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## Elizabeth Seton: Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity; Her Life and Work

Agnes Sadlier

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# ELIZABETH SETON

Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity

## Her Life and Work

By

AGNES SADLER

Author of "Jeanne d'Arc"

Thou hast given me the protection of Thy salvation: and  
Thy right hand hath held me up. Psalm XVII.

The innocent and the upright have adhered to me, because  
I have waited on Thee. Psalm XXIV.

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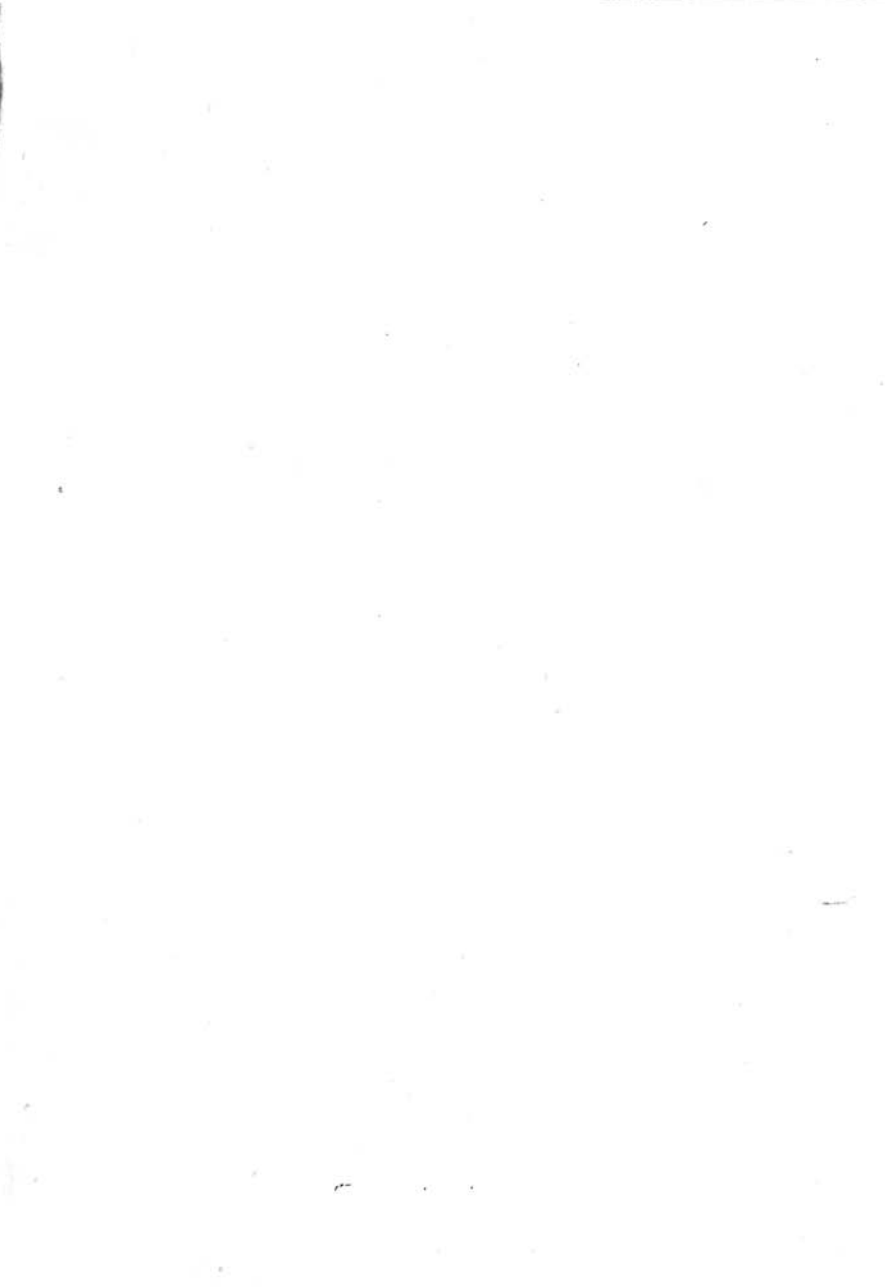
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MOTHER SETON.

**TO THE**  
**SISTERS OF CHARITY**  
**In The**  
**United States,**  
**Who Are Leading That Holy Life**  
**Of Which Elizabeth Seton Was So Perfect An**  
**Exemplar,**  
**This Book Is**  
**Respectfully Dedicated.**



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# ELIZABETH SETON.

## CHAPTER I.

1774—1803.

### CHILDHOOD, YOUTH, AND MARRIAGE.

I praise Thee while Thy providence,  
In childhood frail, I trace,  
For blessings given, ere dawning sense  
Could seek or scan Thy grace.

*Newman : A Thanksgiving.*

THERE stands, at the threshold of the nineteenth century, the forerunner of that noble band of confessors who, during it, renounced honors and wealth, and friendship, and high places, and pleasant lives, for Christ's sake, the figure of a woman, worn and wasted with conflict, yet touched with the radiance of victory; one who, chosen by God to do a great work in the new country that was to repair to the Church the losses inflicted upon her by the schism of the sixteenth century, shows throughout her life the special guidance that He vouchsafes to souls faithful to His inspirations, and the strength and consolation He imparts to those who suffer for His sake.

Elizabeth Seton was born in New York City of

mixed English and French ancestry. In the early part of the eighteenth century, when George the Second was King of Great Britain, a young gentleman named Bayley, the cadet of a family of the gentry of Lynn-Regis, in the county of Norfolk, England, came over to make a tour of the American colonies. The latter were then deeply attached to the mother country, and warmly welcomed any desirable visitor from its shores. This particular visitor, in turn, showed his appreciation of the people and the country, by marrying, and settling in the colony of New York. His wife was a member of the Lecomte family of New Rochelle, descendants of one of that band of immigrant Huguenots of the seventeenth century, who gave the name of their famous French stronghold on the Bay of Biscay, to the quiet spot in Westchester County, on the shore of Long Island Sound, in which they settled.

One of the sons of this marriage, named Richard, became a physician and married Catharine Charlton, the daughter of an Episcopalian clergyman of Staten Island, and the sister of Doctor Charlton, a noted physician of that day. Their marriage took place just as troubled times were beginning for the colonies, though in New York, with its strong royalist contingent, there was a conviction that the difference between them and the mother country would be amicably adjusted. It was in this happy belief, no doubt, that Doctor Bayley, who from first to last, was a staunch royalist, settled down

with his young wife in one of the solid, comfortable houses that lined the shady streets near the Battery, which was then the court end of the town, and devoted himself to the practice of his beloved profession for which his talents, character, and sympathetic disposition appear to have eminently fitted him. Three daughters were successively born to Doctor and Mrs. Bayley, who received the names of Mary, Elizabeth Ann, and Catharine, and then, in the year 1777, a great sorrow came upon the little household in the death of the young mother.

If anything could have made up to the Bayley children for their loss, it would have been the love and care which their father lavished on them. No stranger was allowed to preside in his home; he ordered his life so as to be able to take charge of it himself. But in spite of all his care and knowledge, little Catharine, the youngest of the three, languished, and finally died, when only two years of age. Elizabeth, now an intelligent child of four years, who, while extremely vivacious, must have often astonished those about her by her serious and devout spirit, tells us in her "Remembrances": "I sat alone on the step of the doorway, looking at the clouds, while my little sister Catharine lay in her coffin; they asked me: 'Did I not cry when little Kitty was dead?' 'No, because Kitty was gone up to Heaven; I wish I could go too, with mamma.'"

Doctor Bayley soon married again, this time a Miss Barclay, of the well-known family after whom

Barclay street in New York city is named. Elizabeth appears to have loved her stepmother, and welcomed her half-sisters and brothers as they arrived, very warmly.

The scenes amid which Elizabeth passed her earliest years no doubt had their effect on so intelligent a child. For New York, bright as it appeared with the red coats of the grenadiers, the plaids and plumes of the Highlanders, and the gaudy uniform of the Waldeck, in its streets, was in reality, a city divided against itself, with the homes of many of its inhabitants in ruins, death reaping a wide harvest within its borders, and the sight of the sugar houses, and the Middle Dutch Church, those infamous prisons in which scores of Americans lay dying amid unspeakable horrors, to sadden the hearts of all, Tories, and Americans, that were not insensible to pity. The royalists had rejoiced greatly when Washington had been forced to abandon the city to Howe, and hoped that the zeal which they had shown for the King's cause, would temper the severity of military rule. A wise policy would, indeed, have dictated this, but the British seemed fated to blunder in every particular of the conduct of the American war. Far from receiving the indulgence they had looked for, and considered themselves entitled to, the New Yorkers found themselves treated with the greatest severity, which increased the suffering inseparable from their situation, with Washington's army to the north, constantly intercepting the convoys that attempted to

carry provisions into the city. The suffering reached its height during the Winter of 1780, when the cold was so intense as to freeze even the waters of the lower bay, thus cutting off all succor by sea. Fuel was so scarce that old houses were torn down, and old ships demolished to serve as firewood. When these were all consumed, the trees that lined the streets, and which, because of their stately beauty and the grateful shade which they afforded in Summer, were the pride and joy of the inhabitants and the admiration of visitors, were hewed down for the same purpose. Provisions rose to prohibitive prices, and were so scarce even at these, that many were brought face to face with starvation. Added to these privations was the terror caused by the rumor that Washington intended to cross the ice from Jersey, and surprise the city.

In spite of all these grim facts which history records, life went on within the city, not in the smooth, even channels of prosperous times, it is true, but in some fashion, so that people managed to subsist; and conducted their households, and married, and died, as they have done since the beginning. King's College, as Columbia was then called, was closed, but most of the smaller schools remained open, and the usual procession of children going to and from them, was to be seen in the streets, every day. The little Bayleys joined this at an early age, for in that sterner day, at a period when even the amusements of the Kindergarten are still remote from the children of this, our

happier time, the tender little creatures were consigned to the hard benches and rigid discipline of the schoolroom.

The school which the Bayley children attended was in the vicinity of their home, and was conducted by an elderly, spectacled, dame. Here Elizabeth learned her letters, and began to work her sampler, keeping, at the same time, a close watch on the street for her father, who passed the school frequently as he went to and from home, on his sick-calls. Like Homer, the venerable preceptress sometimes nodded, thus making it possible for the little girl to dart into the street, embrace her father, and regain her place, without being detected.

In the year 1781, Sir Henry Clinton was succeeded as commander-in-chief, of the British forces in America, by Sir Guy Carleton. Shortly after the new general's arrival in New York City, Doctor Bayley joined his army as surgeon. An intimacy sprang up between the Doctor and the new chief, which gradually deepened into a sincere friendship, whose memory Doctor Bayley strove to perpetuate by bestowing the name of Guy Carleton on one of his sons. This Guy Carleton Bayley became the father of one whose name, like that of his saintly aunt, was to become illustrious in the annals of the American Catholic Church; James Roosevelt Bayley, who in the year 1842, at Rome, became a convert from the Episcopalian Church, of which he was a clergyman, to the Roman Catholic, and later, Archbishop of Baltimore.

Two years after Sir Guy Carleton's appointment, a treaty of peace was signed by Great Britain and the United States, and the English forces evacuated New York, the last city that remained in their power. Elizabeth Seton, then nine years old, saw, no doubt, the British regiments, with their brilliant uniforms, and burnished arms, march to the transports that were to convey them to England, and close upon their leaving, Governor Clinton, representing the civil, and Washington the military power, ride in, followed by the shabby, war-worn American veterans, and beheld the British flag hauled down from the forts, and the Stars and Stripes, then seen for the first time by many of the inhabitants, run up in its place.

Doctor Bayley proved a happy exception to the rule of severe treatment of the royalists by the Americans. His high professional reputation, and spotless personal character, not only won for him immunity, but caused him to be appointed health-officer of the port of New York.

The inhabitants of the city were now enabled to renew intercourse with their relatives and friends, who lived in the country. Elizabeth's paternal relatives, the Bayleys, were still living at New Rochelle, and she paid them a visit about this time. She tells us in her "Remembrances," how she enjoyed life in the country. "I delighted to sit alone by the water-side, or wander for hours on the shore, singing, and gathering shells. Every little leaf and flower, or insect, animal, shades of clouds,



or waving trees, were objects of vacant, unconnected, thoughts of God and Heaven." Like St. Francis of Assisi, she had a tender love for all God's creatures, and could not bear to see them hurt. Once, when her little companions had taken the callow birds from the nest, "she gathered them on a leaf, trusting that the little mother, hopping from bough to bough, would come to them, and bring them back to life." She often cried, she says "because the girls would destroy them; and at last, rather than witness their cruelty, preferred to walk or play alone." She greatly admired the clouds, and looked for her mother and Kitty in Heaven.

Much as she loved the country, however, she returned home with joy, for her greatest happiness was to be with her father. Lovely and intelligent, and already displaying many of the noble traits of character which he himself possessed, it is not to be wondered at that Elizabeth was his darling. Unlike many parents, however, his partiality for this child of many gifts, only made him firmer in his wise guidance of her, more observant of her tendencies, and lovingly insistent that her character should conform to the highest standards. Realizing the suffering to which her temperament, which was as ardent, as it was delicate and sensitive, would subject her, he strove to moderate it, and to develop in her that calmness of spirit which comes from the exercise of reason, and that sweetness of disposition which imparts an enduring charm. "Calm that glowing

of the soul, that warmth of spirits," he writes to her; "impressions will then be less readily admitted, but they will last longer."

Elizabeth who was able to say, in after life, that she never had disobeyed him, was equally conscientious in her efforts to mould her character to his wishes. She strove to repress her too great vivacity, to moderate her enthusiasms, and to gain equability of temper. She was studious, but so fond of certain studies, that she neglected others. Among the slighted ones were French and music. Her father, observing this, said to her: "French and music must have their hours." This was sufficient; Elizabeth never again neglected either.

