. There was very little sleep for them that night; and next morning, before Mass, the children were assembled to join in the *De Profundis*. A sort of stupor prevailed through the Abbey that day. The sorrowful preparations for the return of its Foundress went on rapidly, but almost in silence. By midday the entrance hall and church were draped in the deepest mourning; and, shortly after, the first peal of the bell gave notice that the hearse was in sight, followed by the mourning carriages, with Mothers M. Scholastica Somers and Berchmans Lenigan.

Each succeeding hour brought nuns from the houses in the Archdiocese, and some from the other Convents, who could reach the Abbey by the day fixed for the funeral—Wednesday, 22nd May.

It was a moment never to be forgotten when the long lines of nuns and children, who had filed round the new cemetery, stopped and turned towards the mound in the centre.

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In a few words, eloquent in their sincerity of trust, Cardinal Cullen confirmed his previous

nomination of Mother M. Scholastica as the temporary Superior of the Irish Branch of the Institute, until the Canonical election would be held. The General Chapter was not assembled till the following January, but the result was a foregone conclusion. The burden of government was committed to the saintly guardianship of Rev. Mother Scholastica.

Rev. Mother Ball's confidence—even more, her respect, and her respect was not easily gained—had been won by this true daughter of the Institute. Her brilliant girlhood and her honoured early womanhood had passed before Catherine Somers broke the many ties that bound her to the world and came to Loreto, with the one absorbing desire, to bow down her whole being under the yoke of Christ. And from that hour His love reigned supreme in her heart. She was the truest and tenderest of friends, the most unselfish of sisters, the calmest and most prudent of guides, and though her government was the government of exceeding mildness and charity she was a Superior whom none could fail to reverence, and whose authority was acknowledged with instinctive submission.

She was born in 1805, at Ballywilliam, Co. Wexford. Her father, Myles Somers, was of

the fine old Catholic race of country gentlemen who commanded as much love as esteem among their friends and dependents. He and his wife died while their daughters, Catherine and Margaret, were very young, but the sons were older, and one of them at least, was of an age and character which fitted him to take the place of a protector to his sisters.

They grew up handsome and accomplished girls, devotedly attached to each other, though their dispositions were very different. Margaret was reserved, and inclined to be silent outside her own home circle. Catherine was a welcome guest wherever she went, and made many friends, for she went greatly into society. She was an accomplished pianist, and her playing was full of the fire and spirit that were to be seen in every act of hers, indeed in almost every look, until the natural impulses were brought under the control of grace with a strong resolute hand. Even to the end of her life an occasional bright glance showed the vigorous nature which had been so thoroughly subdued by her steadfast will.

No one was surprised when Margaret left the world. Holiness was her attraction, for, "she was one of those pre-destined souls who, unconsciously to themselves, wear the crown

of sanctity from their birth." But it was by no means probable that Catherine would turn her mind towards Loreto. By that time she was the recognized mistress of her brother's house, and a sister like her would surely be proud and fond of such a brother as Francis Somers. They lived in perfect union—models of what true Catholics can be, pious, open-hearted, hospitable, and equally charitable to the sick and the poor.

No token of a change of purpose was visible in Catherine, except that from the day of Margaret's Profession she was not quite her old gay, rather imperious self. Two years had passed. Margaret had been sent to Loreto, North Great George's Street. The nuns had begun to predict a future saint in their meek, prayerful Sister M. Benedicta. At last she told them that a great favour had been granted to her. Catherine had made all the arrangements for her entrance in Rathfarnham, and Rev. Mother had given her St Scholastica as a patroness.

Externally, Sister M. Scholastica became, at once, almost as formed and placid in her mild religious-like ways as we knew her long years after. There was no trace of hot temper or haughtiness in her quiet dignity. A close

observer—perhaps a particularly affectionate one—could detect that she was buying "the pearl" of religious life "at a price." Her sacrifice was not "free cost." But so holily, so humbly was her offering made that the keenest observation only deepened the conviction that her holocaust was a most pleasing one to the heavenly King.

Though she was still a junior in the Community, she was in her fortieth year when Rev. Mother appointed her Local Superior of Loreto, North Great George's Street, to replace her sister, Mother M. Benedicta, who was sent to take charge of the new foundation at Gorey. For a while Mother M. Scholastica seemed unable to school herself to accept the cross of the responsibility cheerfully. The nuns noticed her strained smile, and her forced attempt to enter into their sunshiny happiness; for, certainly "Mary's House of the Immaculate Conception" was a very happy home under the equable, wise and holy rule of Mother Scholastica. She was no novice in household or conventual management; the subordinate officials in each department felt a sense of security in referring to her for direction, and while it was well known that she expected intelligent and faithful co-operation, she never

gave an unreasonable order, and her anxiety for the "aim at perfection" in the lesser details of our work was so gently put forward that it became a sanctified pleasure to do one's best for the service of the Community and the care of the children.

The Mistress of Schools—Mother M. Patricia D'Alton—who succeeded Mother Scholastica in her first office, often quoted her late Superior's minute instructions to her regarding the children, dwelling on the fact that when Mother Scholastica expressed herself satisfied with Sister M. Patricia's class teaching, she did not always express unreserved approval of her degree of watchfulness over the personal neatness and the deportment of the children, especially the younger ones.

"She was so completely and naturally *a lady* in the highest meaning of the word," said Mother Patricia, "that she was pained and disappointed when the children did not look, speak, and act like little ladies. I remember her sending me twice, one morning, to attend to the *toilette* of a child who was too young to attend to it herself. I never forgot the silent reproach of Mother Scholastica's eyes after her inspection of N—— that morning: 'The little one is *not* in fault,' she said. '*Who is?*'

I made a resolution never to deserve another correction on that point."

"I think," said Mother Patricia, frequently, during her own term of Superiority, "that what made it so easy to bear reproof from Rev. Mother (Scholastica) was that we always saw the justice of her remarks, and the absence of pretension in her. 'I should be soon cured of my folly,' she told me, 'if I went about imagining I knew everything. I know less than you do about education, and I continually see how true it is that *two heads are better than one*. I have to consult tradesmen about the repairs of the house, just as I consult you about the repairs of the school.' "

The impression she made on externs was told in the exclamation of an old friend, who met her after a long separation :

"Does religion change every nun into a *saint* as it has changed Catherine Somers ? "

There was the same indefinable certainty that she was "never out of the Presence of God," that so many felt when they were brought into intercourse with Rev. Mother Ball. This gift was even more widely recognized in Rev. Mother Scholastica, and it was one of the reasons why her friendship was sought by those who were eminent in the Irish Church. That

list would be an extended one, if we counted those who were her constant visitors during her seventeen years' Superiority in North Great George's Street. They had no hesitation in saying that she was one of the few women to whose judgment they would willingly defer. And among those who made the admission we may name such Bishops as the Primate, Dr. McGettigan, the Bishop of Cloyne, Dr. Keane, the Bishop of Ferns, Dr. Furlong, each glad to seize an opportunity of confidential conversation with the nun whom they "found out" in her humility, and whom they had no hesitation in calling their adviser in several delicate circumstances.

However, these were passing visits, and others of the same class were of weekly or monthly occurrence. Mother Scholastica's help and sympathy were at the disposal of numbers who came to her. But her friend of friends was the Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal Cullen. He lived so near (in Eccles Street), that it was no great tax on his time to turn into George's Street on his way from the city, and spend an hour—which was a rest to both—with Mother Scholastica.

This was one of the rare friendships which are formed in and for God, and which grow

stronger and more intimate as the fine qualities of the friends are drawn out imperceptibly. Mother Scholastica more than once alluded to her first interview with Cardinal Cullen. She said there was " a simple majesty " about him, as if he were " like one of the saints of the Old Testament, accustomed to direct conversation with God." His manner was " calm and easy, and he used the simplest words, but you felt the strength of his character on the spot, and knew that in him you would have a protector of everything that was right. And that he would be quite fearless in putting down what was wrong. He would act both ways for God's sake, you would be quite sure of that."

In her quiet way Mother Scholastica met and took advantage of facilities for bringing Cardinal Cullen's services to Catholic education prominently to the light. Her own position in George's Street was a sheltered one, but Mother M. Benedicta had had to bear the brunt of a storm in Gorey, where Protestants and Catholics were at open war. The patient charity of the Superior, seconded by the self-sacrificing labour of the nuns, gradually converted their enemies into adherents, still the remembrance of their trials when trying to sow the first of the seed among the ignorant.

could not die out. Defenders and supporters of the movement in favour of the religious instruction of the poor were *pitifully* called for, and it appears to be traditional that in this movement the special post of arduous exertion, and of honour in God's sight, is assigned to the successive Archbishops of Dublin.

Therefore, it was a very sweet consolation to Mother Benedicta when, during a short visit to George's Street, she was able to point out the wishes and hopes of the Catholics in her Wexford Mission to the great champion of the Catholic poor. It was almost the last service she was to render to them, for her days were numbered, and very slight was the hope that some Dublin doctor, in his wide experience, might suggest the means of arresting the rapid consumption which had set in.

The hope was vain and her life—so beautiful in its angelic devotion—was at its close. She went " home " to Gorey to die. A wonderful change had taken place there, chiefly owing to Mother Benedicta's tender zeal for the souls of all who came within her reach, and affection and gratitude clung more closely to her, while it was evident to all that she was passing away from them.

It was then that her noiseless work of the last twelve years was made partially known. The many whom she had comforted and assisted, the many whom she had led towards the Church that they had despised or hated; those who had come to her for enlightenment in doubt; those who believed that hope and strength would be granted to them through Mother Benedicta's prayers; those who were rich in all but the spiritual gifts which she obtained for them at last; and those to whom she had shown the only star that could shed light on their dark lot—the poor whom she had brought to the home of the Sacred Heart.

She was ingenious in spiritual devices for promoting that personal love of our Blessed Lord, in which she *never* had a teacher. He, Himself, had been her Instructor, and He continued to prompt her endeavours to impart it to those within the range of her influence. She lent and gave presents of pious books as far as her means would allow. She kept a store of miraculous medals, "*Gospels*" and "*Agnus Dei*," and encouraged people to come to her for them. Her last Christmas on earth was gladdened by the numbers who came to visit the first Crib which had ever been seen in Ferns. She wrote of this: "The news of

the lovely Infant in the manger soon spread. Some walked eight—others fifteen miles to see the wonder—though nothing could be simpler. From the aspirations of love you could have thought the people were assembled round the real Crib. I feel grateful to God for affording us an opportunity of enlivening the faith and devotion of so many towards this mystery of the love of the Sacred Heart."

She died on the 28th September, 1855. "Heavy rain prevented the burial for some days, and during that time the church was constantly crowded. The devotion and gratitude of the throngs were ready to canonize her." And the supplications for the soul departed were continually interrupted by those who looked up to her as a friend in heaven, and who laid their cares and sorrows in her hands as they had done when she could still answer their petition.

"*Dearest Mother, pray for us.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

"'One shall be taken—and the other left.'"

So said Mother M. Scholastica Somers, speaking of Mother M. Benedicta—adding in her own true spirit of humility, "How strange it is that I should be the one 'left!'"

Inscrutable, no doubt, to many who knew Mother Benedicta, were the "ways" of God in permitting her religious home to be robbed of that brightly shining light of charity and prayer. Among the letters which poured in to Loreto after her death, we may select two which give some insight into her influence over those who began by loving her for her gentle sympathy, and ended by looking up to her as a saint.

One of these was from a priest who had been a Protestant clergyman, until an accidental glance at the church in Gorey led to his meeting with Mother Benedicta. He came during that memorable Novena in preparation for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1854, at the close of which the dogma was to be proclaimed an article of faith by Pius IX.

Mother Benedicta's confidence in Our Lady's

special aid at that moment made her fearless of rousing her visitor's prejudices. He questioned her concerning her evident joy and triumph at the thought of the grand coming festival in Rome. "Her heart spoke"—he said afterwards—and so powerfully, so persuasively, that the love of Mary passed into his soul, at once and for ever.

Mother Benedicta noticed the change. Her store of miraculous medals, and a little book of prayers for the Novena were always at hand those days. She offered both to the clergyman. "No," he returned, smilingly, he had "not gone quite so far."

But he relented at her sadly disappointed look, and took her little gifts—to please her—asking her to pray for him.

Not long after he wrote to her:

"You will, I know" he said, "rejoice to hear that your prayers in my poor behalf, have been most abundantly answered, and that I am now one with you in the fellowship of Christ and the Communion of Saints. You will remember what a hesitating assent I gave to your proposal to join you in your Novena, and how I all but refused to wear the medal. I did, however, wear it, and our Blessed Lady herself has entered into my heart. May she continue

to dwell there till I behold her glorious face in heaven.

"Within the Octave of her great and most memorable festival I was received into the Church, the only Church in which she is honoured, and, consequently, the only one whose members are entitled to the benefit of her all-powerful intercession."

His next letter was from Rome, where he was ordained, at the end of his fervent preparation for the priesthood. The Church owed one of its holiest and most zealous labourers to Mother M. Benedicta's advocacy of the Most Pure Mother of "knowledge and of holy hope."

Even more touching than the tribute of priestly gratitude, was a long, tender farewell from a well-known Protestant family of the neighbourhood, to whom she had grown as dear as though she were really their sister and their mother. We give an extract from the letter written by Mrs. R——, who was in Paris when Mother Benedicta died.

"I will strive to put on paper the vision with which my weak and wavering mind was fortified and whereby strength and confidence were given to me to take that step for which, during eternity, I shall love God and return thanks to Him.

"I saw the first three steps of an altar or great throne. I saw a figure clothed in a long white dress, kneeling before the altar and praying fervently. I knew the figure was meant for me, and I said to myself—'That is I.' I then heard the soft, peculiar voice of dear Mrs. Somers say: 'It is no use to look at the cross and admire its beauties; if you cannot take it up and embrace it you will get no nearer to Christ. Pray for strength to do that which you know to be right.' These last words were repeated two or three times.

"I awoke and related my dream, adding—'I feel I must have been praying all night, for now I have strength—now I feel at peace.'"

Mother Benedicta's biographer adds—"In this mystic dream it was also made known to this favoured soul [Mrs. R——] that a certain priest was the person decreed by heaven to assist her in crossing the gulf that separated herself from the true Church. She therefore stated:—

"I shall not seek a priest, for I know one will be brought to me, and that before Christmas. When I see the right priest I shall know him, and whether it be in a church or in a street, I shall address him at once."

Shortly afterwards she recognized the priest

indicated to her, in the celebrated Père de Ravignan. She continues :—

"A few days after my vision I had a letter from Gorey, telling me of the death of dear Mrs. Somers. I knew how long she had, in her charity, prayed for me and mine, and I instantly felt that the wonderful increase of grace sent me was due to the prayers of this saintly nun on the day of her death. I feel confident that her prayers were also offered for others in our county, who are now in the true fold.

"I told Père de Revignan that he had twenty-one children in the County Wexford —all in one year.

"I could not resist giving the name of Benedicta to my little girl—now one month old. May our dear Mother Benedicta watch over her, and obtain for her some of her own saintly qualities."

There seems to have been some special charm about Mother Benedicta for those who, though not of her faith, could still see and acknowledge the "beauty of holiness." Just twelve years before her death we find this mention of her in a note from Rev. Mother Ball :—

"Mother M. Benedicta is Superior at our

Marine Loreto. Dr. Pusey, of Oxford, venerated her, and wished his daughter to enjoy her society."

When death comes to one like her, in the midst of a busy, helpful life, there are always some to talk of unsatisfied desires, and interrupted projects, but far removed from spirits like these was the tranquil spirit of Margaret Somers. She was of that blessed band who from their childhood are wont to say: "In all things I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord." That rest had been given to her long before the weariness of old age could touch her. It was given to her while she was still bound by the golden precept: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." And with the fulness of truth she said: "Turn into thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee."

A different lot was appointed for her elder sister—Mother M. Scholastica. We have already seen the latter at her post in Loreto, North Great George's Street. She had been nearly seventeen years Superior there, when, about Christmas, 1860, Cardinal Cullen hinted to her that a change would probably take place very soon; and this change, as we have

said elsewhere, was her appointment as Vicaress in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham.

She felt, as she said afterwards, too stunned and bewildered to realize all that His Eminence asked of her, as a friend—but there was no mistaking or evading the command which followed. Mother M. Patricia D'Alton was named Superior of Loreto, George's Street, and the entire charge of the Irish Branch of the Institute was placed, for the time being, in Mother Scholastica's hands.