At a very early age, she began to show a forgetfulness of self, and a desire to help others; a characteristic that only grew stronger with her years, and never ceased to animate her heart until its last breath. It was vouchsafed to this soul with so strange and beautiful a destiny, to discover early, the sweetness beneath the bitterness of sacrifice, the honey of the rock, of which Holy Writ speaks. The deep spirituality of her nature manifested itself in her very infancy; she may be said to have learned to reflect, and to love prayer, at the same time. While still a very young child, she edified those about her by the recollection and fervor which she displayed during Church services. As she grew older, she found delight in reading the Bible, a practice in which she was no doubt encouraged by her stepmother, who was a devout Episcopalian.

It soon became Elizabeth's favorite book, from whose pages she drew maxims which served as guides for her thoughts, her judgments, and her conduct. It was her custom to transcribe those pages of Holy Writ which impressed her most forcibly and thus fix them in her memory. In this way she amassed a store of knowledge that enabled her, in after years, to adorn both her writing and her conversation, with apposite quotations from Holy Writ.

Reared as she was in the Episcopalian faith, in that church, which of all the heretical churches, retains most likeness to that founded by Jesus Christ, she was deeply attached to it. But what she prized most of all its teachings, was precisely what it retained of Catholic dogma and tradition. "The soul has a thousand reasons that reason does not know," and Elizabeth's soul, under the impulse of the grace that was one day to detach it from error, had already unconsciously begun its quest for truth. She read the *Imitation* daily, and endeavored to order her life by its counsels. She also cherished a tender devotion to the guardian angels. Faithful to the custom which prevailed in the Episcopalian Church, she bowed her head reverently if the Sacred Name was uttered in her presence. The image of Our Blessed Lord filled her with the deepest veneration, and the crucifix was particularly dear to her. She always wore at her neck a little cross, suspended from a ribbon, and frequently expressed her astonishment that Christians

so rarely gave this proof of love and respect for their holy Redeemer.

The incessant prayer of a great saint was: "Lord, grant that I may know Thee, and know myself;" and it was also Elizabeth's. She had, indeed, that hunger and thirst for justice, righteousness, and truth, whose possessors have the divine promise of salvation. She traced for herself a path to perfection, and strove earnestly to walk in it; scrupulously examining her conscience every evening in order to see in what, and how far, she had departed from it. She usually wrote this examen which was as severe as youth, with no spiritual guide save its own generous heart, and exquisitely sensitive conscience, could make it. Not only did she accuse herself of the least fault; the slightest negligences of duty, even when almost involuntary; her girlish reveries, or day dreams, became matters of self-reproach. After she had begun to go into society, the examen became still more rigorous, and whenever she had appeared at any social gathering, usually concluded with the remark that her time would have been much better employed if it had been passed in prayer and retirement. This severity of self-judgment, and devout spirit, were united with great vivacity, and that perfect candor and simplicity which are the soul of friendship, and impart to even the slightest and briefest relations in life, an indefinable charm.

At fourteen years of age, her father having gone to England for further medical study, she went to

stay with her relatives at New Rochelle for a considerable length of time. Every healthy spiritual life is deepened when it comes to dwell amid the trees, and fields, and flowers, and the singing of birds, and watches the nesting, and grazing, and ripening of the harvests, that are going on upon the green earth. As Ruskin truly says, landscape seems hardly to have exercised any strong influence on any pagan nation, or pagan artist, while the language of the Bible is specifically distinguished from all other early literature by its delight in natural imagery. It should therefore be expected that every Christian soul would feel amid the scenes of nature, a deep sense of the presence and power of Him who hath made everything beautiful in His time. As Elizabeth passed through the wood-glades, dappled with flowers and sunshine, felt the cool wind, and smelled the sweet scents, watched the day break in solemn beauty over the waters, or gazed on the scarlet clouds that burned like watch fires in the evening sky, there rose in her childish heart, tender and beautiful thoughts of God. She herself speaks of this time in her "Remembrances," as passed in "enjoying the Bible, and Thomson, and Milton, saying hymns on the rocks, surrounded with ice, in transports of first, pure enthusiasm, gazing at the stars, Orion, especially, walking among the cedars, and taking joy in God that He was my Father. This thought gave me pleasure in everything, coarse, rough, smooth, or easy, and made me always gay. When the Summer came, I sat in the mead-

ows, surrounded by the sheep and lambs, or wandered on the shore, repeating my favorite hymns."

Woman's education, in those days, received scant attention. A pretty face, a sprightly manner, a few slight accomplishments, and a knowledge of housewifery were what was considered desirable or necessary for a young girl. Those who, like Elizabeth, possessed talent, repaired the neglect by study and reading. Some one has said that a good library is the best university, and many women of the eighteenth century proved the assertion, in their letters and conversation, at a time, when as Dean Swift remarked, the majority of ladies could not even spell properly. Doctor Bayley would gladly have given his daughter the advantages of further education, if it had been in his power to do so, but our country at that time afforded even less facility for it than did Europe. He did what he could by opening his library to her, and by his advice, she always read with a note-book by her side, into which she copied extracts, both in prose and verse, from her favorite authors. These appear to have been historians and religious writers, in prose, and Milton and Thomson, in poetry.

Unhappily, Doctor Bayley was imbued to a considerable extent with the irreligiously philosophical ideas of the eighteenth century, and his life of toil and study in the service of his fellow-creatures seems to have been for the sake of humanity alone. His library contained a store of the infidel literature so popular at that time, and he placed no restriction

on his daughter in regard to it. In the Catholic Church, so pious a young girl as Elizabeth in her position, would have been saved from danger by the guidance of her spiritual director; but poor Elizabeth was left free to quench her thirst for knowledge at poisoned sources. The result was that she read some of the infidel literature; more particularly the works of Voltaire and Rousseau. Voltaire seems to have exercised little or no influence upon her; but the exquisite style and specious charm of Rousseau seem to have completely fascinated her for a time, as they did countless others. Some years afterwards, noting the decease of a friend who had declared on her death bed that the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau had been her ruin, she adds: "My merciful Saviour! I too, have felt their fatal influence, and once they composed my *Sunday* devotion; dazzled by the glare of seductive eloquence, how many nights of repose, and days of deceitful pleasure have I passed in the charm of their deceptions!"

Elizabeth, like all young girls of her time, was introduced to society at a very early age. The wise refusal of the state and municipal governments to cede New York City to the United States, by ending all hope of its becoming the seat of government, had left it free to work out its commercial greatness, and it had already assumed much of the aspect of a metropolis. It is true, Mrs. Washington's "queenly drawing-rooms," as the disaffected called her weekly receptions,

and the foreign embassies which had imparted so much color and gayety to society, were lost to it, along with Washington's great cream-colored coach drawn by six magnificent horses, which had been one of the sights of the city; but New York had so many old and wealthy families, and the advantages it offered as a place of residence, induced so many desirable people to take up their abode within it, that it still possessed a very gay and elegant society, which had gained in exclusiveness, what it had lost in variety by the departure of the government. The social position of the Bayleys admitted them into the very inner circles of the fashionable world, and Elizabeth's beauty and brilliancy at once made her a favorite there. She was rather small in stature, but slenderly and gracefully formed. Her face, with finely cut features, and lit by brilliant black eyes, inherited, no doubt, from her Huguenot grandmother, was framed in masses of dark, curling hair, arranged in the simple, graceful fashion of the close of the eighteenth century. Combined with this youthful loveliness, was the charm imparted by intelligence of mind, perfect womanliness, and the vivacity which was, no doubt, also a heritage from her French ancestry.

Her most intimate friends at this time were Julia Sitgreaves, afterwards Mrs. Scott of Philadelphia, Mrs. Sadler, the wife of a wealthy English merchant, residing in Cortlandt street, and Mrs. Duplex. These three remained faithful to her through good and evil report, to the end. She seems to have enjoyed



their companionship extremely, and in after years asks Mrs. Scott, in one of her letters, if she remembers their delightful rides into the country, both being, like all the young girls of their time, accomplished horsewomen. Society, in general, however, seems to have had no real or abiding pleasure for her. Visions of a different, a higher and more earnest life, continually rose within her soul ; she read, with interest, of those hoary, historic, cloisters which had sheltered, for centuries, laborious, mortified, monks, or virgins consecrated to God, and wished that there were such places in America, where people could be shut away from the world, and pray, and be always good. She went so far, as to entertain thoughts of running away in disguise, to some such place over the sea.

If Elizabeth had been a Catholic, all this would have ended, of course, in the consecration of herself to God in the religious life. But the church of which she was a member, had no such life within its fold, to offer her, and in all society outside the Catholic Church, marriage was the only career possible for a young girl. So it was by this ordinary and approved way, that God led Elizabeth on to the place and part He had chosen for her.

There was at this time in New York city, a Scotch merchant named Seton, of the highest standing and position. He lived in a large mansion in Stone street, in the midst of his patriarchal family, the result of two marriages, and dispensed lavish hospitality ; so that an English gentleman

who had brought a letter of introduction to him, wrote back to the friend in England who had given it, to thank her "for having introduced him to the most agreeable house in New York." William Seton, the eldest son of this Mr. Seton, seems to have shown a decided admiration for Elizabeth from the time of her entrance into society. He had spent some years abroad, in the business house of the Filicchis, in Leghorn, and had traveled through a good part of Europe before returning home. Elizabeth, at that time, had a passionate longing to travel, and the ability of young Seton to describe to her places and things she so much desired to see, was, no doubt, what first made his society attractive to her. His feelings are revealed in a letter to his brother in the West Indies, in 1791, in which he says: "It is currently reported and generally believed that I am to be married to Miss Bayley, but I shall think twice before I commit myself in any direction. Though I must confess I admire her mental accomplishments very much, and were I inclined to matrimony, not at all impossible, but I might fall in love with her; and I have no doubt but she will make an excellent wife, and happy the man who gets her."

This letter, breathing as it does, all the condescension to the opposite sex, of the very young man who fully realizes his importance as the eldest son of the wealthy merchant, closes, with boyish naturalness, in an apostrophe that plainly reveals his true feelings. No further record of his courtship exists;

Elizabeth's "Remembrances" contain not the slightest allusion to the subject ; but as three years went by before the marriage took place, we may conclude that William carried out his determination of taking time before committing himself, and that Elizabeth considered well before giving him her heart. The marriage took place on January twenty-fifth, 1794, the ceremony being performed by Doctor Prevost, the Episcopalian Bishop of New York. The young husband bore a name that had been famous when Scotland was Catholic, and which was to gain a new and undying lustre from the young girl who that day assumed it.

The first years of their married life were filled with that rare and perfect happiness which often marks the beginning of lives destined to know great trials. William Seton, it is true, was as indifferent to religion as Doctor Bayley ; but the fact that he possessed many natural virtues, and led an upright life, seems to have gone far to content Elizabeth, whose ideas of religion, though God was the constant subject of her thoughts, were still very vague. On every other point there existed the most perfect harmony between them. Elizabeth entered her husband's family like an angel of peace and love ; her father-in-law soon confided to her secrets of his heart that he had never confided even to his own children ; the young brothers and sisters of her husband loved her like a mother ; the grown-up ones, like a sister. In the eldest unmarried daughter, Rebecca, Elizabeth found, as she said later, "the

friend of her soul." This young girl possessed a meek, deeply spiritual nature, and strove to put in practice the highest precepts of the faith in which she had been reared. In spite of her manifold duties as mistress of her father's large household, she found time every day to visit the poor, a work in which Elizabeth joined with ardor. Often, at a very early hour, while the streets were comparatively deserted, the two ladies were to be seen, hastening on their errands of mercy; and so zealous and persevering were they in their charity, that they at length gained the name of "the Protestant Sisters of Charity." It was not given to Rebecca to labor long; she died in ignorance of the true faith, just as its light was beginning to dawn on Elizabeth's vision, but who can doubt that she was one of His other sheep, of whom He told us, whom He tenderly welcomed into the heavenly fold!

The Summer after the marriage, Elizabeth sat for a miniature, and the proud young husband, writing to her from Philadelphia, whither he had gone on business, says: "I showed my friends your portrait, and many agreeable things were said for which I felt greatly flattered, but let them know that the artist, although a Frenchman, had not at all flattered *you*."

In the Autumn of this year, the young couple went to live at No. 8 State street, in what was then the most beautiful part of the city, with only the green sward of the Battery pleasure-ground between it and the blue waters of the harbor, on which the

white-sailed ships went to and fro, and beyond whose clear expanse, unsullied by smoke, rose, on the right and left, the wooded shores of New Jersey and Long Island, and on the south, more clearly outlined then than now, the coast of Staten Island. Here, in May, 1795, Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter, who received the name of Anna-Maria.

The first shadow that fell on her happiness was the ill-health of her husband which began to show itself in the Summer of 1796. Writing to her friend, Mrs. Sadler, about that time, Elizabeth says: "I have learnt to commune with my own heart, and I try to govern it by reflection; and yet that heart grows every day more tender. This I attribute to the state of my William's health. Oh! that health on which my every hope of happiness depends, and which either continues me the most perfect human felicity, or sinks me in the lowest depths of sorrow. That health does not mend, and although it is my fixed principle, both as a Christian and a reasonable being, not to dwell on thoughts and future events which do not depend on myself, yet I never view the setting sun, or take a solitary walk, but melancholy tries to seize me, and if I did not fly to my little treasure, and make her call Papa, and kiss me a thousand times, I would forget myself. . . . You remember your situation on Long Island; I am about two miles nearer the Narrows, and enjoying every comfort of the country without any interruptions of visitors or other intrusions. Sister Post (her sister Mary was now Mrs. Post) is within a hundred yards on

one side, and if I had you on the other I would have every charm of society. My father is Health Officer of the Port, and sails down very often in his boat to see us, and when he meets me and little love, he says there never was such a pair, and that he sees no such cheerful expression in any other eyes in the world. You may believe it, for there never was truer affection in any heart than in mine towards him."