Very few remember her as she was when she came to enter on her nineteen years of office, early in the January of 1861. The fifty-seventh year of her age saw her in the prime of life —her bright complexion and large soft hazel eyes making her look younger at times than she really was. Still, there was all the serene composure in word, and look, and manner, which stamped her with the impress of dignified religious maturity. The noiseless step, the gentleness of every movement, the peaceful voice, seemed to promise that mildness would mark her government, and, moreover, there were clear signs of the motherly prudence and calm strength, which had won so much respect and such implicit trust from nuns and seculars alike.

During Rev. Mother Ball's illness and during

the months following her death, as few changes as possible were made by the Vicaress ; and no new undertakings were planned by her. The ordinary business of the Institute went on under her direction, smoothly and wisely, but as she counted on resigning her charge soon, she put aside any suggestions that were made as to alterations, etc., " until we have a Chief Superior," she said.

Scarcely had she been elected to the office when Cardinal Cullen made known his determination that the Loreto Convents in his diocese should, without exception, be under obedience to the Mother House at Rathfarnham, subject to His Eminence's jurisdiction. The first Community which this decision affected was the filiation from Loreto, Navan, established at Balbriggan.

As Loreto Convent, Baymount, was small and badly adapted as a boarding school Rev. Mother Scholastica gladly took this opportunity of transferring the nuns from Clontarf to Balbriggan and, in spite of the removal, Loreto lost none of its pupils.

The same ecclesiastical regulation applied to Loreto, Stephen's Green—which had been placed under obedience, directly and solely, to the Archbishop of Dublin.

Some years after, Loreto Abbey, Gorey, with its filiation at Wexford, was also brought under the central government at Rathfarnham, to the great satisfaction of the holy Bishop, Dr. Furlong, a devoted friend of Rev. Mother Scholastica.

In this extension of her Communities she showed to everyone and everywhere that her large loving heart had room for each and all with the deepest sense of responsibility to God for the trust He had laid on her. She told some of the nuns that she often meditated on the words of the ritual used at the election of the Superior-General: "We exhort and seriously admonish you, now elevated to this dignity, never to be unmindful of your office, or of the account of your stewardship, which the great Father of the family will, one day, most severely and strictly exact of you."

While, as it has been written of her: "The touch of imperiousness in her nature, which had sometimes glanced out, when she was the idol of her home, was lost, entirely, in the self-control of the subdued religious. And yet, a certain gentle stateliness never forsook her, and the sweetness of manner, which increased as she grew older, was always tempered by her religious reserve and reticence Grace laid

its sanctifying touch on every natural impulse, every natural desire, until her capacity for friendship seemed to be the only quality that remained unchanged in her. For she had been —and she was, to her last breath—the most faithful of friends, not demonstrative, but true and steadfast beyond the power of words to tell."

The development of the Institute, at this period of its history, called for incessant exertion. The schools, growing in numbers, required a larger staff of nuns and extended accommodation. A new Novitiate House was necessary, for the one room in the Nuns' Infirmary, which had sufficed for the novices for several years, and even the larger one under the church, which they occupied for a while, and which is now broken up into several divisions, were unsuitable, so the winding glass passage at the right side of the front lawn was done away with, and the present Novitiate, with the addition of cells and corridors, was built in 1863.

One want supplied often seems to draw attention to other needs. Therefore, the so-called Concert Hall, extending under the Nuns' Choir, was plainly seen to be better fitted for other purposes. It was converted into the

Nuns' Refectory, and its place was supplied by the splendid hall—known as part of "St. Joseph's Wing"—at the other side of "the red house." Music rooms of all sizes, a fine dormitory, and a refectory for the children are comprised in this wing.

Another building on which Rev. Mother Scholastica had "set her heart" from the beginning of her rule in Rathfarnham was the new National School. It was a positive pain to her to visit the poor children and their teachers until she had provided them with the house that fully satisfied her wishes.

Meantime, she had to occupy herself in similar business with regard to the branch houses. For instance, the Convents at Balbriggan, Letterkenny, and Kilkenny had to be enlarged by building chapels, dormitories, and class-rooms. Indeed, the latter Convent claimed a good deal of her attention for some time after its foundation in 1868. Then she was advised to complete the work in the Co. Wexford by establishing a Day School in Enniscorthy; so there were continual calls on her mind from one or other of the filiations.

How gratefully she turned to the helpers who were beside her, and "never found a disappointment in them," she repeatedly told those

who asked her had she any time for rest. Her first assistant was our saintly Mother M. Gonzaga Sinnott, whose spirit of prayer and mortification was noted even in her school days. Her former companions said that they had sometimes busied themselves in testing her goodness, but the result of this was to convince them that she never committed a deliberate fault, though she seemed determined to emulate the saints in the practice of penance. Such as she was in her girlhood, such she was till her death.

"Holiness showed itself markedly in Mother Gonzaga," wrote a Loreto child. "Young as we were, there was a readiness in us to admire and look up to what was 'spiritual'—an unquestioning reverence for what appeared to be quite beyond us—that gave us an idea of Mother Gonzaga's piety, which we have never forgotten. We thank her more than words can tell for exerting an influence over our souls which we shall realize in eternity. We thank her for teaching us that God and the far off heaven, where we hoped to be in time to come, claimed something more from us than perpetual self-indulgence. And most of all we thank her for having *burned* into our souls a spark of her own love for Our Divine Lord in the Blessed

Sacrament. Her adoration of Him, in the Tabernacle, was so loving, so real, that it acted powerfully on those who had never before come in contact with love like hers. The love she thus wakened in us was the seed of more than one vocation, the magnet that drew more than one wavering heart from the world to the cloister.

"This is the united testimony of some whose school-days were widely separated, and who chose very different paths in after life. Mothers of families, and nuns of thirty years' standing, join in this tribute to the memory of her who taught them the lessons which outweigh all others, and who confirmed what she taught by the example of her devoted service of God.

"One word more. Those who knew that Mother Gonzaga was rigid in her views of the perfection required from Religious, and that she was a consistent advocate of peculiar self-denial, might suspect her of severity in her dealings with us. We never thought her severe. We knew her motives when she instructed us, or found fault with us. We knew also that she was our warm-hearted friend, and that she was proud of our talents and successes.

"Looking back on her delight in our progress, we recognize in her the feeling so beautifully expressed by Cardinal Newman, when he speaks of the luminaries of the Church, the veterans of the faith, stretching out their hands in love and gladness to the generations to come."

Another to whom the Rathfarnham children of those years owe an unmeasured debt of gratitude is Mother Angela Murphy, who was appointed Mistress of Schools by Rev. Mother Ball in 1859 after some years spent in Loreto, Baymount.

Helena Murphy was "Irish to the heart's core." In the early days of her school-time in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham, the nuns had no small difficulty in keeping her high spirits in order. The activity, which was afterwards turned to good account, frequently broke out in unexpected ways. She was a clever girl, and she was expected to excel in music, but she was apt to try to diversify her occupations by obliging some most unwilling Sister to accept her services in arranging the dormitories or the refectory.

It is recorded that, once or twice, Rev. Mother Ball chanced to discover that Helena and her friend, Lizzie Browne (afterwards

Sister M. Regis), had ousted the refectorian, and had taken her work into their hands. Curious as to their capability, Rev. Mother desired that no notice should be taken until she had inspected their doings. No fault could be found with the neatness of the arrangements, and Rev. Mother predicted these girls' usefulness in the future, although this outlet should be checked.

Helena Murphy certainly left Loreto with an incipient vocation. Her strong will did not welcome the idea of giving up her liberty. She preferred to follow the path chosen by many of her relatives, and work generously for God in the world. The grand old Catholic spirit of devotedness to the Church and the poor was predominant in her family, and, as they had ample means at their command, they could gratify their liberality.

Helena was happy and pious and energetic for awhile; then the dissatisfaction of the soul which is called "apart," and hesitates to yield to the call, stole over her. She was a "Martha" "busied about many things" for God's glory. The spirit of "Mary" should win its way. Her cousin, afterwards Mother Liguori Segrave, chose the active "part" of the Sisters of Charity, but Helena felt too

powerfully drawn to Loreto to waver as to the choice of an Order.

Once a member of the Institute, her whole being was employed in its service; at first, in the ordinary routine of school duties, then in the superintendence of various departments, and, finally, Rev. Mother Scholastica delegated a large share of the financial business to Mother Angela. In order to attend to this she was obliged to give up her office of Mistress of Schools, in which she had been the truest and fondest of mothers to the children—most really *a mother*, in tender, warm earnestness, and in utter forgetfulness of self.

Under Mother Angela's directions the Sodality of the Children of Mary was the means of exerting a solid influence for good through the whole school. Its members, especially the officials, were trained to be helpful to the nuns in many ways, and their co-operation with her work among the younger girls was styled by Mother Angela "my strongest support."

We must admit that she always cherished her strong affections, and her strong sympathies but, physically, she crucified nature with an unsparing hand. She continually went beyond the bounds of prudence in denying food and sleep to her hardworked body, and the

slightest enforced extra nourishment or rest was a bitter trial to her. A note relative to her says: "The one unanimous word of her through the Institute was that she was pre-eminent in mortification—first, the mortification of rigorous observance of common life; secondly, every additional mortification which could be crowded into her laborious day, and many others that often made the night a time of penance rather than of rest."

No wonder that she was a valuable aid to Rev. Mother Scholastica, especially when, to the multiplied cares at home—supplemented by correspondence with the affiliated houses in India and Gibraltar—was added the beginning of the Loreto Foundations in Australia. This was a step that cost Rev. Mother many an anxious hour. Ireland claimed all her resources, she said. However, when the kind, genial parish priest of Rathfarnham was consecrated Bishop of Ballarat, she acknowledged she would not be able to refuse the Loreto nuns to Dr. O'Connor. He told her she had no idea how much it would help to lighten his burden, and make his exile homelike if she would consent to his petition and, at last, she did consent.

On the 20th May, 1875, nine nuns left

Rathfarnham for Ballarat. They were met in that rising young city by the Irish welcome of "Glory be to God! Glory be to His Name! Glory be to His Holy Mother! We've got the nuns." Many of the exiles cried bitterly, with the love and longing for "the Old Land" springing up afresh. The Bishop's beaming face was enough to cheer even down-hearted Missioners, and his cordial assurance that they would be the busiest and happiest little colony in Victoria brought sunshine immediately into their new surroundings. He soon settled them joyously in Mary's Mount. "The air of this place is like heaven," wrote one of the nuns, "it is laden with scents, not only from the acacia, musk, and gum trees, but from the dear hawthorn and lilac, which remind us of home. We hope others will join us soon."

"Mary's Mount is insatiable," said Rev. Mother when she was implored to send assistants to the pioneers, "it would drain our poor Ireland."

From the Boarding School (which nearly overflowed its boundaries) to the Day School in Dawson Street, and thence to the Free School at Redan, the nuns went in turn. By degrees they introduced all the improvements in education which they could compass, namely,

the Training College for Teachers, the Sloyd Rooms, the Kindergarten classes, etc. Besides this, they set on foot classes for religious instruction, the Sodality of the Children of Mary, and a Ladies' Association of Charity —on somewhat the same lines as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Even with the reinforcements of nuns from home, from time to time, it was several years before the applications for new convents could be entertained. In the mother-country, age and incessant labour had told on some who had been foremost in the van of the workers, and death had visited Loreto. A steady stream of postulants—chiefly from the Loreto Schools —kept the Novitiate supplied, still the newly professed were always in demand.

Strange was the fact that one of the first members of the Institute was in the full enjoyment of a vigorous old age. Mother Aloysia M'Carthy had seen generation after generation pass away, yet in her ninety-sixth year she retained her clear intellect unaltered, with the keen interest in educational progress, and the positive delight in literature which had distinguished her as a girl, and led to her acquaintance with Rev. Mother Ball.

She met the future Foundress in Cork, was

fascinated by the project of introducing the Institute of the Blessed Virgin into Ireland, and although family ties were on the side of her entering the Ursuline Order, Maria M'Carthy was true to her "first love," as she called it, and came to Loreto on the 19th August, 1823.

Not long after her Profession Mother Aloysia was appointed Mistress of Novices; then Local Superior of Loreto, Harcourt Street; and again, in some years, she was put in charge of the Novitiate for a second term. "The Noviceship is in capable hands," said Rev. Mother Ball to the Archbishop, "all agree that Mother Aloysia is a model of holy exactness, and her guidance can hardly fail to set the stamp of regular observance on her subjects. They find her strict and serious, but she contrives to make the youngest understand that there should be no trifling with religious life, and that is such a great point gained that they value her now, and will value her still more as they go on through their future missions. We all—myself included—respect and esteem her."

Her next office was Local Superior of Loreto, Dalkey. She took a good deal of teaching on herself (classes and music), and had never been busier nor more active than when a fall, which

injured the bones of her right leg, crippled her for several months, and lamed her permanently, so that she was obliged to use a crutch.

From that time she was stationed in Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham. She taught music, only, on account of the difficulty of moving about. But she was considered, more than ever, one of the holily-burning lights of the Institute, showing the younger members the path that had been trodden so nobly and so wisely before God.

In humility, patience, and charity Mother Aloysia seemed even to advance visibly, as the crown of venerable age was set on her virtue. It was often remarked how touchingly grateful she was for the least act of kindness, and how she appreciated the thoughtfulness of lending her a new book, or giving her some interesting piece of information. She was so open to every intellectual pleasure that these gratifications contributed to keeping her freshly alive to what religion was accomplishing in the training of the minds that are bent on the pursuit of secular knowledge.

"The world and its sciences are travelling forward so fast," she said, "that I felt a little bewildered when I had gone through the

'Academy' yesterday. And, to my humiliation, I'll show you a verse that is *not* poetry. It is what I scribbled after my reading :—

Lord ! let Thy grace to me impart
Wherein Thy Spirit lies,
That with a pure and upright heart,
That Spirit I may prize.

Oh ! may Thy light resplendent shine
To clear my mental sight ;
Shed on my soul Thy rays divine
To guide me to what's right.

I humbly crave to know the way,
The path that leads to Thee,
Yes—" 'tis my prayer, by night and day,
'Lord, let Thy servant see.' "

With memories like these, belonging to us, how true is the passage written in Rev. Mother M. Xaveria Fallon's life :—

" When she was Mistress of Novices, Mother Xaveria liked to remind us of the young saints of our Novitiate—such as Sister M. Joseph Davys and Sister M. Luigi O'Neill Power—but with far greater veneration she kept up the memory of those who had borne 'the heat and burden of the day,' and borne it, too, with all the steadfast energy that marks heroic virtue. Thank God there were many such whom she could point out with the affectionate

pride which is so strong in a religious family like ours. We need not always turn to the canonized when we would excite ourselves to do as the saints have done. Just as holily, just as devotedly as many of the crowned children of God our own Mothers and Sisters prayed and toiled, and lived for heaven through long, well-filled days, until, like our venerable Mother Aloysia M'Carthy, they found, at length, how sweet it is to die.

"Nowhere in the annals of religious Orders do we find greater examples of charity, zeal, patience, humility and, above all, obedience, than in our own Institute. Self-forgetful, self-denying, spending themselves for God with a fervour that never grew old, never got chilled by age or weakness, Mother Xaveria might well turn to the rising generation, and bid them be worthy of the past."

CHAPTER XX.

PRECIOUS as were the memories of "the past," on which, as we have said, the next generation dwelt with truly religious love and pride, there were saints granted to Loreto still. Rev. Mother Scholastica often thankfully acknowledged her conviction that the Irish Branch of the Institute was rich in spiritual gifts. But those who saw her mentally glancing over the record of holiness, noticed the wistful look that came into her eyes, for the veil of humility was closely drawn over her own unpretending sanctity.

A nun who saw her daily life for many years said: "When she stands before God at judgment she will hardly dare to lift her eyes to His mercy; but when she does, what a grand revelation of her reward will astonish her!"

Again we read: "She pondered constantly over the words of the ritual for the election of the Superior-General, 'We exhort and seriously admonish you to beware of allowing yourself, now elevated to this dignity, to be unmindful of your office, or of the account of your

stewardship, which the great Father of the Family will one day most severely and strictly exact from you.' "

Keeping this deep sense of responsibility always in the foremost place, her earnest application to the various interests of Loreto was a faithful "stewardship." A biographer tells us: "Once, when recovering from a severe illness, and very weak, she held out through a long argument with Mother Angela, the procuratrix, who wanted her to sign a cheque for a large amount for some purpose which in the existing state of the finances Rev. Mother did not think could be prudently entered on. Mother Angela was so intensely devoted to the Order that she was a large-hearted benefactress to the Branch Houses, and pleading insistently for this one she forgot the invalid's extreme exhaustion. However, she gained nothing that day, and when she gave up her entreaties Rev. Mother Scholastica said to a nun who was present: 'Was I very obstinate? I would have given anything I could have yielded, I was so weak and tired, but the money was God's, and I had to do the best I could with it for Him.' "

And here we may devote some pages to the recollections stored among us of Rev. Mother

Scholastica's second assistant—Mother M. Conception Lopez.

Concepcion Maria Magdalena Lopez was born in Cadiz on the 22nd July, 1815. She told the story of her childhood to us in a few words. She said she was so delicate that her mother watched her most anxiously, and spent many an hour beseeching the Blessed Virgin to take care of "Concha," who was specially dedicated to Mary Immaculate, and always dressed in white.

The child was self-willed and passionate, and her gentle mother could not bear to punish her, but, whenever an outbreak of temper made correction necessary, Concha was taken to Our Lady's altar, and desired to say: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for your naughty child." By degrees the words became a fervent prayer for patience and mildness, and by the time she made her first confession Concha had done a great deal towards subduing herself.

To the end of her life she spoke of her mother's reverent attention to preparing her for her first confession. "For several months Dona Elena devoted her spare hours to giving Concha a regular course of religious instruction, warmed and animated by the fervent piety which often made the teaching a prayer."

Mr. and Mrs. Roberts—Dona Elena's father and mother—were very true at heart to England, though they lived so long in Spain that they might have easily become altogether "naturalised." Mrs. Roberts had been educated at the Bar Convent in York. Elena went to school there in her turn, learned to love the nuns and the convent dearly, and of all her companions chose Frances Ball for her special friend. She fancied the nuns could do more for Concha's training than she could herself, so she sent her little daughter to them when the child was only nine years old.

The first accounts of her there represent her as a forlorn-looking, tiny exile, very grave, and decidedly unwilling to mix with the English children at recreation. She felt too desolate to bear being played with or talked to, for Conchita was simply "heart-broken for home and friends, especially her mother." The first real comfort given to her came about in a strange way for a child of nine. The nun who was preparing her for her first Communion wound up the exhortation one day by dwelling on the love of the Creator for His creatures. To her surprise, Conchita burst out crying, and sobbed aloud, "God is so good—so good." These tears had nothing of sorrow in them.

Conchita had found the Love, the Joy, and the Comfort of her life.

Seculars, who were then allowed to occupy part of the Convent chapel, began to notice the extraordinary recollection of "the little one from Andalusia," and called her "an angelic child, wholly absorbed in God." She told a nun that her mother had desired her to begin her visits to the Blessed Sacrament "by an act of contrition, and an act of humility in the presence of the great King."

It was not at prayer alone that Conchita was remarkable. She was perfect in obedience, and in uncomplaining endurance of discomforts or other annoyances which are sometimes very badly borne at school by a petted child. She never cared for the English amusements or games, which others liked so much; and once or twice she said, very quaintly: "I'll go play, because it will be one of the sacrifices I promised God at my morning meditation."

Not much reliance is placed, as a rule, on children's resolutions at that age, but the nun to whom Conchita said: "I long to go quietly away to some place where I can work for God," felt certain that this vocation would strengthen with time.

Some years went by quite happily in York,

and Conchita fretted piteously when a letter from home told her she was to finish her education at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, in the Rue de Varennes, Paris. All we know of her stay there is that she said, in her old age, that she always loved that Order since she was a girl in the Paris House.

A serious illness put an abrupt end to her school-days, and for nine years after that she was as happy as anyone could be who was claimed by God for something higher and holier than the brightness of a well-guarded home. Rev. Mother Ball, who was a nun in York when Conchita was at school there, kept up a correspondence with her Andalusian friends, and this led to Conchita's decision to enter Rathfarnham. The parting was an agonizing one. Don Miguel Lopez could not bring himself to say the long good-bye, and went to France to avoid the last sorrowful days.

"Mother Conception told us," wrote a nun, "that the night before she left home she stole in to look at her sisters and brothers while they were asleep, and kissed them over and over. She left the house alone the next morning, hoping that the vessel would sail before anyone could follow her, but one of her brothers was waiting for her; 'and,' she said, 'when he

left me with the crowd of strangers, and we moved away from home, my desolation and anguish were so terrible that I thought Almighty God could ask no other sacrifice of me!'

"She never saw Spain again, though Loreto sent out foundations there, and one even to her own Cadiz. She never expressed a wish or hope to see it. But the passionate attachment of her girlhood to her own country seemed to speak out again not long before her death. 'Oh!' she said to a nun, 'you will never know how beautiful Spain is till you go to heaven.'"

Rev. Mother met Concha in Loreto, North Great George's Street, and took her to Rathfarnham on the 5th September, 1839. The nun who showed the postulant her cell, heard her whispering, "For God I will live, for God I will die." She received the Habit on the following 12th November, for the usual period of probation might lawfully be shortened in view of her rapid advance to perfection. She said, long after, that, during her noviceship, the words, "Cursed be he who doeth the work of God negligently," seemed to be for ever sounding in her ears, and "kept her on her guard."

The devoted *personal love* for our Blessed

Lord, and the actual *clinging* of her soul to God, for which she had been remarkable as a child, was striking now among the spiritual-minded novices. Not one, they owned, excelled, or perhaps equalled, Sister M. Gertrude Lopez in humility, obedience, patience, and mortification.

The resolutions she made in the retreat before her Profession were found among her papers after her death. They close with the prayer, "O my God! give me Thy love to sustain me in all things. Give me Thy love to love Thee without measure; I ask nothing more. Grant me this, my only desire."

"Believe me," she often repeated, "there is no *creeping* into heaven. We must be in earnest."

And these were not empty words, for the stamp of uprightness was visible on Mother Conception from her childhood. "Her heart spoke in everything she said."

The beauty of frank, honourable conduct had been strongly impressed on the Spanish child, and it was with a sort of startled sorrow that she met anything like equivocation or underhand dealing. When she had charge of the schools she repeatedly quoted the Spanish proverb, "Truth is the daughter of God,"

adding, "Isn't that a beautiful saying—as beautiful as everything is in Spain."

She was professed on the 21st October, 1841, and was made infirmarian directly after. "Her sympathy and warm heart made her the tenderest of nurses," writes a nun who knew her well. And another says, "If Mother Conception did nothing else for God, her self-sacrificing kindness to the sick would secure her crown."

Then a more trying office was laid on her. She was appointed Mistress of Schools. Years on years had gone by when some of those who had been under her charge during the first years of her religious life came to her and told her that the remembrance of her saintly forbearance with them had urged them to try to find her out again, that they might get the guidance and comfort they wanted so badly after their struggles with the world, which had been so hard and so cold to them.

Five years after her Profession Mother M. Conception—who until then had been called Sister M. Gertrude—was put in charge of the Community in Dalkey. From Dalkey she went as Superior to Loreto, Baymount, and in 1851 she was sent Superior to Loreto, Bray.

It was very unlike the lovely Loreto we know to-day. The grounds had been uncared

for years, and the house had been only partially repaired, for it had been untenanted for some time before Rev. Mother bought it. Not even the beauty of the site could make up for the neglect of the immediate surroundings; but when both house and grounds were set in order the Convent looked so attractive that a crowd of boarders was soon added to the already flourishing day school.

Catechism classes brought numbers of poor women and girls to the Convent on Sundays. Bray was quite a rural district then, and the poor were real "country folk" with a great deal of the simple faith of the Irish. They were overheard, sometimes, thanking God for letting them live to see "thim walkin' angels"—the nuns. "Mrs. Putland was the charitablist woman iver brathed," said one old pensioner, "and her charity was the manes of bringin' this good luck on Bray." The Convent had been the property of the Putland family.

Mother Conception always contrived to attend "the Catechism"—for a while, at least, during the hour. And, indeed, she was seldom absent from her own class, in which she took as eager an interest as the most zealous teacher brings to some advanced and likely-to-be-distinguished pupils.

"It argues a want of the true spirit of our Institute not to be ready and anxious to do our best for the poor—especially the children in our National Schools," was a frequent saying of Mother Conception's.

Her memory has not yet died out of the grateful hearts of the "old people" near Bray. She taught them when they were very young and ignorant of the trials before them, "to put their future into the care of the Sacred Heart, and to tell their joys and sorrows to It every day as to their best friend and a Father who would always be with them, no matter who died or went away from them on earth."

She was true to them to the end, for one of her last acts was to beg Rev. Mother Scholastica to advance the necessary sum for the building of a new Infant School in Bray. She did not live to see it finished.

A legacy of £500, which came to the Convent in return for the nuns' care of a dying child, enabled Mother Conception to buy an organ, and the splendid bell which had tolled the opening and closing of the first Industrial Exhibition in Dublin. One of the Bray nuns wrote: "It was one of Mother Conception's unsatisfied desires to build a belfry for our fine bell, which had never been heard to advantage.

She longed to let it be a preacher of the faith for miles round, and told us the story of Lady Catherine Howard, to whom the voice of God spoke through the chiming of the Wicklow chapel bell, so that she never was at rest until she became a Catholic—after the bell had called her to the true Church."

Mother Conception was in the midst of the uphill work of establishing the Bray Loreto securely when Rev. Mother Ball desired her to "come to Rathfarnham to be Mistress of Novices." We quote a few lines written by one of the Community: "She went without a murmur, though she owned that her heart was 'sore' at parting from us, and that a mother could not love us better than she did. She left us on the Holy Saturday of 1853, and it seems a strange coincidence that the date fixed for her final leave-taking, after her return to us for some happy years, should also be at the Paschaltide. We found it hard to enter into the spirit of the Church, and were far more inclined to prolong the feelings of the Passion-tide, as being more in unison with our own."

The following year the Bishop of Raphoe pressed Rev. Mother Ball to found a Convent in Letterkenny. This was the first attempt to establish a community of nuns in the diocese

since the days of the Reformation. Dr. McGettigan offered his own house, surrounded by nine acres of land, and Mother Conception was deputed to take possession of it on the 29th August, 1854.

The entry of the Sisters into the town took place amid a scene of the greatest enthusiasm on the part of the Catholic population. The Bishop, accompanied by upwards of 2,000 persons, went out to meet them and escorted them to the church, where the Litany of the Blessed Virgin was sung and a heart-felt welcome from His Lordship promised blessings on their labours.

Her stay there was short, for the Superior of Dalkey fell dangerously ill, and Mother Conception was obliged to take that post until the next November, when it was found necessary she should go back to Bray. Such a welcome awaited her that she could not but feel glad to meet so much love and trust. Many little souvenirs of these years have been preserved, and it will scarcely tire our readers if we give a few extracts from the "Notes" before us.

"She asked us to meditate on Our Lord's words to St. Teresa, regarding the first Convent of the Carmelite Reform, when He called it His 'dwelling of delight.' And He gave this

name to it, she said, because the nuns were eminent in the observance of the Rule—because they were *poor in spirit*—such lovers of the Blessed Sacrament that every moment at their disposal was spent before It—and models of sisterly charity in word and act. She said we, too, could invite our Blessed Lord to a 'dwelling of delight' among us in Bray, and that, if He gladly made His abode with us, the external work of the house would certainly prosper.

"The December of that year is resplendent in the annals of the Church as marking the Definition of the Immaculate Conception. The Spaniards had always held it an article of belief, and observed the feast as a holiday of obligation; so you may imagine what rejoicing there was in the Loreto over which Mother Conception presided. We did everything possible to honour the day of the proclamation of the dogma. There were first communicants and a reception of Children of Mary—a ceremony which from this date became an established custom in the house. A statue of Our Lady was carried by the chaplain to an altar prepared for it, and the nuns and children followed in procession, singing the hymn, *O Maria, sine labe Concepta*. Benediction closed

our devotions, and the evening was as bright as happy hearts could make it.

"Among the many practices of devotion to Mary, Mother Conception gave the Rosary the highest place. She impressed on the children that nothing would give them greater comfort at the hour of death than the remembrance that they had said the beads devoutly every day—calling on Mary countless times through their life to be with them in their last agony. 'We had heard nearly the same words before we heard them from Mother Conception,' said one of the elder girls, 'but what *she* says to us seems to sink into our hearts. We *have* to take it in, and we can't forget it.'

"The poor knew where to come for beads, scapulars, and miraculous medals, for Mother Conception never let her stock run out. The portress said one would think a grand present was being given to the Convent when Mother Conception was asked for these gifts to the poor. 'So we *are* getting a lovely present,' she said once, 'something very beautiful to offer to our Blessed Mother—the faith and love of the poor when they wear those medals and scapulars, and say those beads.' A former Child of Mary reminds us of the prayer that accompanied Mother Conception's little pre-

sents of beads, etc., to the boarders—'as if she were sending her own spirit of devotion into us.' And the same old friend bids us not to forget an allusion to the Sodality visits to Our Lady's altar during the principal Novenas, especially 'the Dolours,' when Mother Conception put such fervour into the prayer—'O most holy and afflicted Virgin.'

"We know something also of the honour she paid her other special protectors in heaven. She often spoke of St. Raphael as her 'guide in the pilgrimage of life.' When travelling she always had recourse to him to bring her safe through the journey. She invoked St. Gabriel before beginning the Rosary that he might help her to say the 'Hail Mary' with the same reverence with which he hailed the Handmaid of the Lord. When leaving the chapel at night, she begged her guardian angel to keep watch for her before the Tabernacle till morning."

We shall interrupt the thread of this memoir of Mother Conception by a brief mention of another of our holiest sisters—Mother M. Joseph Christina O'Reilly. She went to Bray in 1855, and those who had known her as Mistress of Novices met her with open arms. Well they might! for the sweet, unvarying, most childlike candour of Mother Christina's

character showed everywhere and to everyone that she was one of those who are ready to "enter the kingdom of heaven." She was "the old man's staff" in the hands of her superiors, and such a willing support to each in turn. She was talented and well educated, and in addition to her services in the schools, she went about several other duties with the quiet activity which was sanctified by her spirit of prayer.

She is remembered still by some who went to join the Community in Bray ten or twelve years later, as the most motherly of infirmarians and most thoughtful of dispensers, while though almost incessantly occupied, she was never for an instant betrayed into a motion of disturbance or haste. Her calm, religious-like demeanour was the same at all times—in the schools and in attending to the domestic charges she held. She never knew how many silent lessons she gave to the younger nuns; nor that when they were well aware she was suffering keenly after the loss of a friend, they had noticed her as she passed from duty to duty glancing up to heaven in search of the support she would not seek on earth.

Hers was one of those lives of which not even convent chronicles can offer many details.

They are absorbed into the general "daily round" and "common task" outwardly, but we feel all the while that in the eye of God they are elevated to a spiritual throne, and that those who hardly bear a distinctive mark among us here are noted in heaven as the "chosen among thousands."

People sometimes connect humility with a downcast look and shrinking manner, or with stereotyped professions of unworthiness. There was not the slightest trace of this deportment in Mother Joseph Christina. She was a tall, fine-looking woman, with a handsome, benevolent face, and clear, truthful eyes, that seemed to tell what a tender, gentle heart she had. But underneath that placid bearing there was a fund of genuine humility—the unmistakable humility of a soul which is accustomed to keep itself in a state of lowliness before God. Her admiration of what other nuns or teachers could do in the schools was one proof of this. And it was touching to hear her—after her years of steady advance in perfection—saying that she felt delighted to get a prayer herself from Nannie Smith, a girl of fourteen, who was one of the "young saints of the school," and whose singularly holy girlhood was crowned by an early death. No

mother could watch more devotedly over the sick and dying than Mother Joseph Christina did in Bray. When the end drew near she could not bear to leave the invalids. She was accountant then as well as infirmarian, and often made an excuse for sitting up with the sick by confessing that it would be nearly impossible for her to "overtake the accounts unless she got a couple of quiet hours in the night." And she added, with a smile, "Not one in the house has my splendid health, you know." She used her strength nobly for God, for Loreto, and for us also, as a loving friend and sister, until, in the middle of her term of superiority in Loreto, Richmond House, Wexford, she died on the 23rd August, 1873.

Were she with us now Mother Joseph Christina would ask us not to omit a short memorial word of one of her first companions in Bray, Sister M. Raphael Maguire. "The first death in a small community is always intensely felt. It seems like the breaking up of a family circle. That was what we all said when God was pleased to call to Himself our dear Sister M. Raphael, who was so sorely missed by us. We knew for some months that we could not hope to keep her long, for she was so delicate that our care could do very

little for her. She was an exceedingly lovable sufferer, carrying her cross of failing health with the most cheerful acceptance of its weight.