In the Autumn, Elizabeth gave birth to her second child, a son, who received the name of William. But the joy of the young parents in the child's coming, was soon shadowed by new anxieties; for financial embarrassments began to threaten the business house of Seton. In those days, a merchant's fortune was so subject to the natural dangers of the sea, and to disasters caused by all Europe being at war, that it is a wonder how any of them escaped ruin. The quasi war between the United States and France, brought on by the insolence of the French Directory, and its refusal to receive the former's minister, Mr. Pinckney, caused a suspension of commerce with French ports, which gave the final blow to the already tottering house of Seton.

The certainty of financial ruin, coming as it did upon the elder Mr. Seton, when he was suffering from the effects of an accident, depressed his spirits, and lowered his vitality to such a degree that a disease rapidly developed which caused his death, in June, 1798, at the comparatively early age of

fifty-two. His loss to his family was irreparable, for with him, as Elizabeth wrote to Lady Cayley, one of her husband's Scotch relatives, "passed every hope of fortune, prosperity, and comfort."

This trial was peculiarly hard for Elizabeth and her husband, because the latter, as the eldest son, had now become the head of the family, and was obliged to assume the care of the many helpless young children whom his father had left. But there was neither murmuring nor repining on the part of the young couple. William Seton resolutely accepted the burden, and concentrated his energies on the effort to save something from the wreck; and Elizabeth sacrificed her, "love of quiet and a small family," and bravely took her place as mistress of the Stone street mansion. If her love and respect for her husband were increased by his conduct in their change of fortune, his feelings for her were beyond his power to express. "Adversity, the trier of spirits," had revealed to him the greatness and beauty of his young wife's soul. Ever serene and tender, full of energy for active helpfulness, and showing in her suggestions and advice, much of the executive talent that distinguished her in later years, she seemed to him an angel from Heaven, sent to support him in this dark hour.

The mental strain resultant on these heroic efforts of Elizabeth to be a true helper to her husband, told terribly against her, however, when in the July of this year, 1798, she gave birth to her third child, a son, who received the name of Richard

Bayley, in honor of her father. For a time, the young mother's life hung in the balance, and the child's was for some hours thought past hope. All their trials seemed as nothing, no doubt, to her husband, when he saw Elizabeth out of danger, but she reveals her true feelings to her dearest friend, Julia Scott, when she says in a letter to her written some weeks afterwards; "that she was within one pang more of that rest she often longed for, but which Heaven for good purposes had again denied."

While she was convalescing, New York was visited by yellow fever, described afterwards by Elizabeth, as "of the most deadly kind, and more like the plague than anything else." The family were sent to Craigdon, the county-seat of the deceased Mr. Seton, and as soon as it was possible, the young mother and her infant were also conveyed thither. The only one of the family affected by the fever was Mr. Seton, and his was only a very slight attack, from which he soon rallied.

Craigdon was situated at Bloomingdale, on the Hudson, about six miles beyond the city. This whole region now forms one of the finest parts of New York, and long rows of costly residences cover the site of the pleasant village. But on the east side of Riverside Drive, a magnificent avenue that runs along the Hudson for several miles, these end in superb mansions, and leave the west side free for an unobstructed view of the river and the Palisades, as the hills beyond it are called. The ground lying between the Drive and the water has



been reserved as a public park and left, so far as regards its natural features, much as it was a century ago. It may be therefore, that the wooded slopes in the vicinity of west seventy-eighth street, once formed part of Craigdon, and as one treads their quiet paths, it is easy to fancy Elizabeth Seton strolling there, gazing on "the stately river, moving like eternity," or seated in the shadow of some great tree, repeating the Psalms, whose recital, she says, always gave her special strength, or reading the Bible, and taking joy of the blessed assurances in its inspired pages.

About all Hallow-tide, the Setons returned to their town house, and Elizabeth set systematically to work to rear her large family. Two of the Seton orphans were sent to school at New Brunswick, but all the younger children remained under the joint care of Rebecca and Elizabeth. Two of these were girls, Harriet, aged at this time eleven, and Cecilia, seven, and both were to be closely associated with Elizabeth in her Catholic life. Who can doubt that it was the love they conceived for her during this time when she took with them the place of the mother they had lost, which filled them, in after years, with the desire to know more of the faith she had embraced, and thus led them like her, to brave scorn, and desertion, and all that the human heart naturally shrinks from, in order to embrace it?

The Winter passed quietly and pleasantly, Mr. Seton's affairs prospering more than he had ex-

pected. In the Spring, Rebecca Seton, whose health had grown very delicate, went to live in Delaware, with her sister, Mrs. Vining. She took little Cecilia with her, and Harriet went with her sisters to school at New Brunswick. Writing to Elizabeth some months later, Rebecca says: "I have had many letters from them (her sisters) since their return to Brunswick, and they write in perfect ecstasy at the happy hours they passed at home, which delighted me. . . . My Cecilia has improved most astonishingly since you saw her. She has grown quite tall and rosy, and shall not, if I can help it, lose anything by being kept away from school. She reads charmingly, is now going through the 'Economy of Life,' and can hem a handkerchief. It is an occupation for me to teach her. She is always talking of Anna."

The year 1800 brought fresh disasters at sea, which completely overwhelmed Mr. Seton financially. In the Summer, as Craigdon was now sold, Doctor Bayley brought Elizabeth and her family to his house at the Quarantine Station on Staten Island, and here in June, Elizabeth gave birth to her fourth child, a daughter, who received the name of Catharine, in memory of Elizabeth's mother.

As accumulating anxieties cast a deeper shadow on her life, Elizabeth's soul awakened to a more serious consideration of Christian truth. Rebecca Seton, who had now returned to New York to live, contributed to this by her gentle spiritual influence, and thoroughly practical Christian life. She brought

Elizabeth, too, under the direct influence of the Reverend Henry Hobart, one of the assistant pastors of Trinity Church, a man eminently fitted by his character, manners, and education, to captivate those who were brought into contact with him. Elizabeth soon conceived the deepest reverence and affection for him, and became a regular attendant at St. Paul's, of which he was then in charge. Thenceforth, her letters and entries in her notebook, abound in references to his sermons which seem to have given her great consolation. She was indeed sorely in need of spiritual strengthening, for her already much tried soul was soon to experience a new and overwhelming grief, in the death of her father. From her very babyhood she had loved him with a peculiar love, finding in his smiles and caresses her greatest happiness, and throughout life a complete sympathy existed between them which made them find in each other all that anything outside of God can give.

Doctor Bayley's death was worthy of his life. In the Summer of 1801, yellow fever appeared again in New York, and began to make fearful ravages among the Irish immigrants. Doctor Bayley, as health officer, and one who had made an exhaustive study of the disease, gave himself up completely to the work of combating it. At all hours of the day and night he was to be seen among the dying and the dead, often carrying in his arms a little infant taken from its expiring mother. Elizabeth, who was with him again this Summer, and was only

restrained from sharing his labors by her stern sense of duty towards her own children, aided him by her constant prayers and sympathy, and we may be sure, in every possible practical way.

The conflict ended by this noble physician, in whose life greatness of purpose had been united with greatness of career, falling, with his face to the foe. On the eleventh of August, he felt the first symptoms of the disease, and leaving the hospital, hastened home, went to bed, and became delirious. Elizabeth's agony was inexpressible. Joined to the conviction that she was about to lose her father, was fear for his eternal future, for she knew that all he had to plead in his favor before the tribunal at which he was about to appear, were his upright life, and years of compassionate service of his fellow creatures. So intense was her anguish, that she lifted her little daughter Catharine out of her cradle, and offered her life to God for the salvation of her father's soul. There was no visible response to this prayer; the child slept quietly on, but Elizabeth's soul was soothed, and she felt content to leave the issue with God.

Doctor Bayley must have regained consciousness, for Elizabeth tells us, that on the third day, finding that the remedies administered had no effect, he looked earnestly into her face, and said: "The hand of God is in it; all will not do." Three more days went by, during which Elizabeth had the consolation of hearing frequently on his lips the sacred name of his Redeemer, which she had never heard

him utter before in all his life, and then on the afternoon of the seventeenth, "he became perfectly easy, placed his hand in hers, and died."

His faithful boatmen placed his body in his barge, and after rowing it to within half a mile of the cemetery at Richmond, Staten Island, carried it the rest of the way thither, and interred it themselves. The only other present at the lonely obsequies, was Doctor Moore, the clergyman who read the burial service. "Natural kindness," says a recent spiritual writer, "is a God-given instinct; it is God within us crying out to us; and to whom we may either hearken, or turn a deaf ear." \* Throughout his life, Doctor Bayley had hearkened to this Voice of God within his heart, and can we doubt that, after it had led him through the portal of a hero's, one might say, a martyr's death, into His Presence, He bade him enter into the joy of the blessed, because of what he had done unto his little ones?

His grave, close to the church, on the east side, is marked by a low white marble tablet which bears the following inscription :

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IN MEMORY OF  
DOCTOR RICHARD BAYLEY  
OF NEW YORK.

Who, after practising the various branches of his profession  
With unwearied diligence and high reputation  
For thirty years in that city,  
Projected a plan, and for five years conducted a  
Lazaretto on this island.

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\* Tyrrell, S. J. *Nova et Vetera*.

Intelligent in devising and indefatigable in pursuing plans  
 Subservient to the cause of Humanity  
 He continued to guard the Public Health with  
 Persevering Industry  
 And in the midst of dangers to perform with  
 Invincible fortitude the hazardous duties of Health Officer,  
 Until in the discharge of this important trust  
 He was seized with a Malignant Fever, to which he fell  
 A Lamentable Victim  
 And thus terminated a life of great usefulness,  
 On the 17th of August, 1801,  
 Aged 56 Years.

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The loss of her father, which was perhaps the greatest sorrow of her life, does not seem to have been accompanied with much outward manifestation of grief on Elizabeth's part. She alludes but little to it in her "Remembrances," but one can perceive, after it, a steadily increasing depth of spiritual perception, more practical regard for the duties and counsels of her religion, and a desire to know in all things, the will of God, and to fulfill it. She surrendered herself more and more to Mr. Hobart's guidance, and he led her as far as it was possible for him to go. It was no doubt, under the influence of one of his sermons that she writes in her notebook as follows: "This blessed day, Sunday, the 23d of May, 1802, my soul was sensibly convinced of the blessing and practicality of an entire surrender of itself and all its faculties to God. It has been the Lord's day indeed to me."

In July of this year, Elizabeth gave birth to her

fifth and last child, a daughter, to whom she gave the name borne by her beloved sister-in-law, Rebecca. A few weeks later, she was admitted, for the first time to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at St. Paul's. Writing of it to Rebecca, she speaks of Mr. Hobart's fervent prayers on the solemn occasion, and the peace and happiness which filled her heart, and were like a foretaste of Heaven.

This might be described as the culmination of Elizabeth's life in the Episcopal Church. A great change was at hand; she was to leave her place in St. Paul's, which she had grown to love so dearly, and the "pastor, friend, and brother," as he called himself in his farewell letter to her, whom she so deeply revered, never again to enter it to find peace within its walls, nor contentment in his teachings. The efforts of Mr. Seton to adjust his pecuniary affairs had met with little success, and he appears to have been able to do nothing further until the partnership with Mr. Maitland, who represented the house in London, should have expired. As this would not be for some time yet, he decided to employ the interval in taking a trip to Italy, for the improvement of his health, which was greatly impaired. His wife realized that he was in no condition to go alone; so she at once began preparations to accompany him.

In her heart, Elizabeth had always shrunk from the world,—that world between which and God there is irreconcilable enmity, and for which Christ said He would not pray. Its blighting spirit seems

never to have breathed upon her soul. Her detachment from material things is manifested by the fact that the dismantling of the home in State street, to which the family had returned after the house in Stone street had been disposed of, and the sale of the furniture, which would have been such an unspeakable trial to the ordinary woman, gave her positive satisfaction; as if her spirit realized the height to which it was to ascend, and exulted in casting off all of earth that might impede it in its flight. "I took delight," she says in her "Remembrances," "in packing all the valuables to be sold, and felt joy in saying *adieu* to each article that was to be mine no more."

A sea-voyage, in those days, was far from being the frequent, easy, and uneventful affair that it is to-day. Along with the discomforts resulting from the poor accommodations, and the smallness of the packets, which made them the veritable sport of wind and wave, the traveler endured constant anxiety from the fear of privateers, or ships of hostile foreign powers. It is, therefore, easy to realize what a serious, even solemn, event the embarking of voyagers must have appeared both to themselves, and to their relatives and friends.

From a merely human point of view the contemplated voyage of the Setons seemed extremely rash, and aroused much family opposition; for, as Elizabeth wrote to Mrs. Sadler, her husband's condition was so much worse that every one said "it was folly to undertake the voyage. But you



know," she added, "we do not reason thus." No, they did not, but filled with that mysterious strength which God gives to those whom He wishes to withstand human wisdom, went forth through danger and discomfort, to the distant land, and the lonely deathbed, that had their place in the Divine plan for the soul whom He was guiding to its work.

"Oh, if we could but see the life of God in all creatures, in all things, and learn to regard them, not in themselves, but as the instruments of His will! If we could see how the divine action impels them hither and thither, unites them, disperses them, opposes them, and leads them by contrary ways to the same end, we would recognize that all things have their purpose, their reason, their proportion, their relation, in this divine work."\*

On the second of October, 1802, Elizabeth and her husband, and their eldest child, Anna, aged eight, embarked for Leghorn, in "The Shepherdess." The parting from his relatives, and the last glimpse of his home, just beyond the green pleasure-ground, whence friends and kindred were still waving a last farewell, proved too much for the poor invalid, and as Elizabeth wrote to Rebecca, "she could hardly snatch a moment from him to wave her handkerchief in return to those waving from the shore." But, the parting past, the sea air seemed to revive him, and the prospect of re-visiting

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\* L'Abandon A La Providence Divine. Caussade S. J.