"The schools were very full at the time, but each of us would willingly have taken additional work, to save Sister M. Raphael from exertion, were it not that we found she was far more at ease when she was let go on with her teaching; so we should only smooth her path as much as possible, while indulging her longing to live exactly as we did.

"In the spring of 1858 we saw she was sinking gradually. However, she continued to attend the schools as the presiding nun for, at least, a couple of hours; and she followed all the Community duties till within a month of her death. The end came very peacefully on the Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross, to which she had a particular devotion."

It was an exquisite May morning when the first funeral procession in Loreto, Bray, was formed, to take Sister M. Raphael to the cemetery on the hill. The nuns thought "the songs of the birds rang out above us to bid us look up to heaven, and when the morning light glowed through the trees it seemed as if golden rays from Paradise were sent down to

glorify our Sister's holy rest in God." We may surely picture her among those who "shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XXI.

We take up the broken thread of our Memories at Loreto, Bray, in the year 1855, wishing to dwell a little longer on the recollections preserved there of Mother M. Conception Lopez. After her death, one of the nuns who knew her best, wrote: "We think, here, that our dear mother will be surrounded in heaven by the children she prepared for their First Communion, and those whom she trained for the Sodality of the Children of Mary. No one who did not live with her could fully understand how fervently and delightedly she employed herself in these two duties—helping the little ones to know and love the Hidden God, and the older girls to turn with lifelong devotion to the Mother to whom her own heart clung with such devoted tenderness."

There are many little incidents in our "unwritten records" which are listened to with interest in our own circle, but which those outside it would scarcely care to hear. However, some readers will be content to find trivialities among our stores, allowing for the strong tie, which not even death could break, between the

Sisters of Loreto. Therefore, we still note Mother Conception's pleasure, years ago, whenever she told the story of "Peter Diamond's Cross."

"One day," she said, "I was told that the Bray coastguard wanted to see me. He introduced himself as Peter Diamond, and told me he had been looking up to the Convent as a holy place since he was sent to Bray. But, he added, a great many people who passed by where he was stationed didn't know the Convent—at least, when they were only visitors to the town—so he came to ask might he put up a white marble cross where it could be seen from the strand. Of course, I said I'd be most happy to think that our Blessed Mother's house should be pointed out by the cross, and that I felt very grateful to him. Peter went off highly delighted, and next day he and the cross appeared. After he erected it he walked round the grounds, visited our little cemetery on the hill, and planned to leave a remembrance of himself there, too. So we owe him the marble slabs, with the inscriptions, 'Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus,' and 'Miseremini mei,' also the centre slab with the figure of Our Lord carrying His cross."

Mother Conception's motherly ways won

Peter Diamond's confidence at once, and he confided his great trouble to her. Peter was a fervent Catholic, and his sister, aged sixteen, had been coaxed into a Protestant orphanage when a little child of four. Care and kindness had been lavished on her. She loved her mistresses, and was entirely led by them, except on one point—she never failed to say the Hail Mary her mother had taught her at her morning and night prayers.

Mother Conception promised to get the girl a home in Bray. Peter appealed to his sister to consider the offer. His lively faith seemed to pass into her soul, for, says the chronicler of the Convent—Peter met the proprietors of the orphanage at the Kildare Street Assembly Rooms, and asked them to meet him and his sister at Nelson's Pillar. Then, putting his trust in God, he desired their late ward to choose between Protestantism and Catholicity. She answered, "I am a Catholic, and I wish to remain so." No opposition was offered. Our Immaculate Mother retained the child who had been faithful to the daily Hail Mary.

While glancing over the simple annals left us by the dead, we feel inclined to repeat that well-known saying of the Foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity: "Did you think that

when we entered religion we left our hearts outside?" It seems specially applicable to Mother Conception Lopez. She was a warm and most sympathetic friend. In her unselfishness she tried never to let those who came to her for advice or comfort see how tired and over-worked she sometimes was. "The parlour" was no place of recreation or rest for her—at least, it often was the reverse; she was so patient a recipient of the confidences that rarely meet soothing like hers. Sorrows that were carefully hidden from intimate friends were freely laid before Mother Conception. Difficulties that called for prudent counsel were brought to her. Always, and unfailingly, she did her utmost to lighten the burden and to smooth the thorny way. Many a sufferer will be able, in the eternal years, to glorify the saintly compassion that met her in Loreto, Bray, while Mother Conception was Superior there. Some who read these lines will supply the names that we must suppress.

We have already alluded to Mother Conception's devoted care of the Sodality of the Children of Mary. Its members, who were brought into touch with her in their school-days, were always sure of her peculiarly loving thought of them. No matter where they went

in after life, they came back to her whenever they could, glad of a welcome like hers—a welcome which seemed to bring them closer than ever to the Heart of the Mother who "never deserts, never forsakes us."

Whenever her request was likely to be well received, Mother Conception tried to promote the habit of saying the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception daily, or weekly. "I think you will keep your baptismal robe unspotted if you say it daily," she generally added.

A pretty story is preserved of those days in Bray. "On the 8th December a small lamp was kept burning before our Blessed Lady's altar all day, and the sacristan forgot to extinguish it at night. The first Sister who opened the chapel door in the morning was startled to find that fire had been doing its work. The smoke burst out though the door, and when it cleared off we found that the walls were black as soot, the window hangings and artificial flowers were burned to ashes; the Tabernacle and the alabaster vases on the high altar were scorched, and the box (containing the canopy for the Corpus Christi procession), on which Our Lady's statue had been raised, was destroyed, with the exception of the spot on which the statue rested. Nothing, in fact,

had escaped the fury of the flames, except that statue, with its veil and wreath. What prevented the fire from spreading to the adjoining rooms? Our heavenly Queen, alone, had the power of protecting us while we were asleep, and she preserved her statue as a sign of her affection for us. So sure were we that this was an undoubted miracle that we made two special promises to Mary. One was that the aspiration: "May the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary be our safeguard and protection," should be said three times, after the children's morning and night prayers. Secondly, that the *Te Deum* should be recited in choir yearly, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, while a procession of the Children of Mary carried her statue from the chapel door to her altar, which should be beautifully decorated and brilliant with lights."

The few incidents we have related bear more or less on the external life of religious, and show Mother Conception as the world saw her, full of love for God, and for all who came in contact with her, for God's sake. But the foundation of her overflowing faith and piety was laid in her "eloistral" spirit of recollection and prayer.

So we feel we should not do her justice unless

we incorporated some of her frequently repeated maxims in this sketch. They were, in a way, drawn out of the depths of her soul by the younger nuns who turned to her as to a safe guide. We find that she dwelt on our Blessed Lord's words to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi : " I would have you esteem your vows and rules as you esteem Myself."

We learn that on awaking in the morning her first prayer was that grand offering of St. Ignatius : " Receive, O Lord, my memory, my understanding, and my will, etc." And then, taking the crucifix in her hands, she completed the offering by a fervent renewal of her vows.

All through the busy day she cherished the spirit of recollection, and she owned that she sometimes remembered, regretfully, " the golden words of St. Peter Damian : 'It is by the assistance of silence that we raise up a temple to the Holy Ghost in our hearts. And as, according to Sacred history, the Temple of Jerusalem was built without the noise of hammers or other instruments being heard, so the temple within us should be constructed in silence. The soul, concentrating all her forces within herself, and avoiding superfluity of words, will attain the completion of a spiritual edifice.' "

After her death an old, well-used note book let us into a few of her spiritual secrets. Among these we read in her own handwriting : " As long as it pleases God that I should have the charge of one of our Communities, I will place it every day under the protection of the most loving Mother of God, beseeching her to be the Mother and Superior of its members, and to inspire me, according to whatever she wishes me to do or say, so that her Divine Son may be perfectly served by those for whose salvation I labour."

" And what a model she was for us," writes one of the nuns who was with Mother Conception all through her term of Superiority in Bray : " Hers was the quiet, continuous effort to live up to the full observance of Community life which is sometimes scarcely noticed, although through it we attain the perfection required by our Vows. Mother Conception suffered greatly from headaches, and at times she had to bear an almost total loss of sleep. Nevertheless, she was seldom absent from the hour's meditation before Mass, and was generally found in the choir at 5.15 a.m., while she was Superior here. She cherished the grand old Catholic spirit of bodily mortification. She owned she thought it did her more harm than

good *not* to fast and abstain, she felt so worried when she was desired to make use of a dispensation. In the same spirit of primitive fervour, she was happier in using the cheapest things, and would never allow the few old prayer books that had been her companions for many years to be replaced by new ones.

You might ask if she was a rigid Superior. Anything but that. No one had a keener or more affectionate eye for signs of failing health, and no one was readier with advice and remedies. I remember, one day, we had asked her to confess had she not found it rather hard to rise early that morning. She answered that she had to rouse herself, first by repeating St. Jerome's morning apostrophe: "Arise, and come to judgment." And then, by recalling the gentler words of our Blessed Lord to St. Mechtilde: "Rise joyfully, recollecting the treasures of graces you may gain to-day."

"But," added Mother Conception, glancing round, anxiously, "no one is to mistake me. There are some here who must know they have to say of their strength, 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' They can't do more."

However, it was not from among such as the above-named that the second occupant

of the cemetery was chosen. Sister M. Philomena Holligan was one of those who enjoyed even health, and with it she was gifted with the sweetest disposition to be the universal helper. The nuns said it was a pleasure to be associated with her in any office, she was so kind and unselfish. If two were to carry a burden together, Sister Philomena would contrive that the heaviest share of the task should fall to her lot.

Her call was a sudden one. Fever set in unexpectedly, and in less than a week she was at rest, after a sharp agony, borne with the patience of a saint.

How clear it is that affection guided the pen of the annalist of Bray, Sister M. Gabriel M'Garry. She delighted in picturing the home scenes—the processions to the grotto at the end of the Broad Walk in the summer evenings, the returns to the Convent by moonlight, the sleepy birds roused by the *Evviva Maria* sung in full chorus, also the festal celebration held in the conservatory on the 15th August, when the statue of Our Lady was enthroned among the flowers; and many-coloured lights glanced through the green leaves, while the feast closed with the glorious anthem, *Assumpta est Maria in Cœlum*.

Meantime, the house became gradually overcrowded. A chapel, school-rooms, and dormitories were needed. Rev. Mother Scholastica advanced the money for the new building, Mother Conception being most hopeful of repaying it either wholly or in part. All seemed to be going on prosperously, when, as often happens, it was found that the cost of the building would greatly exceed the estimate.

"The question was raised, ought we not be satisfied with what was absolutely necessary to lodge the children, and defer our projected little church for a time? Be sure we stormed heaven. Some of us, who had unbounded trust in St. Anthony of Padua, were eager to institute a general recourse to him; so nine Litanies were recited in his honour for twenty-one consecutive days, and a picture of 'the dear saint' was buried in the ground on the site intended for the church. Our patron won our cause. Good news arrived from Rathfarnham on the Feast of St. Francis de Sales. The work might go on." And, in virtue of a promise made to St. Anthony, his picture was the first to be placed in the cloisters round the church.

Soon after some precious little gifts for the said church and cloisters came as a bequest

from Peter Diamond. The former coastguard had proved himself to be one of God's chosen heroes. A call had gone over the world for defenders of the Eternal City and the Vicar of Christ. Ireland's generous sons responded to the first intimation of distress, and among the Papal Volunteers was Peter Diamond.

For two years he held a foremost place among the bravest of the Irish Brigade. Many a story is told of their heroism, and it is our turn here to relate a tale of one of the gallant band.

By some fortunate chance the news transpired that the rebels had laid their plans for a fierce onslaught, which would go hard with the Zouaves. It was also ascertained that the ammunition for the attack was stored on a certain hill. Peter Diamond listened to this in silence. When all was still for the night he crept out of his quarters, stole past the enemy's guards up the hill, and guided, perhaps, by the angels of Italy, made his way to the spot where the bullets and explosives were secreted. He loaded himself so heavily with his prize that he was not able to walk under the weight. Not baffled yet, he lay down on the summit of the incline and managed to roll gently to the bottom of the hill. A report of this exploit

was forwarded to the Holy Father, who immediately sent for Peter, and *knighted* him, formally, in presence of the Court and the Swiss Guards.

Peter's ambition was to give his life for the Church, and his prayer was granted. He had often been more or less severely wounded, and at last the death-stroke was dealt to him. He died, triumphant and rejoicing in the fulfilment of his desires, on the 20th January, 1863. The Irish priest who attended him on his deathbed took charge of his legacy to Loreto. It was a large wooden chest stocked with reliquaries, Agnus Dei, rosaries blessed by the Pope, pious pictures, and the crosses and medals he had won as badges of distinction, during his noble campaign.

"You will take them all to Loreto Convent, Bray, Father," said Peter, and the priest was faithful to the trust. He delivered his charge to Mother Conception, and told her the story of her humble friend, who died a Knight of the Holy Roman Empire.

"The 16th June, 1864, was one of our happiest days," writes the chronicler, "for it was glorified by the solemn opening of our church, which was dedicated under the title of The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed

Virgin Mary, by His Eminence Cardinal Cullen. There was a large attendance of priests. Could we ever forget the magnificent chanting that preceded their entrance. We fancied that our own entrance into heaven might be hailed by such a chorus. Father Burke's splendid sermon was another unequalled tribute to the great day."

Mother Conception's Silver Jubilee was celebrated on the following 5th September. The nuns remarked that it was with some difficulty she entered into the general gaiety. Indeed, during the months that followed, they thought she was never altogether free from a suppressed anxiety. She did not tell them that she was to leave Bray, at farthest, in the spring of the next year. The only one who suspected the coming cross was Mother M. Berchmans Lenigan. It was the latter who broke the silence.

"I think," she said to Mother Conception, "that it would be a relief to you to say a word about what frets you. I guess the secret. You are not to be here long, and you are going, if I'm not mistaken, to Stephen's Green."

Mother Berchmans was right. The serious illness of Sister M. Cecilia Nolan detained

Mother M. Justina Darcy in Stephen's Green for awhile, but at Easter the invalid was quite convalescent, and able for the parting from her old and dear friend, Mother Justina, who was replaced as Superior by Mother Conception, on Easter Monday, 1865.

As the days went by in the interval, bringing many little plans and hopes for the future, Mother Conception often silenced her regrets by the prayer: "My God, give me strength. Nail me to Your Cross. I am determined to carry *my* cross, though I feel so weak."

No one knew her struggle for strength except Mother Berchmans, who had learned how to be a comforter in "the school of sorrow."

And here our thoughts naturally go back over Mother Berchmans' long life among us. Those who knew her some years before could scarcely recognize her during her last years in Bray.

She had been the busiest, most energetic of officials, when Rev. Mother Ball was Chief Superior. Sometimes in office, of one kind or other, in Rathfarnham; sometimes Local Superior in a branch house, the whole of the Irish Loretos felt that Mother Berchmans' eye and hand were everywhere. She seemed to be of "the St. Francis Xavier type," on the watch

to sacrifice herself, on the alert wherever she could uphold our interests or guard the honour of Loreto. To explain the ending of this sentence we may insert a few words describing the impression Mother Berchmans made on some of the Rathfarnham children when she paid a flying visit to the Abbey, while Superior of Dalkey:—

"One would think," they said, "that Mother Berchmans only lived to watch that we were perfection. We were well aware that she was worried if she noticed the least want of politeness, or any other fault. We were greatly inclined to be annoyed at a visitor (as we called her) observing us so closely, until some of the grown girls told us that she had been Mistress of Schools in Rathfarnham not long before, and that she had often impressed on them that it 'cut' her 'to the heart' when the least thing went wrong in Loreto. Young as we were, a few of us entered into her feeling, and looked on her in a kindlier spirit. Her quick perception of this, in one or two cases, let us see the warm heart she had for the Loreto children."

This ceaseless activity characterised Mother Berchmans until Rev. Mother Ball's last illness. Then it was suggested that she should take her

post by the sick bed. God alone knew the depth of her sorrowful affection. God alnoe knew how desolate she was when her last great sacrifice was made. It was no trial to her, afterwards, to leave Ireland for Gibraltar. "The whole world was the same to her," she said, "from the day Rev. Mother died."

The pressing needs of the Loreto Convents in Gibraltar woke up a good deal of Mother Berchmans' energy. But the climate did not suit her, and she was soon prostrated by an attack of fever, from which, the doctors said, she would never rally, unless in her native air. She had no wish to live, no yearning for the old home. "Wherever and whenever God pleases," she always answered, when she was told that death was probably drawing near.

In the same spirit of calm content she heard that a "welcome back to us" had been sent to her from Rev. Mother Scholastica. She was still so weak that when the Vicar Apostolic came to say good-bye to her, he said: "You have killed yourself for us, Mother. Is there anything I can do for you?" "My Lord," she answered, "I have been very useless, very troublesome, and it was all too good for me, but for the sake of the poor Sisters who have to work on in those crowded schools, while I

am resting in such comfort, will you promise me to take the house at the south side?"

"I'll do my very best," he assured her. And her last words to him were: "You have comforted me, my Lord, for my failure here."

Contrary to all expectations, Mother Berchmans' fine constitution bore her up, and she recovered her strength completely in Bray. Her busy day began at 6 a.m., when she called the children in several dormitories, and presided in the dressing-room. She also presided in the children's refectory at breakfast and dinner. Having charge of the music, she spent several hours daily giving harp and piano lessons. The best loved of her duties was the training of the choir. She seldom failed to secure a short choir practice for the girls, in the evening, before her last duty of presiding in the dressing-room and dormitories till 9 p.m.

Turning to our "Notes" we are tempted by this extract: "We doubt whether more devotion was ever wakened by a choir of young girls than by our choir in Bray, under Mother Berchmans' direction. In 1865 she cultivated nineteen singers for it, some of them with exquisite voices. We cannot forget Emma Schreiber's lovely soprano—it was 'angel-like' in its clear sweetness. She gave the first and

last of her voice to God, for her life was a very short one.—R.I.P. Besides singing beautifully at a Missa Cantata, Vespers, and Benediction, on all feasts, Mother Berchmans' choir prepared anthems and motets for private devotions. Often, when we went to pay our visit to the Blessed Sacrament before the evening recreation, a stir in the orchestra was the prelude to some of the sweetest of canticles. I remember well how our hearts were lifted up to heaven when the stillness of the Holy Thursday evening watch before the Reposoir was broken by that holiest of hymns, *Ecce Panis Angelorum.*"

However, though she laboured constantly and willingly, every trace of impetuosity and quick temper had disappeared, and the very youngest children, as well as the oldest nuns, recognized the humility, patience, and motherly kindness that seemed natural to Mother Berchmans in her old age.

The strongest affection she had ever known lived on to the end. She rarely spoke of Rev. Mother Ball, but on each anniversary of the death of our Foundress Mother Berchmans' grief was renewed so pitifully that she found it almost impossible to restrain it. Yet, if anyone went to try to comfort her, she was sure

to beg us to believe that she was not rebelling against the Divine Will. "Don't think that," she begged, "I am submitting to it all the while."

Long years after her death a copy of a poem she treasured was given by Mother Berchmans to a friend who was left nearly alone in the world. We may re-write it here :—

REUNION.

Thou wilt not sever us, O Lord our God !
In Thy blessed mansions. On earth's lonely sod
Our hearts are torn by partings. One by one
The loved and cherished leave us. Every stone
The cold dark cemetery holds is faced
By lines that find their parallels deep traced
Within our souls. Thus works Thy chisel, Lord,
In strokes severe. Yet be Thy name adored
For all Thy dealings. In Thy purpose deep
A blessing lies, unscanned by us who weep
Amid the shadows. Night will soon be past,
The clouded night of time, which ends at last
In heaven's bright sunshine. Yet a little while
And we shall greet that blissful morning's smile
With alleluias. Then, Thy love's deep thought
Shall be unfolded ; all Thy love hath wrought
Shall come with Thee. And all we loved and knew
And mourned for here shall rise upon our view
In brighter, lovelier form, akin to Thine—
Thy work, Lord Jesus, perfect, pure, divine.
Thus reunited through eternal days,
Our joy shall be Thyself—our life Thy praise.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALLUSION has already been made to the Easter Monday of 1865, when Mother Conception Lopez left Loreto, Bray, for the Convent which is now Loreto College, Stephen's Green. It was a great change for her. She had done so much for that beautiful seaside home—so much prosperity had followed her efforts—so much love and veneration surrounded her there—that her "heart was very sore" long after the parting. Her faithful friend and assistant, Mother M. Joanna Byrne, was with her still, and was her most loving helper in their new surroundings.

Mother Joanna told us, afterwards, that in those days Mother Conception often comforted herself by pressing her crucifix to her lips, saying :—

"Tu me tiens lieu de tout, de trésor, de patrie;
Tout ce que j'ai laissé, tu le deviens pour moi.
Mon amour, mon seul bien, ma liberté, ma vie,
Ma famille—c'est toi."

Mother Joanna, herself, was one of our saintliest Sisters—one of those whose memories are a treasure to us for ever. Many of us can call back the sweet, placid face, so motherly in

its patient kindness, and feel something of the peace that attends God's dear and faithful servants stealing into our own souls while we remember what Mother Joanna was while she was with us here.

As far as we can tell, Mother Joanna's was a life of continual physical pain. We doubt if she knew what it was to be at ease, for the bones of the right side were seriously displaced, and it was with difficulty that she could either sit or lie down so as to be in a position of comparative rest. But did anyone hear a murmur from her? Not one. Her endurance was too perfect to betray what she must have suffered. Nor was there a trace of languor in her. On the contrary, her quiet activity carried her through a busy day of various duties.

Over and over, when she was Assistant in Bray, we saw her preparing the altar for Mass at 6.15 a.m. if the Sacristan was ill; and supplying for the Sister whose duty it was to see the doors locked at 10 p.m.—taking up these extra charges as brightly as though her strength could never fail.

Besides, she always had a full share of class work, for she was well educated and accomplished. She could give drawing, painting,

needlework, and music lessons—could take English, French, Italian, German, and Spanish pupils, and all this she did, from time to time, while she was Superior in North Great George's Street. As long as she had a moment at her disposal Mother Joanna kept up her old practice of being the universal "stop-gap." The charm of her readiness was that it was almost, or totally, unperceived, even in her own Community. Her gentle flitting from duty to duty passed nearly unnoticed until the time came when she was missed.

But the spiritual light of her exceeding meekness and humility could never be hidden. It was too visible to escape the most unobservant eye. We saw her tried, and sorely tried, but the burning flush which St. Francis de Sales allows to those who are far advanced in perfection was the only sign of Mother Joanna's wounded feelings; her calm, soothing manner was the same, no matter how sharp the touch she had to bear.

And neither could we doubt the sanctity which was never obtruded—the fidelity to heaven which was so simple and so true. We never needed exhortations from her to convince us of Mother Joanna's holiness. We felt it and believed in it. It was certain to be either

a stimulus or a reproach—an influence exercised unconsciously and in silence.

She was Superior successively in the Loretos of Stephen's Green, George's Street, Stephen's Green (for a second term) and Bray. Her health was failing fast when the last appointment was made, and she owned, with a patient smile, that she thought "Bray air would not be friendly" to her "now." She was right. A few months of constantly increasing suffering—a few days of pain and prostration, and Mother Joanna entered into her glorious rest—on the 5th April, 1889. Thank God for those whom He gave to Loreto on earth—thank God Loreto may claim them still in His blessed keeping.

It was no slight support to Mother Conception to have such a friend at her side as Mother—then Sister—Joanna. Loreto, Stephen's Green, was a popular house then, although the later developments of education for girls, such as University Classes for the Seniors, and different courses of study for the Juniors, were not even anticipated. However, the central position in the City, and the fine expanse in front and at the rere, always presented attractions to boarders and day pupils, so the superintendence of the whole was no sinecure.

Mother Conception was comparatively a stranger to this Community, but they soon found how loving a heart and how large-minded a spirit of charity guided and controlled her government. One of her maxims was, "We must respect the consciences of others." She would never consent to lay a heavier burden on the Sisters than that which they had taken up willingly, and with deliberation, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. So said one who had been her subject for several years, and who, at first, expected little toleration for natural weaknesses or inclinations from Mother Conception's fervour.

It was a fervour that, in Southern fashion, permitted itself more demonstration than accords with the subdued devotion that clings just as steadily to the Lord of all in His children of the North. It was a genuine fervour, never pharisaical though spontaneous and, in a manner, irrepressible; and we were so accustomed to the manifestation of it that it would have seemed unnatural if Mother Conception did not let her ardour find vent.

She was often heard repeating :—

"Jésus sois dans mon cœur, Jésus sois dans ma bouche.
Jésus sois pour toujours le seul bien qui me touche.
Jésus sois mon soutien. Jésus guides mes pas.
Jésus me sois *Jésus* le jour de mon trépas."

The favourite Spanish aspiration *Ave! Purissima*, and *Monstra te esse Matrem*, were peculiarly hers. And another devotion which she made *her own* was frequent recurrence to St. Gertrude's Treasury of golden words and prayers. She studied this saint's "Revelations" till she could quote the passages relating to any feast of the Church fluently; and it was a positive pleasure to her to be referred to for a suitable sentence on the eve of a festival.

At the risk of proving tiresome to our readers we must mention a few pious practices which Mother Conception tried to teach her secular friends. She asked them to carry their affection beyond the grave, and "never forget the dead." She selected the shortest indulgenced aspirations, and suggested the use of one or two, at least, at stated times. "Don't take too much on yourself," she generally added. "Those who are overloaded are apt to let the load slip off after awhile. We're not very strong."

But one counsel of hers would not be a tax, and this was the practice of a daily Spiritual Communion. She spoke so earnestly of the tenderness and the humility of that act of love and desire that she was successful in propagating it.

To those whose home duties permitted a fair share of free time, Mother Conception said: "Won't you bring God's blessing on N. and N. by making the Stations of the Cross every Friday?"

Or: "Will you pay a visit to as many churches as you can wherever the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. A great many people can't go in the middle of the day, and *you* can. Don't disappoint Our Lord."

"Mother Conception was so reasonable, and so anxious that I should never annoy anyone by going to church at extra times, that I always felt uncomfortable when I didn't do what she asked, through my own fault," said one of the former Loreto girls.

Many mothers of large families would endorse that opinion.

"I am very self-indulgent," owned a former child of the Bray Loreto to Mother Conception. "Shall I ever go to heaven?"

"Do you want me to tell you to practise mortification?" asked Mother Conception. "No, you don't. Well, just say sometimes, '*God sees me, God hears me, God is to judge me.*'"

Not long after the girl became a Sister of Charity.

It is no uncommon thing for really pious persons in the world to complain they can't make meditation as nuns do; and still it has been strongly recommended to them by confessors, or in spiritual books.

"Try aspirations," advised Mother Conception. "Aspiratory prayer can supply the want of other forms of prayer. I remember," she went on, "reading that nothing changes a careless, selfish person so quickly into a close follower of the saints as the practice of aspiratory prayer. The same writer said that, for the majority of Christians, there is only one plan of succeeding in meditation, and this is the obstinate resolution, day after day, to do our best, however poor our best may be. We should go to meditation to please *God* and not ourselves—with our minds and sometimes our bodies made up for pain, dryness, and effort. Or, if we find it easy and sweet sometimes, we should look on that as a very agreeable surprise, and a grace which we don't deserve."

There are countless testimonies to Mother Conception's affectionate pleadings with those who came to her angry and embittered. After telling them they might open their minds to her, she finished her "comforting" with the

petition : " Now, won't you say one Our Father and Hail Mary for N. ? I'll join you. A prayer can't hurt anyone."

She was very fond of certain verses which at some special seasons, either of joy or sorrow, had touched her heart, and soothed her. On the chance that they may be a little God-gift to others we shall quote two or three. First—one that she repeated when the soul was, as she observed, " at war "—

God comes and lays my heart, all heated,
On the hard anvil, minded so
Into *His own fair shape* to beat it
With His great hammer, blow on blow,
And yet I whisper—" *As God will*,"
And, at His heaviest blows, hold still.

He kindles for my profit, purely,
Affliction's gloomy fiery brand,
And all His heaviest blows are surely
Inflicted by a Father's hand.
So I say, praying—" *As God will*,"
And hope in Him, and suffer still.

Even a gentler spirit of resignation spoke in the following :—

And when my bleeding heart
Desponds, or murmurs at its adverse fate,
Then quietly my Angel's bright lips part,
Whispering softly " *Wait.*"

" Patience," my Angel saith,
The Father's mercies never come too late,
Gird thee with patient and with trusting faith,
And firm endurance—" *Wait.*"

" Angel, behold ! I wait,
Treading the thorny path through all life's hours.
Wait—till God's hand shall ope th' eternal gate,
And change the thorns to flowers."

* * * * *

No one who knew Mother Conception will wonder that her mind dwelt on the trials of life, for she was overflowing with sympathy for the sorrowful.

" I can feel for you, dear child," she said to a nun who had lost her mother, " for when *my* mother died I thought I could never smile again."

But how bravely she sacrificed her strongest affections, and loosened her earthly ties, we know from the copy of a letter sent to us after her death by her sister—Senora Doña Canaleta. Mother Conception wrote it in answer to a beseeching invitation to try the good effects of the southern air by a short visit to our convent at Gibraltar. She had been ailing off and on, and her family thought this would be a valid excuse for letting them all have the

happiness of seeing her. They were not prepared for her reply :—

"My Dear Sister,

"You seem to forget that I have made a vow of obedience. You write as if I could travel at my pleasure. It is quite the contrary, so do not think it possible for me to go to Gibraltar. We shall have the long day of eternity to be together. The present time should be for us a time of sacrifices."

Had Mother Conception expressed a wish to go it is probable that, sooner or later, circumstances would have brought about the journey ; but she put aside every prompting, saying : "So as I may look forward to seeing heaven, that is enough for me."

In 1869 she was re-appointed to her former office of Mistress of Novices. We heard that her first lessons were grounded on the well-known text : "The peace of God surpasseth all understanding."

Among other recollections of her instructions we find the quotations which she repeatedly introduced : "This wish often falls warm on my heart—that I may learn nothing here which I cannot continue in heaven ; that

I may do nothing here that will not bear fruit in eternity."

Also : "Le plaisir de mourir sans peine vaut bien la peine de vivre sans plaisir."

A beautiful thought that has been preserved for us was her application of the verse of Scripture : *Exitus matutini et vespere delectabis* —"Thou shalt gladden my morn and my eve"—to the morning meditation and the evening prayers in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. "Only they who dwell in His house can seek Him early and late," she added, "and so they have good reason to hope they shall praise Him for ever and ever."

There is an entry of her having told the novices that sometimes when she felt very cold and sleepy in the winter mornings she braced herself up with the thought of "our Blessed Lord's struggling prayer in Gethsemani —the prayer that He made longer because all was darkness and loneliness round Him. I say to Him, then, that I hope He was thinking of me when He made the excuse—'The spirit *indeed* is willing, but the flesh is weak.'"

"Ah!" she said in her heartfelt way, "it takes sorrow and disappointment to make us feel the loveliness of prayer."

And when the anxieties inseparable from

responsibility pressed on her, she was more than once seen to be comforted by the dear old hymn which the nuns or novices often sang at recreation—to the air of "Home, sweet Home:"—

When torn is the bosom
By sorrow or care,
Be it ever so simple,
There's nothing like prayer. . . .

The thought occurs to us: Will those who did not know Mother Conception form a mistaken opinion of her, from the fact that we have dwelt at some length on her various minor "helps along the road to God"? Will they smile at the scraps of poetry that pleased her, the unpretending hymns that had their influence on her; and might the terms "poetical" or "sensational" be applied to her? If so, they would be entirely *mis*-applied. Mother Conception was a keen matter-of-fact woman, fully capable of administering the temporalities of our Houses, and a competent judge of the children's progress in our schools, as well as of the training necessary to fit the novices for their future mission. She had lived in the "old days" when the staff was small, and, as she expressed it: "Everyone had to put the whole strength

of her shoulder to the wheel." We remember her instancing Sister M. Seraphia Rorke—though this was bringing us down nearly to the time being.

"My heart used to ache," said Mother Conception, "when I would meet Seraphia, with her cheeks flushed with weakness, going to the school in Bray. I often told her to go back to her cell—that we would manage very well without her—and she used to say so cheerfully, 'I don't think you could, Mother. I am too famous for keeping your crowds in order.'"

That was perfectly true. Sister M. Seraphia's control of the children was a gift to be envied. She was mild-looking, low-voiced, and composed in manner; still, the moment she appeared any approach to disorder was hushed, and the children applied themselves immediately to the duty of the hour. When, as usually happened, other nuns were teaching in the same room, Sister Seraphia could sit there quietly at her needlework class, and her mere presence preserved discipline through from forty to fifty children. Mother Conception often drew the attention of the younger nuns to her, telling them she never saw Sister Seraphia anything but "absolutely gentle and absolutely firm."

"I was so grateful," Mother Conception said, "when Seraphia was sent to Stephen's Green, *to die with me*. Her beautiful patience was bringing a blessing on the house."