Italy, with his wife, raised his spirits. The voyage was uneventful, and comparatively calm, and on the eighteenth of November, just as the evening bells were ringing the "Ave Maria," "The Shepherdess" entered the harbor of Leghorn.

## CHAPTER II.

1803—1804.

### DEATH OF MR. SETON—STAY IN ITALY.

I hear the tuneful bells around,  
The blessed towers, I see,  
A stranger in a foreign land,  
They peal a fast for me.

*Newman: Consolations in Bereavement.*

UNHAPPILY, "The Shepherdess" was the first vessel to reach Leghorn with the news that yellow fever was again prevalent in New York, and she had entered the port without a Health Certificate. The pilot who had brought her in had rendered himself liable to the punishment of death. The Setons, her only passengers, were informed that they must go to the Lazaretto, as the building in which people were detained for quarantine was called, for forty days. As this Lazaretto was situated some miles from Leghorn, the unfortunate travelers were placed in a barge, manned by seven sailors, and rowed along the coast, to the mouth of a canal from which heavy chains were lifted to give the boat entrance, then on between high stone walls, to the landing-place. Here, after mounting twenty stone steps, the Setons were directed to go

to the right, past the house of the captain of the Quarantine Station, where behind a grille, with his wife, Elizabeth saw for the first time that true Christian gentleman, Antonio Filicchi, with whom she was to form one of the noblest and most enduring friendships, of which human annals hold any record. But poor Elizabeth was then too worn and weary to do more than mechanically return the Filicchis' salutation.

The Setons were assigned to apartment number six in the Lazaretto; a room with high arched ceilings, brick floor, and naked walls. It was a miserable ending to the hopes that had upheld Elizabeth during the long voyage, to behold her sick husband lying on a ship's mattress on the floor in this damp place, without any fire, and with the wind blowing on him from every crevice, and down the chimney, so as almost to extinguish the light, when she lit it; and when she saw the poor sufferer convulsed with a fit of coughing that brought up blood, and the agitation that this plainly caused him, in spite of all his efforts to hide it, she felt as if her cup of anguish was full. Well might she write as she did: "This is the hour of trial; the Lord support and strengthen us in it."

On the following morning, Sunday, she writes: "The matin bells awakened my soul to its most painful regrets, and filled it with an agony of sorrow which would not, at first, find relief in prayer. In the little closet, from whence there is a view of the open sea, and the beatings of the waves

against the high rocks at the entrance of this prison, which throw them violently back, and raise the white foam as high as its walls, I first came to my senses, and reflected that I was offending my only Friend, and resource in my misery, and voluntarily shutting from my soul the only consolation it could receive."

Some better provision was soon made for the comfort of the sick man, and the Filicchis did all in their power to brighten his confinement, and have its term shortened. But the terrible consciousness that it was sapping the invalid's vitality, and that he had left his home, not to find health in the sunny gardens, and balmy air of Italy, but to die, slowly, in a prison, made it a time of suffering that no human power could alleviate. The only consolation that Elizabeth had, was the spiritual awakening of her husband. He had always been a good, amiable man, but religion, as he himself said, had given him but little concern. The patience, serenity, and angelic sweetness of his wife, during all their trials, first caused him to give it some serious thought. As he failed in health and fortune, he gradually turned more and more to God, meekly accepting His decrees, and at length became, as Elizabeth said, "the peaceful, humble christian, waiting the will of God with a patience more than human. . . . He often says this is the period of his life which, if he live or die, he will always consider as blessed, the only time which he has not lost."

And so the days passed, some of them dark with the shadow of death upon the sick man, in almost continual prayer, and acts of resignation, until the nineteenth of December, when the Setons were allowed to leave the Lazaretto. Lodgings had been engaged for them at Pisa, on the banks of the Arno, before they left America, and Mrs. Seton "had cherished many poetical visions about the famous river," but now all had given place to the vision of death.

In the arms of two men, her dying husband was borne down the steps of the Lazaretto, to Antonio Filicchi's carriage, which was in waiting, followed by Mrs. Seton, and little Anna, while the bystanders murmured compassionately, "O poverino!" The air, and warm sunlight, and the comfort of his new lodgings, caused an apparent improvement in his condition; but it was merely one of those deceptive rallies that are the cruelest characteristics of his disease. After it was past, he sank rapidly. Early on the morning of Christmas Day, he awoke, and seeing his wife kneeling at his bedside, asked if she had not lain down. She answered: "No, Love, for the sweetest reflections keep me awake. Christmas Day is begun; the day of Our dear Saviour's birth, which you know, opened to us the door of everlasting life." "Yes" he answered: "and how I wish we could have the Sacrament."

As this was impossible, his wife put a little wine in a glass, and after reading prayers and portions of the psalms, "they took the cup of thanksgiving,

setting aside the sorrow of time in the view of eternity." The following day, the dying man sent for Captain O'Brien, of the "Shepherdess," and, with perfect composure, placed his wife and child in his care, to take home. The next day, his suffering was so intense "that he kept continually calling on his Redeemer to pardon and release him. At four o'clock on the morning of December twenty-seventh, the hard struggle ceased; nature sank into a settled sob, with murmurs of: 'My dear wife and little ones,' and 'My Christ Jesus have mercy on me, and receive me,' until a quarter past seven, when the dear soul took its flight to the blessed exchange it so much longed for."

Later, writing to Rebecca, Elizabeth says; "I often asked him when he could not speak: 'you feel, my love, that you are going to your Redeemer,' and he motioned, 'yes,' with a look of peace. At a quarter past seven, on Tuesday morning, December twenty-seventh, his soul was released, and mine from a struggle worse than death."

After kneeling with little Anna for some time beside the body, in prayer, Elizabeth informed the people of the house that all was over. But they were so afraid of the disease, "which they regarded" she says, "as we would regard yellow fever," that she had herself to perform the last duties to the body, with some slight assistance from two women who had washed for her, and helped in the care of her husband. When she had finished, she bathed, dressed, packed up, and drove in Signora Filicchi's

carriage, which had been sent for her, fifteen miles to Leghorn. Her brother Carlton, who was a clerk in the Filicchis' business house, and Louis, her faithful servant in the Lazaretto, remained with the body until the afternoon, when it was conveyed to the protestant cemetery at Leghorn, and deposited in the receiving-house there. The following morning, at eleven o'clock, in the presence of all the English and Americans then in Leghorn, it was committed to the grave.

On her arrival at Leghorn, Mrs. Seton had been received by the Antonio Filicchis, who showed the most sincere and delicate sympathy in her affliction. "It seems," she wrote to her sister-in-law, Rebecca, "as if they could not do enough. Indeed, from the day we left home, we have met with nothing but kindness, even in strangers and servants." . . . In Leghorn, she was the object of the kindest attention, and such solicitude was evinced for her health, as she says, "caused her to smile, when she looked forward to her unprovided situation, in regard to the affairs of this life."

The Filicchis were worthy successors of those great merchants of the Middle Ages, who made the republics of Italy famous. The cradle of their family was Pietra-Lunga, seven miles from the ancient Etruscan city of Gubbio, in Umbria, where the great Pontiff, Leo Thirteenth, was born. A castle which bears their name is still standing at Pietra-Lunga, and the records of Gubbio show that the family held high rank in that city in the



fourteenth century. The Leghorn branch of the Filicchis acquired a great business reputation, and considerable wealth, which was always at the service of charity. Antonio and Filippo were both fervent Catholics, and aided with all the generosity of an ardent faith, the various charitable and pious foundations of their city. A multitude of poor, sick, or imprisoned creatures, supported by their alms, blessed their names, and drew upon them the benediction of God.

These two truly Christian men were no less remarkable for their intelligence, than for their goodness. The elder, Filippo, was frequently summoned by the Grand Duke of Tuscany to represent the interests of navigation and commerce in his council. A link between Filippo and William Seton had been the fact that the former had passed several years in the United States, and had married an American, Miss Mary Cooper, of Boston. As the representative of the principal banking-house of Leghorn, Signor Filicchi had been summoned to Philadelphia, then the seat of the Federal Government, to discuss important questions in regard to the commercial interests of Italy and America, and thus had been brought into contact with Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, John Adams, Daniel Carroll of Carrollton, and other noted men of the time. Washington seems to have been very favorably impressed with the character of the young Italian banker, and made him consul-general for the United States at Leghorn.

For a few days, Mrs. Seton was allowed to remain in perfect quiet and peace, with her little daughter, in order that she might recruit her strength and recover from the strain to which she had been subjected. Then, thinking it well to divert her mind from its sorrow, Signora Amabilia Filicchi besought her to accompany her to Florence, where she was going to visit some relatives, in order that she might take advantage of her brief stay in Italy, to see one, at least, of its beautiful old cities. Mrs. Seton yielded to her kindly entreaties, and the little party left Leghorn on the third of January. On the eighth, Elizabeth writes to her sister-in-law, Rebecca, as follows: "Four days I have been at Florence, lodged in the famous palace of the Medici, which commands a view of Monte Morello, and the Arno, with its five bridges which are always thronged with people and carriages. To-day, at eleven o'clock, Signora Amabilia took me to the chapel of La Santissima Annunziata. A heavy curtain hung at the entrance; we raised it, and my eyes were struck with the sight of hundreds of persons kneeling; but the gloom of the chapel, lighted only by the wax tapers on the altar, and a small window at the top, darkened with green silk, made every object at first appear very indistinct, while that kind of soft and distant music, which lifts the mind to a foretaste of heavenly pleasures, called up in an instant every dear and tender idea of my soul, and forgetting Signora Amabilia's company, and all the surrounding

scenes, I sank on my knees in the first place I found vacant, and shed a torrent of tears at the recollection of how long I had been a stranger in the house of my God, and the accumulated sorrow that had separated me from it. I need not tell you that I said our dear service with my whole soul, as far as in my agitation I could recollect. When the organ ceased and Mass was finished, we walked around the chapel. The elegance of the ceiling, in carved gold, altars loaded with gold and silver, and other precious ornaments, pictures of every sacred subject, and the dome a continuous representation of different parts of Scripture, all this can never be conceived by description." But what gave far more delight than could any material beauty or magnificence, however great, to Elizabeth, was that sight which has called forth the comment, often tender and sympathetic, of Protestant visitors to Catholic countries, from the time of the Reformation to our own day, when the late Archbishop of Canterbury, on his return home from a visit to the continent, mournfully asked why the people of England never entered the churches to pray, like the people of Catholic countries? Accustomed to the rigid formalism of Episcopalian worshippers, departing as soon as the last notes of the recessional were sung, with an air of satisfaction at having performed their duty to God and to society, Elizabeth was astonished and delighted at seeing, after Mass, a crowd of eager suppliants thronging about the altars, as unmindful of one another's

presence, as if they were alone, and pouring forth their petitions, their fears, hopes, anxieties, and troubles, to Him who has bidden all the heavily burdened to come to Him for ease and refreshment.

Elizabeth was in no physical or mental condition for sight-seeing, and though she beheld, every day, things she had longed to see in her youth, they aroused but a languid interest in her. The magnificent church of San Lorenzo and its Medici Chapel, with the colossal marble figures in which Angelo symbolized his despair at the enslavement of his beloved city, almost affrighted her by their solemn grandeur, and of the other churches and historical monuments, she makes but little mention. What seems to have pleased her most were Rubens' Descent from the Cross, in the Pitti palace, and the Anatomical Museum, and Cabinet of Natural History, which "with God revealed in every object," gave her, she says, "my two happiest hours in Florence." About the twelfth of January, Elizabeth returned to Leghorn with the Filicchis, and made preparations to sail for America on the third of February.

It may be readily imagined that Elizabeth did not pass more than a month with so admirable a Catholic family as the Filicchis, without being deeply impressed by the beauty of the Catholic religion. No shadow of doubt, however, appears to have crossed her mind as to the truth of her own, and though she often discussed the matter with her hosts, this appears to have been merely

from curiosity as to their views on the subject. Thus, one day, when Antonio Filicchi, in answer to a question put by her, replied that there was but one true religion, and that without a right faith no one could be acceptable to God, Elizabeth answered: "O, my, sir, if there is but one faith, and nobody pleases God without it, where are all the good people who die out of it?"

"I don't know" answered Filicchi, "that depends on what light of faith they have received; but I know where people go, *who can know the right faith, if they pray and inquire for it, and yet do neither.*"

Mrs. Seton, not in the least dismayed by the blunt frankness of this answer, retorted laughingly; "Much as to say, sir, you want me to pray and inquire, and be of your faith?" But Filicchi answered with the deepest earnestness: "Pray and inquire, that is all I ask of you."

The Filicchis, on their part, did all that lay in their power to win from error this beautiful soul whom Providence had so visibly conducted to them. They gave her suitable books to read, and brought her in contact with the Abbé Plunkett, a learned Irish Jesuit, residing in Leghorn. That little impression was made on her, however, by the efforts of her good friends, is seen from a letter to her sister-in-law, in which she says: "I am hard pushed by these charitable Romans, who wish that so much goodness should be improved by a conversion, which to effect, they have even taken the

trouble to bring me their best informed priest, Abbé Plunkett, who is an Irishman ; but they find me so willing to hear their enlightened conversation, that, consequently, as learned people like to hear themselves best, I have but little to say, and, as yet, keep friends with all, as the best comment on my profession.”