The anniversary of Sister Seraphia's death —1st June, 1869—was never let pass without a reminder from Mother Conception that those who have done all they could for Loreto should not be forgotten by their new Sisters. And besides, they are, she hoped, doing a great deal at present for us in Heaven, or even in Purgatory; "We don't know all we may owe them."

On one of these anniversaries Mother Conception pointed out the great Bishop of Southwark's teaching: "The souls in Purgatory are incomparable helpmates at the death hour. I can safely promise you that you will not dedicate yourself to the service of the holy souls without many graces following, drawing you closer to our dearest Lord, giving you a fresh claim on the love of our Immaculate Mother, interesting angels and saints in your behalf, smoothing your own pillow when you lie down to die, and laying sweet constraints on the Heart and Lips of Jesus when He comes to pass on you the fixed and final sentence of eternity."

It was one of Mother Conception's involuntary mortifications that she could rarely find half an hour for reading. People imagined she did not care for it, but her own testimony was to the contrary. Had she been able to consult her inclinations, she would not even have confined herself to spiritual books. She told a nun that the sight of a volume of Dickens made her feel "greedy."

What chance was there of gratifying this taste? Not much at any time, and less as the years went on. In addition to the charge of the Noviceship, Mother Conception was obliged to take the office of Assistant to Rev. Mother Scholastica. At first there was little or no difficulty in combining the duties. Rev. Mother Scholastica was fully equal to the government of the Rathfarnham Community in particular, as well as to the government of the Irish Branch in general. She exercised a minute supervision over the Mother House, and afforded ample assistance and direction to the local Superiors of the filiations at home and abroad. All she asked and required was the wise, true-hearted advice which Mother Conception could offer at the consultations concerning the affairs of the Institute. And, acting on her own wish, as well as the wishes

of the large majority of the nuns, Rev. Mother Scholastica brought this devoted consultress to Rathfarnham. To use her own words the day after Mother Conception's death, "No one could speak worthily of the dear, faithful Mother I have lost. She was more to me than words could tell. She bore the brunt of every trial to spare me pain and anxiety. May she look down on me, and *assist* me to the end."

Slowly, but surely, advancing age began to tell on Rev. Mother Scholastica. She bore the weight of her cares with so much self-restraint that it was not considered necessary that her Assistant should share her special tasks of correspondence and visitation until she showed what a relief it would be to her if Mother Conception could be at hand whenever Rev. Mother's health interfered with the discharge of the active duties of her office. For this reason another Mistress of Novices should be chosen. Our Venerable Mother M. Aloysia M'Carthy was appointed, as she said, "provisionally," for she protested that she was "past labour," and barely consented to "do" her "best" until the coming election, when her place was taken by Mother M. Patricia D'Alton.

Mother M. Patricia had exerted a remarkable

influence within and without the Institute for well nigh forty years. The term "educated," so often carelessly bestowed, was merited by her in the true sense of the word. Her mind had been trained in the Ursuline Convent, Waterford, and the culture was evidently of the highest order—granted, no doubt, that the seed was sown in receptive soil.

She was as unassuming as she was intellectual, so her acquirements might escape notice, but few who met her failed to recognize the genial, generous nature, which drew so many to her as to a most motherly friend. Her friendship so fully deserved the name, it was so earnest and so tenderly sincere, that to win it was to be "taken into her heart of hearts," with the warmth that was so precious in the darker days of life. Moreover, the directness and frankness stamped on her dealings won esteem and trust; consequently, she gathered a large store of experience, and, "her advice on various subjects was as valuable," said Dr. Furlong, Bishop of Ferns, "as if she had applied herself diligently to social and financial affairs. Her great charity to the poor enlightened her as to the best means of helping them."

That charity was a master-passion in Mother

Patricia. Nothing gave her greater delight than to get alms to distribute. "I would do anything on earth in my power for those who are good to the poor," she often said. "They make me as happy as a queen when they put something into my hands for the poor."

Two or three days before her death she was making a languid effort to open a letter, when a sovereign fell out. "Oh! it's for the poor," she exclaimed, "I'm enchanted," her kind, dark eyes brightened lovingly, perhaps for the last time.

Sometimes other distresses, as heartrending as the miseries of the poor, woke all Mother Patricia's compassion, especially when the sufferers were Loreto's "old children." They told her the trials they had to hide from their nearest and dearest, and not one was disappointed in her; not one left her without feeling, at least, a little better able to bear life's troubles, if there was no present hope of relief.

The affection of these former children for her was often transmitted from generation to generation. It would be hard to say which was the prouder of the fine young flock who came to her—one after another—Mother Patricia or their own mothers.

In the earlier years of Mother Scholastica's superiority in Loreto, George's Street, Mother Patricia was Mistress of Schools. At very short notice she was sent Superior to Loreto, Dalkey, and thence again to George's Street, where the charge of the schools was waiting for her. Mother Scholastica's appointment to be Vicaress of the Irish Branch of the Institute in the January of 1861 was followed by Mother Patricia's instalment as Superior of George's Street. In the spring of 1865 she succeeded Mother Conception as Superior of Loreto, Bray, and in 1868 she came back to George's Street for another term of office. At the end of the three years she was transferred, as Superior, to Loreto Abbey, Dalkey, where she stayed till 1874, when she was elected Consultress and, simultaneously, was named Mistress of Novices.

Mother Patricia's growing power was never questioned in the Communities over which she presided. Fully acquainted with the working of the schools, she was also an authority on housekeeping, and "the vexed question" of providing for the support of a large—a very large—household, on limited means, was not left unsolved wherever she was Superior. She acquired a practical knowledge of the economies

that prevent unnecessary privations, and this because she was of one mind with the Foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity, who impressed on the subordinate officials that, "As an empty sack can't stand, neither can the hard-worked body and mind subsist without proper nourishment."

Except in rare cases, it requires personal experience of ill-health to teach us intelligent pity for invalids. Mother Patricia had her own constant opportunities of studying that lesson, even if it had not been taught her by the hearty good-nature which was born with her in her Irish country home. She was an Irish-woman in every fibre of her being—with the strong, vivid Irish faith, the Irish realization of the world beyond the grave, the Irish trust in "the Mother beloved above all," the Irish pride in our Irish saints, and the Irish clinging to "the dearest land under the sun."

"You speak English, Mother Patricia, but your phraseology is Irish," remarked an English priest. And Mother Patricia registered his remark as a compliment.

Irish, too, was her ready response to everything that touched the emotions—religious or patriotic. Almost against her will the tears sprang to her eyes at the sad old Irish songs

or the sad old Irish stories. "God forgive me," she said one day, "I'm mourning over the thought that Ireland has so few joys to look back on, and so many sorrows. I should be praying it may be made up to us in eternity."

For one who appreciated the gravest authors, and who entered with zest into a theological, philosophical, or educational discussion whenever she came in contact with experts, it was strange how thoroughly she enjoyed and was lifted up by the simplest pleasures, and how dearly she loved birds, flowers, and little children. Here, again, the Irish element was perpetually glancing out—the Irish gift of catching a mental sunbeam, and the Irish endowment of a fund of quiet humour. These she retained to the last, and, withal, the younger nuns could tell many an anecdote of Mother Patricia's insistence on the obligation of toning down the high spirits of the childhood that some of them had scarcely left behind into "the deportment that ought to distinguish the religious." "That's not a high price to pay for the dignity of your espousal to our Blessed Lord," she said.

Mother Patricia's spiritual instructions had commanded the children's attention in the different houses where she was Superior. In

fact, she excelled in her clear, popular presentation of the truths of religion, as well as in the series of lectures which the children called "beautiful"—on the Our Father and the Mass. Rev. Mother Scholastica enumerated this qualification among others when giving Mother Patricia the charge of the Novices. "For years," said Rev. Mother, "I watched her sound judgment, her spiritual insight, her deep piety, and the power she had of imparting pious thoughts. She has all the fine qualities that make a woman respected—she is so honourable, so straightforward, so deserving of confidence. All I fear is that the office is a heavy burden at her age, and with her delicate health."

There were sufficient grounds for that fear. Bravely as Mother Patricia struggled to discharge the last task laid on her, it was a veritable endeavour to toil on under a cross that was almost beyond her strength. What an amount of patience and resignation bore her through the close of her days very few could tell. On her death-bed she owned: "But for the love of the Sacred Heart I should have let everything drop from my care, I am so worn out. God be Blessed that I clung to the Sacred Heart when I was comparatively strong. I have had my reward. It is such

a comforter! Far beyond a mother's love is Its love."

She did not appear to be worse than usual in the beginning of the winter of 1877, and she was able to be at the Christmas Midnight Mass. But she must have felt herself sinking, for on New Year's Day she spoke of her conviction that "the sands were nearly run." Early in February there was a decided alteration. Symptoms of an aggravated internal disease and increasing weakness gave cause for alarm; still, the doctors were of opinion that their treatment was partially successful, and that Mother Patricia would rally. She suffered intensely, but she was so tranquil, so collected, that it was difficult to think that she was passing away, especially as her loving interest in her friends and their welfare was as lively as ever.

On Tuesday, 12th February, she seemed wonderfully better, and spent an hour examining historical pictures. As she closed the book she observed: "I wish I were as familiar with the faces of the saints as I am with the portraits of these great personages. The former would be powerful protectors for me now." The following Friday she asked for the Last Sacraments. Canon Meyler—the

parish priest and novices' confessor—did not think her in danger; however, he yielded to her wish, and she thanked him over and over for gratifying her, saying, "You won't be sorry for it, Father."

So rapidly did she sink that when he visited her again at 7 p.m. the next evening, she was barely able to whisper, "How long may I last, Father?" Knowing her desire, he answered: "You will see God in a few hours." She looked up at him with a grateful smile, and clasped her hands in prayer. At 9.30 p.m. she was gone "behind the veil."

"Her work was done," said her confessor, "and her heart was gone before her to heaven."

CHAPTER XXIII.

We have referred more than once to the fact that the life of a nun is invariably, more or less, "hidden with Christ in God." Now and then, in the case of the active Orders, some of their members are brought for awhile into such contact with outside work that a few of their deeds are matters of general interest, but usually years on years go by and leave nothing for an earthly chronicler to record—beautiful exceedingly as these biographies would often be if the hand of a guardian angel would guide our pen.

And we feel this especially when trying to preserve a few recollections of the closing years of two who were so loved and venerated among us as Rev. Mother Scholastica Somers and Mother M. Conception Lopez.

Pursuing the thread of our Memories, we have reached a period when the extension and development of Loreto was carried on securely in the ordinary course of a solidly established educational religious Order. We recall with pride the letter addressed to our Sisters by the great prelate and patriot, Cardinal Cullen, then

Archbishop of Dublin, when, as our Ecclesiastical Superior, he was charged with the application to Rome for the solemn approval and confirmation of the Constitutions hitherto observed in the Loreto Convents under the headship of the Mother House at Rathfarnham and Episcopal Jurisdiction.

The Archbishop wrote : " The Constitutions, which have been added to your holy rules, have received our sanction and approval. They have been carefully prepared and revised, and we believe that they amply provide for your individual sanctification, as well as for the government of your Congregation."

After many fatherly words of congratulation and encouragement, " in pursuing this high vocation," His Grace concluded :—

" We hope to obtain for the Constitutions, added to your rules the approbation of the Holy See, for which we shall immediately apply, and we pray God to grant you every blessing."

✠ Paul Cullen,

Archbishop of Dublin, etc., etc.

26*th December*, 1861.

It was one of the crowning joys of Rev. Mother Scholastica's term of superiority to

receive the Decree of Confirmation, issued after the usual mature deliberation by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, and signed, with the approval of His Holiness Pius IX., by the officials of the Council of Propaganda—Cardinal Alexander Franchi, Prefect, and the Most Rev. John Baptist Agnozzi, Secretary. The construction of the spiritual edifice was complete.

Immeasurably less important, indeed, and yet a source of great happiness to Rev. Mother Scholastica and Mother Conception, was the formal recognition of the Sodality of the Children of Mary established at Loreto, Stephen's Green, for ladies living in the world. Mother Conception was the first directress of this Sodality, and even still the first members preserve treasured recollections of the saintliness that she brought into the midst of them. Her own exceeding devotion animated theirs, especially on the day of Reception into the Sodality.

" There was fervour in the affectionate pressure of her hands, as she arranged the ribbon on me," says one of the early Sodalists, looking back on the ceremony of admission into the Congregation through the lapse of many years.

Mother Conception often predicted the influence that would be exercised by this Sodality over the former Loreto girls. She knew it would keep alive the love of the Church and the poor in their hearts at the very time when the world would be busy teaching them altogether different lessons. That it has gone on doing this to the present day is testified by the registers kept from year to year. There are the records of thousands of visits to the hospitals, there are the lists of every variety of clothing that has been such a blessing to the poor, and there are the details of the benefactions to poor churches—the mention of stores of the beautifully-finished altar linen, which need only be glanced at to prove that the needles were employed in a labour of love. While all through these outward testimonies of practical fidelity to God's interests, we trace the perpetual heart-to-heart intercourse with their Mother Mary which prompts her Children to live in sympathy with higher aims, and leads to something nobler than selfish absorption in their own pleasures or their own individual welfare.

As regards our place in the sphere of education, there was a steady advance; not always as noticeable as, in secular phrase, "it deserved

to be." Never was a truer maxim caught up by the novelist Dickens, than when he bids one of his created characters say: "We note the harvest more than the seedtime." And, "I reap what I have sown—no more." But for the unobtrusive labour of many of our Sisters during the progress of the last century, where would the preparation be for what Loreto undertakes to-day? In every department of instruction remarkably gifted women were busily engaged sowing the seed and that without being urged on by public pressure or the appreciation of experts abroad.

To take a few instances from among the crowd, we know that the aforesaid experts would rarely meet a class mistress who would command more esteem than Sister M. Francis Rowe, whose name was seldom heard outside the Loreto circle. She was a carefully educated lady, refined in manner and in mind, and a perfect example of the possibility of uniting close application to the duty of education with the truest spirit of religious recollection and prayer. "Whatsoever thy hand shall find to do, do it with all thy might," was a lesson that Sister Francis had thoroughly learned. No professor in the most celebrated universities could make more diligent pre-

paration for his lectures than Sister Francis did for her daily classes. The prescribed text books never satisfied her. Wherever she could discover additional information bearing on the subjects she taught she made good use of it for the benefit of her pupils, and if we accept the definition of genius as " an infinite capacity for taking pains," Sister Francis was a genius among educationists.

Besides, she really loved her work. It seemed a positive pleasure to her to labour hour after hour—as she always did—for, in addition to being an excellent English scholar, she was a well-trained linguist and a finished musician. Certainly, in the opinion of the Loreto girls, " she was a very happy nun, as well as a very holy one." They were not too young to notice an elasticity in Sister M. Francis that kept her freshly able to enter into the growing intellectual life of the age. And neither did it escape them that she was one of those who strenuously prepared for the peace of life to come. When they saw the beads slipping quietly through her fingers as she went from duty to duty they knew she was trying to bring herself nearer to heaven by indulgenced aspirations ; for, though Sister M. Francis did not indulge in protestations she had the

children's spiritual well-being affectionately at heart, and she occasionally permitted herself a few words that gave them an insight into the earnestness with which she carried out her religious consecration to God.

And now, having said so much in praise of Sister M. Francis, we fear that numbers of former Loreto children will be disappointed if no mention is made of the nuns who were toiling with equal devotion at the same time in the different Loreto Convents. The " Bray girls " would remind us of Mother M. Christina Ryan's undoubted ability, both as an organizer of studies and a teacher. Nor would they let us pass over such an efficient staff as Sister M. Gabriel McGarry, Sister M. Augusta Feron, Sister M. Louisa Cavanagh, and Sister M. Gonzaga O'Reilly. The " Balbriggan girls " would insist on a mention of warm-hearted Mother M. Ursula Dwyer, whose grand religious spirit bore her through a laborious life from youth to old age. Others would desire us not to forget Mother M. Catherine Connolly, who did so much for the Letterkenny Loreto, and afterwards exercised great influence wherever she was stationed as Mistress of Schools.

Probably, the first place among our artists would be yielded to Mother M. Agnes

McAllister whose drawings, paintings, and illuminations were so exquisitely executed as to be considered "perfect" by connoisseurs. She was one of our universally-gifted members. Few organists could rival her. She was also an adept at every kind of needlework, especially embroidery. There was no lack of talent in Loreto from the earliest days, and Mother M. Agnes was a very tiny child when she went to the day school at Loreto, Harcourt Street; thence (as soon as she was old enough to be a boarder) to Rathfarnham.

Mother M. Agnes often spoke gratefully of all she and her school companions owed to one of her first mistresses, Sister M. Magdalen Dowling. We could hardly do justice to the sweet spirit of charity that made Sister M. Magdalen so lovable. Always the same kind words on her lips; always the same true sisterly feelings in her gentle heart; and then the meek patience with which she accepted the heavy cross of blindness, which deprived her of every occupation—she who could do so much, and had done her part so well. Not a murmur, not an allusion to the past, as she went peacefully here and there—knitting in hand—her mind often intent on composing the devotional verses with which we were so

familiar. There were frequent calls on her for poetical addresses for feast days, etc., and whatever she dictated bore the stamp of her own delicately-toned pious mind.

Sister M. Magdalen and her younger sisters, Mother M. Petronilla and Sister M. Joanna, were the daughters of a Protestant rector, but they became Catholics soon after his death, when they were still "in their teens," and knowing them as nuns, it was hard to believe they had not always been in our fold. There was not a vestige of "the convert" about them; they enjoyed the simple, serene faith that appears to be incapable of struggles or difficulties. Mother M. Petronilla passed nearly the whole of her religious life in Loreto, Stephen's Green, and Sister M. Joanna's was, we may say, spent in North Great George's Street. She had a singularly placid disposition. One could count the momentary slight ruffles that touched her during her fifty-six years in religion.

Even temperaments are not uncommon, but few preserve to the end the buoyant spirit that lit up many a clouded day when our dear Sister M. Theodora Mackey was one of the Community. A model of religious observance, faithful to every religious obligation, a friend who could

be confided in with entire trust, she brought continual sunbeams into the midst of us, so cheery and so healthy was her nature. The very day before her death she showed herself as bright and unselfish as ever, although she was going through the last agonising stage of months of sharp suffering.

It will tire our readers, though not ourselves, if we multiply these recollections. But we cannot close them yet, for we have our debts of gratitude pressing us in the name of Rathfarnham not to let gentle Mother M. Borgia Colgan's long, assiduous service of the sick be forgotten. What a mother she was to them! She literally lived for them. Day and night, if she could be of the least use or comfort, she was on the watch, and when she could do no more the very sense of her motherly presence was soothing to the dying. Her own beautiful passing away was a type of a sanctified death-bed. Pain was over; she had no cares, no regrets. "Say 'Jesus' often," she whispered to a Sister who was suggesting aspirations to her. "You love Jesus better than ever," said the Sister. "Yes," answered Mother M. Borgia, "and I think He is getting very fond of me, too." In a few hours she was with Him for ever.

Then, turning elsewhere, how ardently the love of the grateful poor in the neighbourhood of Loreto, Stephen's Green, would beg for a tribute to their indefatigable friend, Sister M. Regis Browne. Her heart was set on the poor. She was never content with employment in our Secondary Schools, but invariably won her way back to the poor children. To work and spend herself for them was her delight, and they owe the fine National School belonging to the Stephen's Green Loreto to Sister M. Regis's exertions.

There are still two names that must not be omitted from this very imperfect record. Mother M. Anne Hickey and Mother M. Joseph Hickey were not relatives, nor even connections, though they bore the same surname. In some respects their lives ran on the same lines, for they were called on repeatedly to take charge of one or other of our houses which needed an especially capable Superior. Both were sure to effect a great improvement in the state of affairs, and both were sure to make friends among those with whom they were brought into intercourse.

To Mother M. Anne was entrusted an exceptionally important foundation—that at Hulme, Manchester. Hulme was then only a

suburb, but the fact of the numbers of Protestants within reach, all more or less antagonistic to the advance of Catholicity, made the task of our pioneer Sisters a difficult one. How prudently the first Superior steered through obstacles and worries, and how popular she became, has often been told. Hulme is now surrounded on every side by an immense population, and the Loreto Schools and the amount of work they entail have grown in proportion to the wants of the district.

Mother M. Anne's last mission was in Gibraltar, and there, as always, veneration followed her devoted service of God.

Mother Joseph Hickey had a peculiar power of winning affection and trust from parents and children. The latter were put completely into her hands, and they, in turn, afterwards brought their little ones to her with all the old confidence in her motherly heart. There was always something home-like about the house where Mother M. Joseph presided—something that forbade loneliness or the sensation of being a stranger. And it was the same even when her lingering illness set in, and kept the mastery over her for months. She tried to forget the torture she went through by busying herself with others, and managed so well

that she was able to superintend the Convent at North Great George's Street till she died. Two or three days before her death some of the George's Street nuns who went to see her at Rathfarnham, to which she had been removed for change of air, found her just as anxiously alive to their wants and comforts as she had been when she was in the midst of them.

The Sisters who have been alluded to as typical of the Loreto staff in the middle of the last century were all actively employed in various directions while Mother Conception was spending her last years in Rathfarnham. Rev. Mother Scholastica was obliged to rely more and more on her Assistant, as she became gradually too feeble for the annual visitation of our Convents. Fortunately, she had a deputy who was competent to relieve her of anxiety—one who would be her second self in thoughtful attachment to the interests of the Communities in general, and in solicitude for each nun who held a place in them. We remember how often Mother Conception repeated, "Rev. Mother will ask me how everyone in the house is"; and "Rev. Mother will be delighted with all I have to tell her."

Bravely as Mother Conception kept her

course through her large share in the superintendence of the Loreto filiations, there were signs that she might soon be worn out. She was rarely absent from her post, but it became an effort to follow all the community exercises, as she felt specially bound to do; and whenever she permitted herself some dispensation on that point it weighed on her mind, and did her harm in another way, for the uneasiness tended to increase the intermittent fever to which she became subject. She had been so long accustomed to strict observance of her rules that it was a source of keen vexation to her when exhaustion interfered. She said sometimes that the consciousness that her time was "growing short" was urging her to do more, while if she attempted it she was soon forced to do less. "If we could be sure," she said, "that it was His own divine Hand that is pressing us down we would be content. I say to myself that if not a hair of our heads can fall without His permission, He will be merciful to our bodily weakness, and I beg Him to let me know what I am able to do for Him."

This year—1879—the Church celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception as an article of faith, and as the great annual Feast drew near Mother

Conception seemed to have got "a new lease of life." She almost lived at our dear Lady's feet, her thoughts were so incessantly clinging to Mary Immaculate's queenly throne. The glorious 8th December brought her many spiritual pleasures. Among them was a gift of money from a friend for a Novena of Masses. The last of these was said for the repose of her soul the morning after her death. Someone remarked that Mother Conception's health appeared wonderfully improved. "Yes," she said, "I believe I am to cumber the ground a little longer."

On the morning of the 16th she was in the choir at 5.45 a.m. for the hour's meditation before Mass and Holy Communion. A visit to the Blessed Sacrament after breakfast, and her morning Office, occupied her till 9 a.m. Then she snatched a few minutes to finish a letter to Loreto House, Calcutta. The last words were: "Many changes have taken place here. Many loved ones have left us for heaven; they are interceding for us. Many more changes will take place. God's ways are wonderful."

A prolonged consultation with Rev. Mother Scholastica and the Council followed. Rev. Mother's third term of office would expire early

in January, 1880. Her age and weakness (she was entirely confined to her room), forbad the consideration of her re-election. And this was the day fixed for the preliminary consultation with the Archbishop, Cardinal McCabe. Mother Conception and Mother Xaveria Fallon were deputed to meet His Grace in Loreto, North Great George's Street. They were at the Convent shortly after 12 o'clock. Mother Conception went round the schools, saw all the nuns and children, and asked the former to be ready to meet the Archbishop about 2.30 p.m. His Grace appointed the day for the election, at which he promised to preside, and left George's Street at 3 p.m. Mother Conception was as well as usual till the end of the after-dinner recreation. The Rathfarnham cab was to call for her at 5.30 p.m. Just half-an-hour before she acknowledged she had a bad headache, and would be glad to rest quietly for awhile. A bed was immediately prepared. "Call me when the cab comes," she said, and lay down with evident relief. Shortly after it was noticed that she was growing restless, and her devoted friend, Mother Joanna, then Superior of the house, asked her to try to go to sleep, and stay where she was for the night. Mother Conception

made a last effort to answer: "No, Rev. Mother would be uneasy."

Her articulation was so indistinct that Mother Joanna—a practised infirmarian—got frightened, and sent in haste for Dr. Quinlan, who understood Mother Conception's constitution. He came with all speed, and his first words were: "Send for a priest—there is no time to lose." Mother Conception had lost consciousness.

In five minutes Father Thomas Kelly, S.J., from Belvedere College, was beside her, and almost simultaneously Dr. Cruise was in consultation with Dr. Quinlan. They turned to Father Kelly, begging him to administer Extreme Unction. He hesitated. "If possible," he said, "that duty belongs to a priest of the parish. One has been sent for."

"She may be gone any minute," cried Dr. Quinlan.

Father Kelly at once began the sacred rites, and before they were ended Canon Conlan, from the Pro-Cathedral, came in haste, followed closely by Father Edward Kelly, S.J. But Mother Conception had gone far beyond earthly help or earthly consolation. She lay insensible and motionless, the laboured breathing of apoplexy growing gradually slower and

fainter. The saintly spirit was passing away in the Arms of God. She needed no other friend, no other comforter. He had been all in all to her in life—He was all in all to her in death.

At last a slight, indescribable change made the nuns' hearts beat more quickly; the fervour of their prayers was redoubled; Father Edward Kelly raised his hand for the last absolution, the dying head drooped gently to one side for the last long slumber—and Mother Conception was at rest.

Many years have elapsed, but the memory of that evening is fresh in the minds of those who were present at Mother Conception's death-bed. They had been brought so close to heaven's gates, they had been drawn so solemnly into the scene of the return of the soul to its Creator, that they could scarcely force themselves back to the world that had vanished so suddenly from her whose blessed abode was in eternity that night.

Even dear Mother Joanna, whose affection was so tender and so true, could not shed a tear over her loss. The sovereign Lord had claimed His own, and, in the strange nearness of His Presence, earthly love and earthly grief disappeared for awhile as though they were of little worth.

Next day all that was mortal of Mother Conception was laid before the altar in the church where she had received her last Communion a few short hours before.

The nuns said, afterwards, that the holiness of a saint's resignation was visibly before them these days, while our beloved Rev. Mother Scholastica offered up her sacrifice to God. Though many loving, grateful words told what was in her heart, there was always the submissive yielding up to the sweet Sovereign Will of God of what had been such an unfailing support and comfort to her for the past eighteen years.

Three weeks later the election of a new Superior-General took place, and Mother Xaveria Fallon was canonically appointed to the office—which she held till her death in 1888.

Mother M. Xaveria was born on the 6th February, 1832, at Ffrenchlawn, Co. Roscommon. We know how fondly the Irish of the West cherish their home. Perhaps no spot on earth throws stronger ties round its children. They tell us that:

> In the very air there lingers
> Something tender, something faithful, which the world besides, has not.

And, young as Mother Xaveria was when she left Runnamede, she clung to the memory of

her first sunny seven years with an affection that absence never destroyed.

It was a sad familiar story that was repeated in her family—the tale of failing fortunes, and sinking hearts, and then the inevitable exile. Like many another open-hearted, open-handed son of Ireland, Bernard Fallon lacked the strength to encounter the troubles that thickened round him, but not even his nearest and dearest knew how sore and heavy his burden had become till he suddenly sank under an attack of brain fever.

He had preceded his wife and children to Boulogne, hoping to provide a dwelling-place —he could not yet bring himself to call it a home—for them. A hasty summons prepared Mrs. Fallon for the worst, and by the time she reached her husband but a few hours remained for their long farewell. She was almost startled to find him so calm and trustful, till he told her that an Irish priest had been with him, and prepared him to meet his God, and had comforted him with the promise of a glorious answer to his prayer: "We beseech Thee, O Lord! to defend and provide for the fatherless children, widows, and all who are desolate and oppressed."

The prayer was most mercifully granted as

regarded his children, for his four daughters became nuns, and rarely was a son more devoted to a mother than her only boy was to Mrs. Fallon.

With all her yearnings towards the old land, Mrs. Fallon knew the wisest plan was to settle for the present at St. Omer. She had heard great praise of the education given at the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration, under the Benedictine Rule; so it was there that Mother Xaveria—then Jane Fallon—began her school days.

She was described by some of these nuns (who survived her) as a dear little girl, so docile and so sweet that she won the votes of the whole house every year for the "Prix de Sagesse," a wreath of white roses. Moreover, a priest, Monsieur l'Abbé Gruelle, who was intimately acquainted with the family, distinguished Jane as *cette âme prédestinée*."

Life flowed on smoothly till the awful upheaval of 1848 converted France into a theatre of horrors. The Fallons were among the crowds who hurried back to Ireland, where, even in the midst of the agonies of the famine year, and the bitter consequences of English mis-rule, something of "the peace that the world can neither give nor take away,"

hallowed the atmosphere of Irish faith and strong belief in the world to come, where "none shall hurt them more."

Early in the spring of 1849 Jane Fallon and her sisters went (boarders) to Loreto, Rathfarnham. Here, again, she was everyone's favourite, and was crowned May Queen. "Perhaps," said Rev. Mother Ball, when she heard the result of the voting, "that child may one day rule our Institute." But Jane had not formed any attachment to Loreto then. Her thoughts turned towards the Benedictines at St. Omer, where she had listened to the first divine whispers, re-echoing, "Que de grâces, dans une seule grâce! Que de bienfaits ressemblés dans le seul bienfait d'une vocation réligieuse!" At length she concluded "The grace which contains so many graces must be the most precious of all."

Gradually, and almost insensibly, Jane Fallon's love was transferred from the French Benedictines to our own Irish Loreto. She begged to be allowed to enter on Christmas Eve, and spent her first hour in religion at midnight Mass. The mention already made of the then Mistress of Novices, Mother Gonzaga Sinnott, is a guarantee of her exactness in training the aspirants. So holy a nun should

expect a high degree of fervour in those for whom she was responsible, and she found all the dispositions she desired in Sister M. Xaveria. She was recollected, prayerful, anxious to attend to every point of the Rule, and as mild and charitable as she had always been, while the spirit of unnoticed self-denial had already taken root in her soul. One of her companions called her, "A light of spirituality among us."

Very soon after her Profession, Sister M. Xaveria was sent to the new foundation at Loughcooter. The demesne was a magnificent one, but nuns could not cope with the difficulties of managing so extensive an estate, and the salaries of a competent staff of dependents would run beyond the means of the Community; therefore, when Lord Gough offered £3,000 over the sum paid for it, Rev. Mother unwillingly parted with her splendid acquisition.

In the August of 1854 Sister M. Xaveria returned to Rathfarnham, and in April, 1855, she was appointed Mistress of Novices. She was very young, no doubt, for that important charge; still, Rev. Mother Ball, who had watched her closely, judged that her union with God, her meekness, patience, and self-sacrifice

had been sufficiently tested, and that her single-hearted devotion would bring a blessing on the Novitiate.

Certainly, the novices soon knew her worth. She was so equable, so engrossed with her duty to them, and so regardless of her own natural fatigue or strain in the constant round of earnest attention to the necessary training. A proof of early maturity in the spiritual life was always before them in her adoption of St. John Berchmans as the type of sanctity that might safely be imitated.

Let us quote her own words: "He never aimed at working a miracle. No miraculous favours were attributed to him. Humbly, simply, unostentatiously, he travelled along the path of observance of his rules, and it is not written of him that he ever turned aside to perform what is called a heroic act. *God is not mocked.* Those who do not conform to the ordinary rule laid down need not fancy there is a higher sort of holiness waiting for them."

Over and over these words were repeated with but little variation, and the sentence which is italicised will be "a household word" to many. Mother Xaveria used to insist on the importance of being ready to face the question: "What does God think of us, and

of our actions and speeches? How do they appear in His sight, divested of all human clothing or colouring?"

Continual reference was made to Mother Xaveria's piety, and there is not a dissenting voice as to the truth of the following picture:—

Her prayer was quite unlike that usually described as ecstatic. What she felt was deep in her heart, and never expressed itself in raptures. It was her tranquil spirit of absorbed devotion that was so striking. Her piety was perfectly unobtrusive, she seldom brought forward her feelings, being far more willingly the listener than the speaker, but the entire holiness of her soul was revealed when she knelt down to pray.

Bright and unconstrained the instant before—in one moment—the short pause of her slow, reverent Sign of the Cross—her whole being was rapt in God.

There was no effort, no strain; distractions seemed impossible, and we often fancied that with her petition must be almost lost in adoration—that earth drew back and left her—alone with God.