Elizabeth’s mind, however, was too intelligent not to be forced by the Abbé’s keen and logical reasoning, into questioning, however faintly, the intellectual soundness of the so-called Reformation, while the noble, Christian lives of the Filicchis, were a constant incentive to examine seriously this ancient, historic faith, which put forth such powerful claims on her reason, as well as an appeal to the noblest instincts of her heart. She began to grow troubled, and to implore the divine light and assistance, repeating the words of Pope :

“ If I am right, thy grace impart,  
 Still in the right to stay ;  
 If I am wrong, oh, teach my heart,  
 To find the better way.”

One day, as the time drew near for her departure, Antonio Filicchi said to her : “ Your dear William was the early friend of my youth. You are now come in his room. Your soul is even dearer to Antonio. May the good, Almighty God, enlighten your mind, and strengthen your heart, to see and follow in religion, the surest, truest way to the eternal blessings. I will call you. I must meet you in Paradise, if it is decreed that the vast plains

of the ocean shall soon be between us. Don't stop praying, meanwhile ; keep on knocking at the door."

On the second of February, the Feast of the Purification, and the day before Mrs. Seton was to sail, the Filicchis took herself and little Anna to the Church of Our Lady of Monte Nero, a mile and a half from Leghorn, and a celebrated place of pilgrimage. It was especially dear to the Filicchis because of the fact, that when the troops of the French Directory had occupied Leghorn, Filippo Filicchi had only escaped being carried off with several other patricians, as a hostage to France, by fleeing to the monastery of the Benedictines attached to it, where the monks concealed him till all danger was past.

The journey was to be made partly on horse-back, but mostly on foot, and at daybreak the party set out. It was one of those exquisite mornings which in the mild climate of the south of Italy, make life seem like a perpetual holiday. The warm Spring air breathing "of fragrance all impregn'd with herb and flower," filled with perfume the paths along which numbers of pilgrims were moving slowly, or as Dante describes them :

" Like men who musing on their road in thought,  
Journey, while motionless the body rests."

The elder people, absorbed in meditation, spoke little, but the children, filled with the joy of the morning, ran on ahead, gaily chattering or gathering flowers.

On their arrival at Monte Nero, Elizabeth asked

to be present at the Mass at which her friends had come to assist and communicate. Her request was granted, but she seems to have been placed in a part of the chapel removed from that which they occupied, for she found herself next to a young Englishman, who was evidently surveying the scene with the cold, critical gaze of the protestant tourist. At the moment of the elevation, he turned to Elizabeth and said, with an ironical smile: "This is what they call their Real Presence."

"With my heart," as she says, "trembling with pain and sorrow at his unfeeling interruption of their sacred adoration, for all around was dead silence, and many were prostrated," Elizabeth involuntarily sank on her knees. Instantly, as if in reward for her public protest against the blasphemy of the other, there flashed through her mind the awful words of St. Paul: *They discern not the Lord's body*, followed by the thought; *how should they eat and drink damnation for not discerning it, if it is not there?*

The following morning, Elizabeth and little Anna, "parted with their kind friends, loaded with blessings and presents," and the former, "with gold, and passports, for fear of Algerines, or necessity to put in at any of the Mediterranean ports," and set sail in the "Shepherdess," in charge of Captain O'Brien, for New York. But it was not the design of God that Elizabeth should yet be withdrawn from Catholic influences. During the night, the "Shepherdess" collided with another vessel, and in



the morning, she found herself obliged to put back to Leghorn for repairs. Before these were completed, little Anna was suddenly taken ill with scarlet fever, and all thought of going had to be abandoned. It was three weeks before Anna recovered, and then her mother was seized with the same illness, which confined her to her room for the same length of time. If she had been filled with admiration of the Filicchis, before, their conduct during this trial, rendered her powerless to express her gratitude. "Oh! the patience," she exclaims: "and more than human kindness of these dear Filicchis for us! You would say it was Our Saviour Himself they received in His poor and sick strangers."

Living in close intimacy with them as she did at this time, Elizabeth was more and more impressed by the manner in which the Catholic religion enters into human life, supporting the soul and enabling it to sanctify every moment and every act of existence from the dawn of reason to the grave, thus educating it for the life beyond. When Antonio Filicchi showed her how to make the sign of the cross, she describes herself as growing cold with the awful impression its first making gave her.

But what appealed to her most of all was the fact of Catholics being able to hear Mass every day. "Oh!" she writes to her sister-in-law, "how often you and I used to give the sigh, and you would press your arm in mine, as we turned from the church door, which closed on us, (unless a prayer-day was given out in the week) until the following

Sunday. Well, here they go to church every morning, at four, if they choose, and can communicate (though many do not do it) every day. Oh, my! I don't know how anybody can have any trouble in this world, who believe all these dear people believe. *If I don't believe it, it shall not be for want of praying.* Why, they must be as happy as angels almost."

As soon as she recovered, Elizabeth took passage in the "Flamingo," which was to sail on the eighth of April. As the captain was young and inexperienced, and the dangers arising from the state of affairs in Europe, very great, Antonio Filicchi decided to accompany the travelers to America. On the appointed morning, Elizabeth went with both Filicchi families to Mass before daybreak. The sky was bright with stars, the wind fair, and just as they entered the church, the gun of the "Flamingo" was heard, warning the passengers to be aboard within two hours. "In a few moments," says Mrs. Seton in her journal, "we were prostrate in the presence of God. O my soul, how solemn was that offering! for a blessing on our voyage—for my dear ones, my sisters, and all so dear to me—and more than all, for the souls of my dear husband and father—earnestly our desires ascended with the Holy Sacrifice, that they might find acceptance through Him who gave Himself for us; earnestly we desired to be united with Him, and would gladly encounter all the sorrows before us to be partakers of that blessed body and blood. O my God, spare and pity me.

“ We returned home with hearts full of many sensations ; on my part, sorrow at parting with the friends who had been so kind to me, and the dear little angels I tenderly love, struggled with the joy of once more embarking for home. When I gave dear Amabilia a farewell embrace in the balcony, the sun rose bright and glorious, and called our thoughts to the hour when the Sun of Righteousness would rise, and reunite us forever.

“ The signal had been given, the watchman waited for us, and my dear brother passed the struggle of parting with his wife like a man and a Christian ; dear, manly soul, it indeed appeared to me in the image of God.

“ Filippo Filicchi and Carlton waited for us at the Health Office, and letters for America. Filippo’s last blessing to me was as his whole conduct has been—that of the truest friend. O, Filippo, you shall not *witness against me*. May God bless you forever, and may you shine as ‘ the stars in glory for what you have done for me ! ’ ”

At eight o’clock the anchor was weighed, the sails hoisted to the familiar “ Yo, yo ! ” of the sailors, and the “ Flamingo ” began her westward voyage, and bore Elizabeth swiftly from the shore that contained the remains of her husband.

The weather remained calm, and the vessel sped through the Mediterranean, passing in sight of the Alps, and the Pyrenees. She remained in view of the latter mountains all day, and Elizabeth was filled with rapture as she contemplated them

“from their base, black as night, to their towering snow-covered peaks, that were lost in the clouds. They speak to me so strongly of God,” she says in her journal, “my soul responds involuntarily in praise.” The gentle motion of the sea, which was so calm that one could see in its depths as in a mirror, the snowy summit of the mountains, colored with the glow of the setting sun, the moon rising over the opposite shore, made up a scene whose beauty and calm appealed to her heart as an image of a soul at peace with God and itself.

As the “Flamingo” entered the gulf of Valencia, she found herself in the midst of the great fleet of Lord Nelson, who was besieging the old Spanish city, which the memory of the Cid has made famous. After being boarded by the “Excellent,” and the “Belle-Isle,” the “Flamingo” was allowed to proceed. On the twenty-sixth of April she passed Gibraltar, and entered the Atlantic. Here she was met by contrary winds, so that the voyage thenceforth was slow, and without either accident or incident to break its monotony. The time was passed by Mrs. Seton, as may be imagined, in gaining from Filicchi a fuller knowledge of the Catholic faith, in whose exterior practices, such as fasting, and the observance of festivals, she heartily united with him, and in fortifying her soul by prayer and meditation, for the struggle that awaited her. On the third of June, after a voyage of fifty-six days, the “Flamingo” entered the harbor of New York.

## CHAPTER III.

1804—1805.

### SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES OF ELIZABETH—CONVERSION TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on ;  
The night is dark, and I am far from home ;  
Lead Thou me on.

*Newman : Lead, Kindly Light.*

ELIZABETH'S joy in being re-united to her children, was marred by finding her sister-in-law, Rebecca, on her death-bed. It was an unspeakable trial to the newly widowed mother to see this "sister of her soul," who would have done so much to fill the void left in her life by her husband's death, and assist her in the rearing of her children, dying, but she repressed her grief, and strove rather to rejoice in the release which Rebecca anticipated so ardently. She did not disturb the sick girl's last days by religious discussions, for as she was not yet convinced of the errors of their common faith, she thought it cruel to raise doubts in the former's mind in regard to it. She felt sure that Rebecca's innocence, charity, fidelity to the light that had been granted her, and abiding sorrow for sin, would

cause her to find mercy with God. Still, the contrast between the powerlessness of protestantism to console and strengthen the dying, as compared with the almost infinite resources of the Catholic Church, under the same circumstances, deeply impressed her. On the eighth of July, 1804, Rebecca calmly passed away, and Elizabeth was bereft of one whose character, and position in her husband's family, would have afforded her invaluable support in the struggle which she was about to enter into with them.

It is hard for us to realize to-day, when Catholics and non-Catholics are so intimate in both business and social life, and when convent-schools and colleges number so many non-Catholics among their pupils, the contempt and aversion that were felt for those of the old Faith, in the United States, a century ago. For over two hundred and fifty years, among the English people, and those who had sprung from them, protestantism, as Newman says, had been the tradition of law, and society, and literature, with the result that hatred of the Catholic Church, and prejudice against its members, as ignorant, bigoted, and superstitious, permeated every class, and was the one sentiment common to the followers of every sect. The Constitution of the United States, by removing the political disabilities of Catholics, left them free to combat this prejudice, so that during the century that has just gone by, it slowly but steadily lessened, and it is to be hoped that before this shall

have run its course, all traces of it will have vanished. Even in those early days it was already beginning to be counteracted, and among those to whom this was due, Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, by reason of his lofty personal and official character, and the social position of his historic family, was the most prominent.

Filippo Filicchi, who had passed some time in the United States, was aware of the sentiments with which Catholics were regarded there, and felt that Bishop Carroll would be the best guide for Elizabeth at this juncture, for besides solving her doubts and difficulties in regard to the Church, he would be able, as an American, and one bred in the same rank of society as Elizabeth herself, to advise her as the best course to pursue in regard to her relatives. He therefore gave her a letter of introduction to the Bishop whom he had met during his stay in this country, and counselled her to write to him before taking any decided step in regard to the matter. He himself also wrote to the Bishop, in regard to Mrs. Seton, telling him of the many rare and beautiful qualities he had seen in her character, which, joined, as they were, to utter sincerity, had caused him to believe "that Providence had so disposed events as to bring her to Italy, with a view to dissipating the prejudice she had formed against the true Faith, and by showing her the Church as it was, draw her into the true fold."

If Elizabeth had done as Filippo advised she would have been spared many trials, and much per-

plexity of mind. But the death of Rebecca, coming as it did upon her while her sorrow for her husband's loss was still fresh and keen, made her so long for the consolations of the Catholic religion, that she determined to forego her intention of hearing the arguments in favor of the Episcopalian Church before deciding, and to seek admission to the Catholic fold at once. This was wise, for as events proved, Elizabeth's mind was perfectly convinced of the truth; but, unhappily, Antonio Filicchi, with more zeal than prudence, urged her to acquaint her family at once, with her resolution, and she followed his advice. A storm of indignation followed, which did not move Elizabeth in the least. Her family saw their mistake, and Elizabeth heard no more reproaches. It was remembered that from childhood, she had always been influenced in the strongest manner by her affections. The fear of wounding, or of forfeiting the affection of those she loved, had always caused her inexpressible suffering. This trait of character, which so often degenerates into weakness, was the one by which they hoped to conquer.

The person for whom, now that her father and husband, and Rebecca, were gone, Elizabeth had the deepest affection and respect, was Mr. Hobart. A distinguished writer, a graceful and eloquent preacher, zealous, and ever ready to encounter difficulties in the cause of his Church, Mr. Hobart possessed along with solidity, all those attractive qualities that go to make a charming personality.



In Elizabeth's case, many circumstances combined to intensify his influence. For several years she had revered him, and had married into a family in which affection for him was a sort of cult. Throughout all her trials and misfortunes, she had enjoyed his unfailing sympathy, and profited by his spiritual advice; and during her absence in Italy, had received every proof of his sincere interest both in her and her husband's welfare, and in that of the children whom she had left behind her. "The sumptuous and splendid worship of Italy, will not, I am sure, withdraw your affections from the simple but affecting worship of Trinity Church," he had said in one of his letters to her while she was abroad; but it was, in reality, her affection and reverence for him, and her dread of renouncing what he held as truth, that steeled Elizabeth, at first, against Catholic arguments and influences. During the homeward voyage, she had written him a letter which revealed the struggle going on within her mind; a struggle so cruel, that as she herself said, "it will end by destroying my life, if protracted much longer." This letter, however, was probably not sent until some days after Rebecca's death, for Mr. Hobart's first reference to the matter was made on July nineteenth, eleven days after that sad event. He then addressed her, not as the indignant pastor, ready to reprove and set right the erring one of his flock, but as the sincere and affectionate friend, whose heart was saddened at the thought of a step that must open a gulf between

herself and him. It is true that the argument he uses against the step does not give us a very exalted idea of the intellectual power of this famous divine, unless we set it down to the firm conviction of almost every man then on the green earth, that women were unfitted by nature for serious argument. He asks her how she could ever dream of abandoning the Church in which she had been baptized. Even Elizabeth, in spite of her partiality for him, says in a letter to Amabilia Filicchi, Antonio's wife, "His question amused me. For it is as much as to say, that wherever a child was born, or placed by his parents, there the truth must be."