Surely it was these intervals of rest and comfort that made her retain so much of her simple happiness to the end; for, indeed, she

had her trials, though she spoke so little of them. She was put into office early in life, and was never afterwards without cares and anxieties, so it was most natural that she should value the support and advice of older and more experienced guides. One by one they were taken away, just when they were most helpful and, we might say, indispensable. We don't think anyone heard a murmur from her. There was a longing look to God, and if He thought it best not to answer that look it was not repeated. She strengthened and steadied herself to stand alone, or rather, perhaps, she drew closer to Him Who is our only constant stay.

In addition to being Mistress of Novices, Mother Xaveria was Assistant to Rev. Mother Ball for some years before the death of our Foundress. At the redistribution of offices under our Second Chief Superior (Rev. Mother Scholastica), Mother Xaveria was confirmed in her post of Mistress of Novices, and Mother Gonzaga Sinnott named Assistant to the Superior-General.

Then followed the years of Mother Xaveria's uninterrupted application to preparing the future Loreto nuns for their mission. They all remember her reiterated suggestions on the

point of hardly perceptible exterior and interior mortification. For instance, when illness or delicacy demanded a dispensation from fasting or abstinence, she prompted slight mortifications of the appetite that could not injure health: "Let there be some sign," she said, "that you recollect the Precept of the Church, if you are not able to observe it."

Another continual exhortation dealt with purity of intention, and (as closely connected with this) she generally passed on to the consideration of the dignity of our vocation. One sentence of hers is preserved: "To labour generously in the schools is to deal with the salvation of countless souls. It is to prevent multitudes of sins. It is to extend the influence of religion far beyond our sphere. It is to become instrumental in the sanctification of numberless beings yet unborn."

She had never been quite cut off from intercourse with the children, for she retained her French class in the First School while she was in charge of the novices. So the Rathfarnham girls never lost sight of her, and the few sweet, gentle words that she sometimes greeted them with, *en passant*, won a welcome from them when she succeeded Mother Antonia Mathew as Mistress of Schools.

Mother Antonia had been greatly loved by the children, and they had good reason to feel the parting from her; but they could not resist Mother Xaveria's gentle advances, and, as to herself, her whole heart was thrown into her new sphere of action. Someone remarked to Rev. Mother Scholastica how easily the Mistress of Novices was translated into the Mistress of Schools. "It would be just the same with her," said Rev. Mother, "if she were made Mistress of the Kitchen Garden."

"She had a true mother's heart," writes one of her former charges. "She was always ready to listen to our little joys and sorrows, and if a naughty child had to be penanced, Mother Xaveria felt it as keenly as the child herself." "We knew," wrote another, "that she belonged to us, after God. Our childish ups and downs were of real importance to her. How her face used to light up when anyone praised us! And how hard she tried to believe the very best of us, so that we could not bear to undeceive or disappoint her. I remember her well at the morning meditations she gave us. She sat motionless, her eyes closed, her hands clasped, the words flowing quietly from her lips. Two or three sentences were constantly urged on us. One was:

'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence.' Another: 'That which thy hand findeth to do, do it well.' When we had special difficulty in overcoming ourselves, or when we were in trouble over our little annoyances, she was accustomed to ask us: 'How do you feel with regard to such a thing after Holy Communion?' That thought often helped us. So did her admonition: 'Remember that the tongue with which you offend our divine Lord when you speak uncharitably is the same on which His Sacred Body and Blood is laid in Holy Communion.' She had us trained to join the choir at Benediction, and when we succeeded she was more delighted than words can express, telling us how glad she was to hear us giving the first of our voices to God."

A great deal has been said from year to year of Mother Xaveria's thoughtful tenderness towards children, and she well deserved the most heartfelt acknowledgment of her affectionate guardianship of them, especially those who were the least favoured by fortune or other advantages. But we must dwell a little on another feature of her career, as Mistress of Schools—the spiritual side of her unremitting labour. We can throw some light on it here.

Examples of patience, energy, and devotedness are not rare among secular teachers; still, the most pious among them cannot possibly surround their pupils with the atmosphere that belongs of right to a convent school, which is, at the same time, the House of God. Both parents and children look for a difference there, and only they appreciate this difference they would sometimes be content with secular training. We need not attempt to analyse the feeling that lies so deep in Irish Catholic hearts. Fathers and mothers, world taught, sometimes world weary, sometimes richly blest in all that the world can give, feel that for a few years at least they would like to place their children in the safe keeping, not of man, but of God. It is to Him and to His House they bring their children, and the nuns are there to receive the trust in His Name.

This is what distinguishes the nun from secular teachers. This is why she is pledged to give the first place to the "one thing necessary." We do not require to be warned that in current phrase we "must advance with the times." The very best and most earnest work should be done in convent schools—better if possible, and far more earnestly, than the

same kind of work carried on in secular schools. Surely, we should not fancy that any effort short of our best could repay God's confidence in us! Surely, we should not imagine that He would be satisfied with the setting of a lower standard before us than that which seculars propose to themselves in educational matters! Certain limitations to the freedom which is sometimes indulged in in secular schools are laid down in convent regulations, but these are well understood and thoroughly approved of by a large majority of parents. Emancipation from restraint will come soon enough, they say, and they would regret departure from the established discipline.

The foregoing may be called a digression—however, it is not—for it might have been worded as a direct quotation from Mother Xaveria's instructions to her subordinates. If the costly equipment and expensively-trained professors of the State colleges tempted her to wish that our pecuniary resources were equal to those of our richly-endowed rivals, she had the gratification of seeing that when our girls competed with the apparently more favoured students, they did not show themselves inferior. God's blessing touched their work. Moreover, the success was achieved without

any curtailment of the devotions of the scholastic day, or of the time set apart for religious instruction.

In fact, in proportion to the increased mental activity, Mother Xaveria grew more vigilant that the primary religious obligations should be faithfully discharged. "Circumstances may change," she often said, "but principles never change. We must try to please the All-seeing Eye. Better fail in an examination than neglect God."

And the children, who knew how her heart rejoiced in their successes, wondered a little at her steady adherence to the rules that protect their religious instruction and obligations. Whether they could fully enter into her views is a matter of doubt, but their faith was never severely tried; for, as a rule, those who took highest honours at the public competitive examinations got highest marks for religious knowledge.

Rev. Mother Scholastica and Mother Xaveria agreed to lay it down that no child could obtain any distinction by the private quarterly and annual examinations who had not gained at least half the number of marks allowed for Christian Doctrine, Sacred and Church History. The prizes given in our

schools for this subject were to be superior to the rest of the rewards.

And this rule was enforced by one who watched the children's improvement in every other department with all the eagerness of a fond mother.

"Just think," she told them, "it is certain that the great God is occupied with the concerns and actions of each school girl. Will He meet disappointment in Loreto?"

Those who were under Mother Xaveria's care say that she brought this vivid perception of the Divine Presence to bear on their conduct in every respect. They were to be truthful and honourable, because the calm Eternal Eye never withdrew Its watchfulness. They were not to feel themselves free to be rude, or loud-voiced, or boisterous, because "Our blessed Lord expects something of His Mother Mary's spirit to pass into her little children."

In this context we may insert Mother Xaveria's usual advice to the younger nuns: "I know some of the children give you trouble. Some are not clever, and some are wilful. I will do all I can to help you, but God can help you better than I can. Talk to Him about them. He knows them better than we do.

He can influence them. Tell Him everything that is a hindrance to your work. You may be quite sure He will always listen to you."

Thus spoke the true Religious—such as Mother Xaveria always was. And it was the conviction among the nuns that the same religious spirit would guide her to the end that led to their choice of her as the third Chief Superior.

Her predominant feeling when she was invested with this authority was that she would not have to bear the burden long. Probably, no outsider would guess that she was a sufferer from progressive spine disease. Even in Community life there were few signs of it observable. Nevertheless, it must have exercised her endurance daily—might we add hourly. No one on earth knew how much restless pain was hidden under Mother Xaveria's bright attention to her various tasks. She practised as well as taught the lesson: "Have you any coin in your little spiritual savings bank? Make haste and hoard it up as fast as you can; put in all, down to the smallest earnings. Good interest will be given; but, again I say, make haste, for the bank may soon close, and then—the long stand-still."

Now and then some words of sympathy

scattered through her letters, told of a personal acquaintance with the crosses that strewed our path. For while she continually reminded us that "Every nun is truly happy, no matter what her crosses may be, if she lives according to the spirit of her holy state," she also repeated, "Is it not a happiness to have it in our power to suffer something in return for the priceless grace of our religious vocation." While, if a definite sacrifice was to be made she added: "Avec Dieu plus on fait les choses promptement moins on souffre, et plus on mérite."

When she cheered others with thoughts like these, her own increasing weakness was pressing on her. She kept up an extensive correspondence with the filiations at home and abroad, and did not omit the annual visitations. Yet, when some temporary ailment prevented her from presiding at the Community duties, it always preyed on her mind—lest, as she said, her example might contradict her former teachings to the novices: "God blesses us most richly when we are all together in common life. Who knows what graces we miss when we are absent from the Community."

Well! harder hearts than any we have ever met would have assured her that her duty was

accomplished with anxious fidelity, and that no one could fail to notice her conscientious endeavour to answer to God for the trust confided to her.

A matter which cost Mother Xaveria much care and labour was the drawing up of regulations suitable for the government of the affiliated houses in India and Australia—the getting them accepted by all—and approved in Rome. At the close of the negotiations the foreign foundations found themselves, to their intense satisfaction, in intimate touch with Rathfarnham.

As Rev. Mother Scholastica had been honoured by the faithful friendship of Cardinal Cullen, so Mother Xaveria found steady support in Cardinal McCabe. Her humility and her simple confidence in him were almost childlike. And she invariably found His Eminence fatherly and accessible, when she referred the affairs of the Institute to him, with implicit reliance on his direction.

She met his successor, Archbishop Walsh, with the same entire trust; and opened her whole heart to him concerning her desire to resign her office, on account of her fast failing health. His Grace would not accept her resignation, but she always dwelt gratefully on

the kind, comforting words with which he encouraged her to hope for better days.

She rallied, indeed, from time to time till, slowly and sorrowfully, she was forced to relinquish those choir duties which had been so inexpressibly dear to her. Her morning meditation was just as punctually made in her room, but she sorely missed the Eucharistic Presence, and she clasped her little crucifix tightly, begging for submission to the sovereign Will that crucified her longings.

Her delicacy was so apparent now, her face had grown so transparent, and her bright, candid eyes were so often dimmed by exhaustion, that we knew a protracted martyrdom had begun. Paroxysms of terrible agony became frequent, leaving her scarcely strength to whisper: "God's will be done. He knows best. He loves most." When relief came, her first ejaculation was: "Ah! God is very good."

So the weeks and months went on. By degrees the old familiar devotions had to be merged in a loving, heart-whole acceptance of the earthly purgatory that closed her life. She would never join in the prayers for her recovery. To the very last she tried, in her unselfishness, to give a little help, a little

consolation, wherever she could, and then—God would do the rest.

The blessings she had been deprived of in the beginning of her illness were restored to her. She had her frequent Viaticum and the weekly Mass celebrated in her room. Her only wish was to yield up her office to the Ecclesiastical Superior: "He would not say now that I might recover," she said, "and when he comes home he will certainly appoint a day for the elections, so that I may die in perfect peace."

But His Grace was delayed in Rome, and by the time he was able to visit Mother Xaveria she was going fast. She strove to look the welcome she could not speak, and when she was asked if she knew the Archbishop she summoned up the momentary power to answer: "Oh! yes."

His Grace gave her the Holy Father's blessing, and his own, and then, as if inspired to forestall the request she was trying to utter, he promised her he would hold the visitation of the house in August. "Never," said some of the nuns, "could we forget the comfort he gave her. All was in his hands, and she was happy."

Three days later the last flickering light of life sank away. It was Sunday morning.

The Dominican Father from Tallaght came for the customary Mass in her room. He knelt beside her for a quarter of an hour, giving her absolution after absolution. Suddenly her eyes opened, clear and joyful. Next instant they closed peacefully. Mother Xaveria slept in God. It was the morning of the 8th July, 1888.

Only three years before, Rev. Mother Scholastica's long pilgrimage had ended. From the day she was freed from responsibility she had turned, with exceeding happiness, to the untroubled rest of a beautiful and sanctified old age. Her room, which she could never leave, was a true sanctuary of prayer, and holy hope, and ever-increasing love. Yet, never did a warmer heart than hers embrace all whom she had known and cherished in the past, as well as those who were dear and precious to her still. Tender, searching inquiries followed them if they were absent, and her motherly solicitude clung to those from whom nothing but death would separate her.

Nor were wider interests forgotten. She had been a woman of wide sympathies, extended interest in the great general course of God's ways through the world. Her prayers pursued them now. Passive as she seemed, she was no idler in the Master's vineyard, and her prayer-

ful diligence was helping the harvesters on many a busy field.

As she grew weaker she liked to surround herself with little external aids to the remembrance of her favourite devotions.

"I am so old," she said, "and I never see the lovely church on feast days; never hear the music; no 'Forty Hours' for me; no processions. I'm not murmuring, I hope, but I loved all these things, and I wanted them, to warm my tepid soul."

So, by degrees, the cotton check-curtains of her bed became tapestried, as it were, with pictures of the Sacred Heart, Our Lady (sometimes changed, according to the different feasts) and other patrons. Her crucifix, beads, Agnus Dei, and some relics were always near her. And thus, when her extreme feebleness forbade the repetition of long vocal prayers, her aspirations were guided from one sweet thought to another.

Holy ministrations were never wanting to her. Many of our Bishops and priests were happy to visit her, and long after she had passed away they spoke of the tranquil spirit of holiness that seemed to hush earthly anxieties, and show them something of the beauty of the eternal peace in God.

And still, she was her own humble, gently upright self to the end. Never a preacher in words, but so eloquent a preacher by her deeds—so simply and naturally what she was called to be as the Spouse of the King—that those who knew her, whether as friends or sisters or children, count it among the great graces of their lives to have lived with one whose sanctity was tried and true.

The month of March, 1885, brought a great change. Partial paralysis set in, but it only affected her externally—her mind was quite clear. Many touching incidents proved how unaltered she was; the little presents that she always loved to give (just as a mother would), kept within reach; the fond motherly welcome to some who came to say a sad good-bye; the minute inquiries for their far-away relatives; the hope that correspondence was kept up with those whose welfare was dear to her; and the fervent blessing that followed all who held a place in her faithful heart.

So the last week of her life wore on. She had several hours' peaceful slumber every day, but she liked to waken when the Sisters visited her; for, though her speech failed, she recognized them with a delighted smile, and her soft, earnest eyes told a great deal that she

could not speak. Rev. Mother Xaveria and Mother Angela hardly ever left her : they were with her the first in the morning, the last at night.

" She seemed," writes one of the watchers, " to grow more angelic every hour, and she was always so ready to listen to the prayers that we repeatedly said beside her."

Masses were said frequently opposite her bed, while she lay offering up her holocaust with the devotion that never knew a faltering day from her early childhood.

Thursday, the 19th inst., she lost consciousness, and though the doctor assured the nuns she was not suffering, she seemed to breathe with such difficulty that they wondered how the fragile frame held out through the long agony. For, next morning she was lingering still when Father Gilligan, O.C.C., came for the usual Mass in her room. After he celebrated it death seemed so near that he would not leave her. Hour after hour there was no pause in the prayers for the soul departing. Midday came. The bright March sunshine streamed in freely, but the closed eyes never opened, and the flushed face gradually paled. It was as if God were drawing her closer and closer to Him, apart from earth, before He

bade her come to Him for ever. One o'clock struck. Our dear Mother woke for an instant, looked up, and then, with a low sigh, turned aside. She was gone.

" One could hardly think her dead," wrote a nun who was kneeling by her. " Her beautiful, calm face grew so bright and young-looking, and so saintly. The prayers and offices were continued day and night beside her, as they had been during her last days with us. And when the time came to lay her in the grave we saw we were not the only mourners, for tears were in the eyes of the priests who were standing round the coffin where the truest of friends was laid at rest."

" I feel that words could never convey an idea of the beauty and sorrow of those days."

" The little birds that were accustomed to be fed at her window flew to it, and stood there with drooping wings, as if they knew something of our grief, and when she was taken away to the church they never came again."

It was the close of one of those lives that glorify our Irish convents for ever—lives of such spiritual loveliness in the sight of heaven, lives that betray themselves but partly and unwillingly to the world, yet lives that, when

a glimpse is caught of their quiet Spousal dignity, call forth much love, much reverence, much gratitude, with livelier hope and more vivid faith in Him who in His own royal Home will crown our Irish Sisters "with glory and honour" for evermore.

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