Even if he had seen her smile at his logic, however, Mr. Hobart would have forgiven it in consideration of Elizabeth's finally granting, in response to his entreaties, a concession which he and her relatives regarded as vital—a promise to read, under his direction, before going further, a series of controversial works, in which were set forth the teachings of the Church which she had resolved to leave.

Mr. Hobart had chosen a favorable time for his efforts. Antonio Filicchi, convinced that her strength would be equal to the struggle, had departed to visit the different cities of the United States to which his business interests called him. Elizabeth was again among her own people, tasting the sweetness of familiar and friendly intercourse, and feeling, with renewed force, the strength of the ties of blood and friendship, those strong, invisible

chains, which converts find it harder than death to break. The very qualities which were to make her so good a Catholic, once she entered the Church, her docility and reverence for authority, her humility, and loyalty to what she had been taught to love and respect, were what proved her greatest danger at this perilous time. She had been able to write to Mr. Hobart when far from him, that "even if the loss of your esteem and friendship are the price I have to pay for the truth, I will pay it," but under the influence of his presence, his unvarying kindness and sympathy, and unfailing patience, she began to waver; the more so that he was careful never to wound her, as her relatives frequently did, by repeating scandalous stories of Catholics, or calumnies against their Church.

Often, in biographies of those who attained great virtue or holiness, their spiritual struggles are too little dwelt upon, so that the end they had in view appears to have been reached with an ease which makes many a poor, storm-beaten, soul, faint with temptation, or discouraged with failure, who reads the chronicle of their lives, conclude that those just and holy persons must have been some different manner of men and women from him. The writer of this little book, therefore, believes it is well that every faltering of Elizabeth's feet, as she "painfully trod the burning marl" should be faithfully recorded.

After she had begun the course of reading prescribed by Mr. Hobart, in the hope, no doubt,

which so many noble souls after her entertained, of finding some *Via Media*, that would satisfy her conscience, her relatives took new heart, and leaving the matter to Mr. Hobart, busied themselves in discussions as to how provision was to be made for the young widow and her children. Mr. Seton had died in the hope that when the English partnership was wound up, there would be enough left to provide for his family, but on her return to America, Elizabeth found that there was nothing for them. She and her children, therefore, would have to look for maintenance to her own and her husband's family. Her relatives were willing to accept the burden; but on learning of her contemplated change of faith, made their assistance conditional on her adhering to the Episcopal Church. If she did, her relatives assured her, all would be well with her; but if she persisted in becoming "a Roman," as they termed it, they would cease to hold communication with her, and leave her to provide for herself and her family as best she could.

In the meantime, Elizabeth went to live in a small cottage about half a mile from the city. Here, secure in the hope that bread would not be lacking, she might have settled down to a quiet life, devoted to the bringing up of her children, if it had not been for her spiritual unrest. That she had come to question the truth of the Episcopalian faith, was now well known, and a gleam of humor is thrown on the situation, by the efforts of some of Elizabeth's friends of different religious

sects to capture the stray sheep for their own particular fold. An old and intimate friend, a Scotch lady, journeys expressly out to the cottage to beg her: "Do come and hear our J. Mason, and I am persuaded you will be united to us." A little later a Quaker lady seeks her out and murmurs in sweet and caressing tones: "Betsy, I assure thee, thee had better come with us." She is followed by Mrs. T., an Anabaptist, who, with tears in her eyes, cries out: "Oh! if you could be regenerated! If you could understand what we experience, and taste with us the celestial banquet!" Her old servant, Mary, who was a Methodist, seeing the efforts put forth to gain her mistress, thought it only just that the claims of her church should be made known to the seeker for truth, and accordingly began to "groan," and "contemplate," her poor mistress' wandering soul, and be "troubled" because she had no "convictions."

In order to strengthen his cause, and increase the effect of the course of reading he had marked out for her, Mr. Hobart now set forth in writing his arguments against the Catholic Church, and sought to prove to Elizabeth that it had fallen into error, and was unworthy of obedience; and that the Episcopal Church was that branch of it which had returned to the teaching of the primitive doctrine, at the time of the Reformation. "This," to use Elizabeth's own words, "decided testimony given me by the clergy of the Episcopal Church that they were a true Church, destroyed the foundation

of my Catholic principles, and I no longer felt any necessity of making a change."

With her usual frankness, however, a quality which proved her salvation, Elizabeth showed Mr. Hobart's manuscript to Antonio Filicchi. He, fearful of his ability to reply to Mr. Hobart's arguments, especially in English, which he knew imperfectly, besought her, before deciding, to submit the matter to Bishop Carroll. Elizabeth, however, objected to the length of time this would take; whereupon Antonio carried the paper to the Reverend William O'Brien, then pastor of St. Peter's Church, in Barclay street, who promised to return it that evening, answered. He kept his word, and advised Signor Filicchi to give Elizabeth a book called "England's Conversion and Reformation," to read; Antonio did so, and implored her to write to Bishop Carroll. She promised that she would, and did in fact, do so, but did not send the letter.

Mr. Hobart and her relatives, rightly fearful of the influence of such a man as the great Bishop, united in an attempt to persuade her to take no part in any more controversies, but to end the disquiet of her soul by once more professing herself a member of the Episcopal Church. Exhausted by long mental suffering, deluded by the specious pleading of the brilliant divine, and longing for the repose and certainty which he assured her, would return to her soul, once she had renewed her profession of faith in the Church of her baptism, Elizabeth gave up the struggle, and was preparing

to follow this unsafe guide through the mist of doubt and mental confusion that enveloped her, when like a clarion call, a letter from Antonio Filicchi recalled her soul to a sense of its danger. In it he says: "This friend who prevails to-day, says of you: 'She has chosen her part. She is tranquil in regard to all that troubled her hitherto, that is sufficient for the repose of her conscience.' I might perhaps wish that it would be sufficient for the salvation of your soul, my dear sister; but what is certain is that it will not suffice for the conscience of your advisers. I feel from the bottom of my heart for your situation. Your tortured mind and bleeding heart, found consolation at Leghorn, but in a different way. Does not your own experience warn you that this security in which your old friends would retain you at any cost, must be a false one? It is a real sorrow to me, to have to rouse your fears, but with the principles that are sacred to me, and with my sincere affection for you, how can I spare you, my poor sister?"

"I here give you my solemn promise to remain, in any event, your sincere friend to the last moment of my life; ready to do all in my power to assure your well-being in this life; our miserable mortal life. But even as your physical life, dear as it is to me, ought, according to my Christian principles, as well as yours, to be sacrificed to the salvation of your spiritual soul, you will pardon me, I am sure, my beloved friend, if on every possible occasion, I renew the combat of your dearest sentiments, in the

hope that at least in your last moments in this valley of tears, it may please an all merciful and powerful God to send His Holy Spirit upon you, and to reunite us in His celestial kingdom. In order to make me act otherwise, it would be necessary for you to forbid me in the most positive manner, to see you or speak to you again."

On the same day that Antonio wrote this to Elizabeth, he wrote to Bishop Carroll, inclosing a letter of introduction from his brother, and the letter Elizabeth had written to the Bishop, though, as he says in his own letter, merely as an explanation of the situation.

Whether it was the appeal of Antonio to her, or the effect of Father O'Brien's refutation of Mr. Hobart's arguments, Elizabeth now paused, distressed and irresolute, seemingly unable to move either way. On the twenty-second of August, a reply from the Bishop reached Antonio, who placed it at once in Elizabeth's hands. She was deeply impressed with the strength and clearness of the Bishop's comments upon her position, and withal, the note of authority which sounded clearly through them. She held the letter to her heart, while, on her knees, she besought God to enlighten her to see the truth, without doubts and hesitations." On the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, she writes to Antonio, that Mr. Hobart had been to see her the day before, and for the first time had lost patience with her, so that she felt it would be of no use to show him Bishop Carroll's letter. After "this



short and painful visit," from her minister, Elizabeth seems to have been left to herself, so far as he and his brethern were concerned.

Her faithful friends, the Filicchis, however, bore with admirable patience, her apparently inexplicable conduct, believing that God was subjecting His servant to this peculiar trial, for some wise purpose, beyond their comprehension, and that all would yet be well with her. The Autumn went by, while from her place in St. Paul's, she looked from its barren altar, towards the neighboring Catholic Church, and prayed to Him who rested in its tabernacle. Filippo Filicchi, who had perfect command of the English language, wrote to her frequently, letters full of learning, piety, and wisdom, and so clear and precise in their statements of Catholic doctrine, that one might fancy them rather the work of a trained theologian, than of a layman actively engaged in business pursuits. Still, in spite of all this help and sympathy from these dear friends, and the infinite patience of Filippo in answering the objections she put forth against the Church, the cloud remained before her way, that kept her always asking Him which was the right path. She suffered keenly, as may be imagined, at the alienation from every form of Christian belief, in which she found herself, and wept so continually, that even her children would often cease their play, and come to stand and gaze at her, murmuring; "Poor Mamma!" At length, one Sunday, in December, she went to St. George's Church, say-

ing to God that since He would not show her the way, she would remain in the Church in which she had been born. But when she bent her head before the Bishop to receive his absolution, she was unconscious of feeling not the least faith in his prayer, and resolved to go no more to the protestant church."

Christmas came and went, and still Elizabeth's soul remained crucified on indecision. The new year, the year 1805, destined to be forever memorable to her as that which brought her, as she declared on her death-bed, the greatest blessing ever bestowed on her by the Almighty, began for her in the same spiritual darkness and misery. But God had now proved his servant sufficiently.

The Feast of the Epiphany found her at home, a prey to her now usual painful thoughts. Within her soul, all was obscure: "piety ruined, faith extinguished;" so that she had almost resolved to remain without professing any religion till the time of her death. A thousand troubles faced her from without, which she found herself without strength or energy to meet. To these exterior crosses, "the interior one of utter discouragement was now added." Suddenly, as she sat alone and silent, a prey to these sad thoughts, she felt an irresistible impulse to take up a volume of Bourdaloue, and turn to his sermon for the day. She found that it was on the text: "Where is He that was born King of the Jews?" and seemed to her as she read, to be addressed directly to herself.

For, speaking of the disappearance of the star that had conducted the wise men on their way, and addressing those "who had lost the star of faith," this great master of the spiritual life, spoke as follows: "When light has been vouchsafed, and then withdrawn, the memory of the light must take the place of the light. It suffices for us to be able to say. '*We saw His star.*' . . . There are in the Church, doctors and priests, as there were then; men appointed to conduct you, whom you have only to listen to. Interrogate them as to your course, and they will tell you what to do."

It seemed to Elizabeth as if the voice of God had spoken to her. Falling on her knees, she cried out: "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth! Thine hour has sounded, henceforth no more hesitation, no more feebleness, no more delay. Holy Church of God, teach, direct, call thy child, henceforth docile and faithful to thy voice."

Elizabeth at once addressed herself to the Reverend Father O'Brien of Saint Peter's. He was, to quote the words of Archbishop Bayley, "an intelligent and faithful priest, of the Order of Saint Dominic, who for thirty years edified the American Church, by his zeal and piety." Elizabeth found it so hard to see him, however, owing, no doubt, to his numberless duties, that she conceived the idea of writing to the Reverend John Cheverus, assistant pastor of the church of Boston, of whom she had heard from Antonio Filicchi, who was then in that city. She accordingly, did so, and

received the following reply, which long believed to be lost, was found, happily, by the late Mother Jerome of the Mount Saint Vincent sisters of Charity, among the papers of the Reverend Doctor Power, after his decease.

Boston, March 4, 1805.

MADAM :

I received, a few days ago, your favor of the 19th of February, and have perused it several times, with the greatest attention. I have received also, by a private hand, a letter from our respectable friend, Mr. Antonio Filicchi, this morning. I shall enclose this in my answer to him, as you have not favored me with your directions.

Your earnest wish to find out the truth, your fervent prayers, your fastings, etc., will obtain from the Father of Light, "who seeth in secret," that He should bestow upon you, the precious gift of faith. The God of all comfort will perfect in you the good work He has begun. In your present state of mind, the reading of all controversial works would be perfectly useless. You have read and heard enough to be acquainted with the arguments on both sides, and those in favor of the Catholic Church have, as they will, when examined with candor, convinced you that she is really the Church against which the gates of hell can never prevail.

You are told that "because the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, Jesus Christ has separated it from Antichrist, etc., or, in other words, the Church of Rome." But it follows from hence that previous to the separation, i. e., the Reformation, the Church of Jesus was united with, was a member of Antichrist, and had been so for several centuries, and, of course, the gates of hell had prevailed against it.

Your conscience whispers sometimes that you are too partial to the Catholic side, and unwilling to pass to the other side when your ideas seem to lead you to it. But it appears to me, that if at times, you have doubts, anxieties, you are never for a moment, a strong protestant, although you are often, you say, a

good Catholic, and I believe you are always a good Catholic. The doubts which arise in your mind, do not destroy your faith; they only disturb your mind. Who, in this life, my dear Madam, is perfectly free from such troubles? We see "as through a glass, in an obscure manner;" we stand, like the Israelites, at the foot of the holy mountain, but in spite of dark clouds and the voice of thunder, we perceive some rays of the glory of the Lord, and we hear His divine voice. I would therefore advise your joining the Catholic Church as soon as possible, and when doubts arise, say only; "I believe, O Lord, help thou my unbelief."

Your separation from the world, the privations which your present circumstances prescribe, are so many precious favors from your God, who wants to attach you exclusively to Himself, I am extremely edified with your Christian courage and resignation. But let me beg of you to be very prudent in your fastings and other voluntary mortifications. I refer you for this to St. Francis de Sales' "Devout Life." Read often the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th, chapters of St. John, particularly the last. You will find in the "Following of Christ," many passages exactly suiting your present situation.

Permit me to recommend myself to your prayers. I have prayed, and shall pray for you every day. Believe me, my dear Madam, with sincere sentiments of respect, esteem, and friendship,

Your most obedient, humble, servant,

JOHN CHEVERUS.

Shortly after the receipt of this letter, Elizabeth received one from Antonio Filicchi, which had been written to him in regard to her, by Bishop Carroll. Like Father Cheverus, the Bishop declared further controversy to be useless in her case, and advised her to summon all her resolution to "follow unreservedly the voice of God."

These letters decided Elizabeth to enter the Church at once, and she announced her determination to her family. Another storm of indignation was the result. Mr. Hobart, who had left her severely alone for many months, visited her once more, this time, to solemnly warn her how fatal to her children's interests would be such a step. Her relatives asked her how she could dream of joining a congregation "composed of the offscourings of the people," and regarded "as a public nuisance." To a nature like Elizabeth's, however, these things were as nothing, and casting aside all doubts, and fears, and apprehensions, she devoted herself to preparing for reception into the Church.

The day appointed for this was the fourteenth of March, and on that morning, accordingly, she turned her steps toward Barclay street, and for the first time, entered St. Peter's Church. It was plain and bare, save for the great painting of the crucifixion, above the high altar, the work of Vallejo, a Mexican artist; and it was filled with an eager throng, pushing towards the altar-rail, to be signed with ashes, for it was Ash-Wednesday, but Elizabeth gave small heed to these things. At the sight of the little tabernacle, her "heart died away in silence," and she fell on her knees in adoration. After Mass, she was called to the sacristy, and there made a formal abjuration of protestantism, and profession of the Catholic Faith, at the hands of the Reverend William O'Brien. Antonio Filicchi was present, and we can imagine his joy at seeing the

soul for which he had prayed so ardently, and fought so valiantly, entering the true fold. As for Elizabeth, she found her soul filled with a divine peace—the “peace that passeth all understanding,” and returned home, “light at heart, and cool of head,” for the first time these many long months.”

A few days later, she was admitted to the Sacrament of Penance, and on the Feast of the Annunciation, she made her First Communion. The altar at which Mass was offered on this memorable occasion, is now in the basement of St. Peter's Church in Barclay Street, and Sisters of the community which she founded, kneel before it daily to hear Mass, and approach it several times a week to receive communion.

The happiness that filled her heart after the reception of the Holy Eucharist, is expressed by her to Antonio Filicchi, in a letter written about this time: “You have led me, my dear Antonio, to the possession of a happiness that words can not describe, and which increases every day, or I might better say, every instant. The peace which fills my soul gives me a strength, and resolution, superior to anything a creature so frail could have believed possible.”

The joy and peace which filled her heart, were indeed God's compensation for the sacrifices she made in becoming a Catholic, for never was any one more lonely, more deserted by friends and kindred, than Elizabeth Seton was for putting into practice the boasted protestant principle of private judgment.

Only two of her husband's family, Harriet, then entering upon a brilliant social career, and Cecilia, a mere child, approved her step, and secretly longed to follow her. As for her friends, only Mrs. Duplex, and Mrs. Sadler, of New York, and Mrs. Scott of Philadelphia, proved generous enough to maintain the same friendly relations with her after her conversion, as before. Elizabeth had the consolation, some years later, of seeing one of these ladies, Mrs. Duplex, embrace the true faith.

The necessity of providing in some way for the support of herself and her family, now confronted Elizabeth. The Filicchis had placed at her disposal a considerable sum for this purpose, and Elizabeth, with a generosity of soul equal to theirs, had unhesitatingly accepted it. But she was naturally anxious not to prove any more of a burden than she could not help, to these good friends, and so strove to find some means of support. A way seemed opened to her soon after her conversion, by the proposal of a Mr. White, an English Catholic gentleman, who, with his wife, was about to open a school for boys, in the suburbs of the city, to have her assume charge of the younger ones, in return for which he offered to give her children their education, and employ her in the school, if it succeeded.

There seems to have been a need of schools in New York at this time, and no one doubted Mr. White's ability to conduct one. But the fact that both he and his wife were Catholics, and that they



had engaged Mrs. Seton, another Catholic, to assist them, caused the absurd rumor to rise at once, that the proposed school was only a vehicle by which they hoped to propagate the principles of their religion. It was in vain that Mrs. Duplex and Mrs. Sadler contradicted the report, and did all in their power, to convince people that Mrs. Seton's only concern in the matter was to support herself and her children; the fate of the school was sealed.

A large, pleasant house was secured, and the school was opened. Mrs. Seton, who of course resided there, was obliged to rise at an extremely early hour in order to reach St. Peter's Church for Mass. After her return, her whole day was given to her duties, which must have been utter and painful drudgery to a woman brought up as she had been. The evenings, however, were her own. In her rooms, she could gather her children about her, and read or talk to them, or play the piano, while they danced or sang. This was her only recreation. Never going out, save to church, she lived, in her native city, a life as remote from all the associations of her protestant existence, as if she were in another planet. It was, however, a life that with all its privations and restrictions, was congenial to Elizabeth, because of the deep recollection of spirit that it permitted, and she was sorry, when after a few months, lack of funds obliged Mr. White to close the school. Some of her former friends, who, while bewailing her infatuation, were generous enough to recognize the necessity of her

living, strove to secure a place for her with Mr. Harris, the curate of St. Mark's Church in the Bowery, who kept a boarding school for boys. Mr. Harris, fearful of the criticism he would be subjected to for employing a Catholic, refused to give her the position, but agreed to send ten or twelve of his pupils to board with her. Mrs. Seton, therefore, rented "two white houses, joined, in Stuyvesant's Lane, Bowery, near St. Mark's Church," and entered upon the ungrateful task of presiding over a large and unruly household, happy in the thought that she was able to eat a piece of bread of her own earning.

## CHAPTER IV.

1806—1809.

### CONVERSION OF CECILIA SETON—ELIZABETH REMOVES TO BALTIMORE—FOUNDS A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.

When I sink down in gloom or fear ;  
Hope blighted or delay'd,  
Thy whisper, Lord, my heart shall cheer ;  
'Tis I ; be not afraid.

*Newman : Consolation.*

AS has been already said, Harriet and Cecilia Seton, Elizabeth's young sisters-in-law, were tenderly attached to her, and their grief had been so great when they had been forbidden to see her, that the prohibition had been removed, and at long intervals, and for a short time, they were allowed to meet her. In the January of 1806, Cecilia became very ill, and asked constantly for Elizabeth. Mrs. Ogden, her sister, with whom she lived, and who, with the rest of the family, believed her to be dying, could not withstand her entreaties, and sent for Elizabeth, who hastened at once, to the sick girl's bedside. She continued to visit her regularly, and one day they chanced to be left alone. Cecilia seized the happy opportunity, and told her sister-

in-law of her desire to be a Catholic. Elizabeth's heart was filled with joy, mingled however, with anxiety, lest she be lacking in the prudence necessary to consummate the work begun in the young girl's soul by the mysterious action of God's grace. She wrote at once to Father Cheverus for advice, and that zealous priest, after praying for some days for light on the subject, wrote her in return, telling her that in Cecilia's weak condition, and under the difficulty of their intercourse, it was not necessary to instruct her on any points of controversy; what Elizabeth told him she had already taught her, seeming to him, under the circumstances, sufficient. "Should she ask any questions, I would answer in few words, without entering into the particular merits of the question, telling her that when she is better, you will examine these questions together; that, at present, it is enough to know Jesus and Him crucified, to put all her trust in Him, to suffer with Him, to wish to become a member of His Church. . . . The most embarrassing circumstance will be when you see her near the end of the fatal disorder. Then, perhaps, you will be with her, oftener, and alone. Let the love of our adorable Saviour in His sacrament and on the Cross, be the subject of your discourse. You might also mention the anointing of the sick in St. James, and if she desires it, and it can be done, procure to her the blessing of the last sacraments. Could they be hard-hearted enough to refuse such a request, and at such a time? The

whole weight of their displeasure will fall on you, but God has given you strength to bear it, and will make rich amends by his interior consolations. . . . Your beloved sister has been made by baptism a member of the Church. Willful error, I have reason to think, has never separated her from that sacred body. Her singular innocence of mind, and ardent piety, have also, very likely, preserved her from offending God in any grievous manner, and I hope, in consequence, that even if she cannot receive the sacraments, she will be a member of the Church triumphant in Heaven, although it would be an unspeakable advantage to receive the sacraments, and render her salvation more secure."

Contrary to expectation, Cecilia recovered, and sought instruction from the Reverend Father Hurley, who had succeeded Father O'Brien at St. Peter's. When she announced her intention, however, of becoming a Catholic, the storm broke in all its fury on Elizabeth's head. She was denounced as a corrupter of the minds of the young, and the Seton family threatened to obtain her expulsion from the State by the Legislature, as a dangerous character. Cecilia was kept in close confinement, and told that she would be sent to the West Indies in a vessel about to sail for that port, and be the means of taking the bread out of the mouths of Elizabeth and her children, if she did not renounce her intention of becoming a Catholic. Nor was this threat a vain one. It is sad to have to chronicle it, but for the thorough understanding of Eliza-

beth's position at this time, it must be told, that Mr. Hobart, and his brother minister, Mr. Moore, both forgot, not only their Christianity, but their manhood, so far, as to take the most active part in persecuting Elizabeth, using every effort to deter parents from leaving their children under her roof, and striving to have persons who had influence with Mr. Harris, urge him to discharge her. In case these means of punishing a woman who had been guilty of obeying her conscience when it led to an act of which they disapproved, did not succeed, these gallant gentlemen proclaimed their intention of invoking the law against the conduct of schools by Catholics, which still disgraced the statute books of the State of New York,—a hideous legacy from its colonial days. It so happened, however, that the very year, 1806, which witnessed this manifestation of the spirit that had enacted the horrible penal laws against Catholics a century before, saw them abolished.

The suffering which Elizabeth knew Cecilia was enduring, while she was prevented from making any effort, even by letter, to console or strengthen her, caused her to suffer keenly herself. It was during this time of affliction that an unexpected joy came to her in a meeting with Bishop Carroll, who was making a visitation of his vast diocese, in order to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. It must have been impressive, the meeting between these two noble souls, who comprehended each other so fully, and were to be such intimate friends

for ten years; the Bishop, with the frost of seventy winters upon his venerable head, welcoming with exquisite courtesy and benignity, the slight, pale woman, clothed in widow's weeds, with her beautiful, spiritual, face, glowing with the deep and holy emotion of the happy moment. For the Bishop there still remained ten years of life, during which he was to have, along with the cares and trials inseparable from his great office, many joys and consolations, among which, was to be the establishment, by her to whom he was now speaking, of that great religious order which he so longed to see, to whose home, amid the Maryland hills, he would often retire, in his great age, as to a Paraclete, to find rest, like St. John at Patmos, among the little children.

The Bishop listened with the deepest interest to Mrs. Seton's account of herself since her conversion, and gave her invaluable advice as to her children, and her conduct in regard to protestant friends and acquaintances. But, best of all, he strengthened her with the Sacrament of Confirmation, which her soul, tried as it was by calumny, and misrepresentation, sorely needed. She had invited her spiritual director, Father Tisserant, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, to be her godfather on the occasion, but he did not receive the invitation in time to be present, so Father Kelly, one of the priests attached to St. Peter's, took his place. Father Kelly gave Elizabeth the name of Mary, which, as she said, united to those of Elizabeth and Anna, which she already

bore, were a memento of the mystery of the Incarnation.

The Bishop seems to have stayed in New York with the Barrys, an Irish Catholic family of wealth and position, who had welcomed Elizabeth on her entrance into the Church, with all the warm-heartedness of their race. They opened their home to her as to one of their own family, and constantly befriended her with that generosity which is a part of the Irish character. Elizabeth was extremely anxious that Antonio Filicchi should return from Montreal, where he then was, in time to see the Bishop before his departure. We do not know, however, whether this happy reunion of friends under the hospitable roof of the Barrys took place or not, for the next letter of Elizabeth to Antonio is dated the tenth of August, when he was on the ocean.

In the meantime, Cecilia Seton had been bearing her spiritual martyrdom with a constancy worthy of the persecuted Christians of the first ages. Gentle, tender, and full of a gayety that, as Elizabeth said, could always bring a smile to people's lips, no matter how dark the hour, she appeared so soft and yielding, that to find her inflexible in her resolve to embrace Catholicism, was as novel, as it was irritating, to her guardians. For some reason, perhaps her promise not to see or communicate with Elizabeth, the restraint placed upon her was lessened, and she found opportunities to see Father Hurley. He was an Irish Augustinian friar, severe



and rigid in character, and possessed of some unpleasant peculiarities of manner, but withal, a worthy and pious priest. It is probable that he brought Cecilia to visit Bishop Carroll, and we may imagine how the Bishop consoled and strengthened the youthful neophyte, and how his heart was moved with compassion, as he raised his consecrated hand in benediction over the tender flower-like head meekly bent before him, even as Newman tells us, the heart of Cæcilius was moved in the cell of St. Callista, when he prepared and strengthened her for martyrdom. We may be sure, too, that the great Bishop, filled as he was "with the solicitude of all the churches," did not forget the brave little confessor, but won increase of fortitude and strength for her by his prayers. She had need of them indeed, for the most exquisite suffering was her daily portion. Still, she persevered, and on the twentieth of June, 1806, was received into the church by Father Hurley. "The anger of S—— and T——," says Elizabeth in her letter to Antonio of August tenth, "on finding that Cecilia was not only a Catholic, but as firm as the rock on which she had built, can not be described. . . . They uttered all sorts of threats—absurdities, as you would call them,—which are not worth repeating. Finally, they called a meeting of the family, when it was resolved, that if she persevered, every member of the family would feel bound never to address a single word either to her or to me. They also agreed never to allow either of us to cross the thres-

hold of their homes. When the day came which terminated the time that had been given her for consideration, Cecilia quietly packed her clothing, and leaving a note for Mrs. Ogden, her sister, in which she declared her willingness to return to her family at any time that she would be assured of freedom to profess and practice her religion, left the house, and came to me. She has been followed by the most terrible letters and accusations, against our faith; bigotry, superstition, bad priests, etc." Father Hurley, who, as Elizabeth elsewhere says, "only needed suffering in his penitents, to make him as tender and compassionate, as he was severe in time of calm," showed himself "an angel all through this affair, and also a true friend."

In answer to this letter, Antonio says: "If those who are in tears, deserve to be called happy, you, my well-beloved sister, are indeed fortunate. Courage and perseverance! Let your new Saint Cecilia take her place in your happy family. Pray for your persecutors. Your moderation, courage, and piety, will make them blush in the end." Filippo Filicchi also wrote a letter full of manly sympathy and encouragement, to Elizabeth, and concluded it by offering her his house at Gubbio as a home. He and his brother, he adds, have placed a sum to her credit with Murray, their agent in New York, sufficient to enable her and her family to go thither.

The thought of leaving a place where she was so misunderstood and calumniated, and finding refuge

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among those who, in the best sense, had become her own people, seems to have strongly appealed to Elizabeth, and led her to seriously consider doing so. Only the strong opposition that she met with from Father Cheverus, and Dr. Matignon, made her abandon it. Happily for the American Church, the instinctive feeling of both of these priests, born of their great wisdom and sanctity, that Elizabeth was intended for some special work in the United States, made them firmly oppose any plan of hers that would necessitate her leaving the country.

The feeling that led the Seton family to treat Elizabeth and Cecilia with such bitterness and contempt, found echo in the manifestation of hatred made against the Catholic Church by the populace at the close of this year. On Christmas Eve, a crowd gathered about St. Peter's Church for the purpose of tearing it down, or setting it on fire. They were dispersed with difficulty by the constables, one of whom was killed, and others wounded. The mayor issued a proclamation against the rioters, and a number of Catholics remained on guard about the Church, but there seems to have been no further attempt at violence. The only damage done to St. Peter's was the tearing down of the gilt cross, the sight of which, glittering in the morning sun, had so often cheered Elizabeth as she drew near the town, in her long walks to church every morning.

Elizabeth and Cecilia were suffered to remain in "Peaceful Cot," as Cecilia called Elizabeth's home,

in the enjoyment of each other's society, and the unrestrained practice of their religion, until 1807, when the fatal illness of Mrs. Maitland, Cecilia's sister, brought them again in contact with the family. The era of trained nurses was not yet, and the task of caring for the sick woman, weighed so heavily on her relatives, that when Elizabeth and Cecilia offered their services, the family compact to ignore them was forgotten, and their assistance promptly accepted. In her letter of March fourteenth, to Antonio Filicchi, who after an absence of almost three years, had reached Leghorn in January, safe and well, Elizabeth says, speaking of the state of affairs which Mrs. Maitland's illness had brought about; "Like the bird of wisdom, I appear only at night; Cecilia shows herself during the day."

Time had softened the anger and bitterness of her kindred, and the charm and tact of Cecilia, revived their affection for her. When all was over, and Cecilia was about to return to Elizabeth's house, her sisters, and her sister-in-law, Mrs. James Seton, invited her to visit them.

Three months later, in June, Mrs. James Seton died, and her husband at once asked Cecilia to take charge of his household. It was hard for Elizabeth to let her "sweet, merry Cis" go, especially as she knew the suffering she would have to endure for the sake of her faith, but both Cecilia and she considered it her duty to comply with her brother's request. As Elizabeth had foreseen, however, the

young girl was no sooner installed as mistress of her brother's house, than her suffering began. Elizabeth, writing to Antonio in June, 1807, says: "What Cecilia is suffering now, is so terrible, that I feel it will bring an end to her troubles. In the meantime, she dwells like an angel of peace in the midst of all sorts of contradictions. The children's governess has already complained to Mr. Seton that Miss Seton is endeavoring to distill the poison of her principles into the mind of his eldest daughter. This has roused much bitterness, and re-opened all the wounds of the time of her conversion. We are made the subject of conversation, remarks, criticisms, etc. This, however, affects Cecilia as little as it does me, but it is a heavy cross to see our religion so misrepresented."

Mr. James Seton was so convinced of the goodness and capacity of Cecilia, that he could not bear to part with her, fearful as he was of her influence upon his children. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Hoffman, was openly opposed to her being in the family, and frequently declared that the young girl would bring her to the grave. As this good lady was not given to hiding her sentiments, the danger that threatened the Seton children from the machinations of their aunt, who was regarded as a puppet in the hands of the artful and designing Mrs. William Seton, soon became a subject of discussion in the stately drawing-rooms, and over the well-laden dinner tables, of New York's best society, with the result that protestant prejudice was once

more awakened against Elizabeth, and caused the removal of nearly all the pupils of Mr. Harris' school from her house, thus leaving her once more utterly dependent on the charity of the Filicchis. These kind friends had already assumed the charge of the education of her sons, William, now aged ten, and Richard, eight, and had placed them at Georgetown College. This new expense which these gentleman had assumed, only made Elizabeth more anxious to lighten the burden of the support of her family, and her thoughts turned to Catholic Canada, with the hope that in one of its numerous religious communities, devoted to education, she and her three little daughters might obtain a home, in return for which she would give her services as a teacher. Her only misgiving in regard to the plan, arose from the fear of the lack of capacity in herself. Her intellectual gifts, and many accomplishments, which had been so much admired, even in the cultivated and critical society in which she had moved, and her beautiful disposition and character, seemed as nothing in her eyes. Her humility was indeed "the humility of the perfect" of whom Saint Bernard speaks, "who, ignorant of their riches, are bowed down by their abundance, like branches loaded with fruit."

When she mentioned her design in a letter to Bishop Carroll, however, she found that he was strongly opposed to it. He reminded her of the rigorous climate of Canada, and the effect it might have on her little daughters, and the difficulty of

again establishing herself in New York, if she were obliged to return thither. The Bishop did not know how very poor her condition and prospects were, at this time. Out of respect to his wishes, however, she endured an existence which had become well-nigh unendurable, for some time longer, with the utmost faith and patience. Meanwhile, the time, the visible time of God's succor, which arrives, sooner or later, for every soul faithful to His leading, was drawing near for her.

Towards the end of the month of August of this same year, Father du Bourg, president of the Sulpitian College of St. Mary, Baltimore, visited New York City. During his stay, he celebrated Mass every day at the altar of St. Peter's Church. One morning, a lady, attired in widow's costume, presented herself to receive Communion at his hands. She seemed so utterly absorbed in God, that Father du Bourg was deeply edified. Some hours later, as he was visiting Father Sibour, who had replaced Father Hurley, at St. Peter's, a gentle knock was heard at the house door, and Elizabeth was shown in. Father Sibour introduced her to Father du Bourg, who at once recognized the lady he had seen at his Mass. Though he had never met her before, he was familiar with her story, and welcomed the opportunity of conversing with her. His evident interest in her led, Elizabeth to speak of the difficulties of her life in New York, and of the desire she had cherished to remove to Canada. As she spoke, the intelligence which

she manifested, and the grace and distinction of her manner, inspired him with the thought of her opening a school in Baltimore. Though the chief city of a State that had been the cradle of Catholicism in the United States, it possessed no religious community devoted to the work of the education of young girls. Why could not Mrs. Seton, he thought, found an association of ladies, who, attached to the Rule of some existing Order, would undertake the meritorious and greatly needed work? Whether he mentioned his idea to Elizabeth at this interview, or not, does not appear, but before he left New York, it was fully discussed by both. Elizabeth would decide nothing without consulting Bishop Carroll. She wrote to him, and told him fully of her condition, how she had carried magnanimity towards her enemies to the uttermost limits, pausing only at what she felt her conscience would reproach her with in the hour of death, only to find the same hatred surrounding her on every side. She spoke of the desire to embrace the religious life, which had filled her soul from the time of her stay in Leghorn, and of her desire to have her children provided for in some way, so that in case of her death, they would be saved from being claimed by their protestant relatives, and brought up in their faith.

Before answering, Bishop Carroll consulted Father Cheverus and Dr. Matignon on the subject. They approved the plan, believing, as Father Cheverus said, that it would be advantageous not only



to Mrs. Seton's own family, but to the interests of the Catholic religion in the United States. The venerable Dr. Matignon went further, and spoke as if the gift of prophecy had descended upon him: "May God bless your designs! He has inspired them! I beseech Him to give you the strength to accomplish them for His greater glory. *My belief is that you are destined for the accomplishment of a considerable work in the United States.* You must remain here, in preference to any other place." Elizabeth must often have recalled the saintly priest's words, when, amid the mountains of Maryland, she saw her work growing and expanding, but at this time, her humility was so great that they almost caused her to smile.

The plan, in fact, of Elizabeth establishing herself in Baltimore, met with such hearty approval from all interested, that one can only wonder why it had not been thought of long before, and must conclude that it was because God wished His servant, for some wise reason, to experience the peculiar trials that fell to her lot, during her life in New York. As it was, the Autumn and Winter passed away, without Elizabeth receiving any word from Father du Bourg. In January, Mr. Barry died, and his daughter's health became so precarious, that her mother decided to take her back to Ireland, as soon as the embargo, which then rested on American vessels, should be raised. This broke the last link that held Elizabeth to New York, and increased her longing to leave it. At length in the Spring of 1808,

Father du Bourg again visited New York. To tell the truth, whatever might have been his intentions in regard to the proposed school, he had as yet got no further than wishing for it. While he was talking with Elizabeth one day at Mrs. Barry's house, he happened to mention the fact that the Sulpitians possessed some vacant lots near their college. "Vacant lots," answered Elizabeth, playfully, "suppose I go down, and ask for them?" Whereupon Father du Bourg, impressed with her energy, resolution, and admirable patience, interested himself thenceforth, to the utmost in her behalf. When he was leaving he said to her: "Come to us, Mrs. Seton, we will help you to form a plan of life that will save your children from the dangers that threaten them. You will find at Baltimore, more of the consolations of your Faith, than you have yet tasted. There need be no building. You can rent a house. You will not lack the courage to begin the work, and the experience of a year will enlighten you and your friends, as to the measures to take later." Elizabeth, ever candid and humble, would have spoken of her want of capacity, but Father du Bourg said: "Don't fear; what we need is example more than talent."

The voice of one speaking with the authority of a wide experience, and defining her plan with the precision of one accustomed to the conduct of great enterprises, subdued Elizabeth's fears and misgivings, and she agreed to his proposal. A few weeks later, she left New York, with her children, and

embarked for Baltimore, on the sailing packet, "The Grand Sachem," on the ninth of June, 1808. After a voyage of seven days, the travelers arrived in Baltimore, on the morning of the Feast of Corpus Christi, and were driven to St. Mary's Seminary, to find the consecration of its chapel in progress. "We entered without a word," she writes to Cecilia; "prostrate in an instant. Human nature could scarcely bear it. Your imagination can never conceive the splendor, the glory, of the scene. After Mass, I was in the arms of Madame Fournier, Father du Bourg's sister, surrounded by so many caresses and blessings! My wonder is how I got through it all. The feelings were lost with delight."

Elizabeth was indeed welcomed by Madame Fournier and her mother, Madame du Bourg, as if she had been a member of their own family. Father du Bourg had rented for her a two-story brick house in Paca street, near the Seminary, and the two ladies helped her to arrange her little household, with that skill and taste, and combination of grace and economy, for which the French are noted. One of Madame Fournier's little daughters, Aglae, welcomed the new-comers, on the evening of their arrival, in a set of verses, composed by Father Babad, one of the priests at St. Mary's, which she recited very prettily.

Elizabeth's whole being was revived by the Catholic atmosphere of Baltimore, and the kindness and attention which were shown her on every side.

It was like passing from the barren regions of eternal snow, to the fertile lands and balmy breezes of the South, to exchange the chilling neglect and scorn in which she had lived at New York, for the tender sympathy, and pleasant friendship that greeted her in the southern city. "If ever I dared ask God for anything touching our temporal future," she writes to Antonio Filicchi about this time, "it would most assuredly be that we might never be forced to return to New York." In July, when the college at Georgetown closed, Mrs. Seton went thither, and brought home her two boys, whom Father du Bourg had agreed to receive into his college, without any expense to Mrs. Seton, thus enabling her to keep the income allotted to her by the Filicchis, for the maintenance of her other children and herself.

Her thoughts now turned continually to Cecilia, wishing that she could transport her to Baltimore, from New York, where her life was one of unceasing suffering. "Were there not an all-wise God to direct," writes the angelic young girl at this time to Elizabeth, "and a Jesus to recompense, for our pains, I know not what I should think of my situation. Oh! my sister, if I could only get out of New York, I would go anywhere, and be the most menial servant." Nothing, however, could shake her constancy. She lived according to a rule approved by her confessor, "and found her greatest happiness in the frequentation of the Sacraments." Having consecrated her heart to God, she shrank

from all worldly amusements and functions, and looked forward to being able to dedicate herself to God's service, in the religious life, which, she hoped, Elizabeth would soon render possible for her. Her repeated requests to be allowed to join her, however, were refused, and even her confessor, Father Kohlman, did not favor the idea. But He who has promised to direct the paths of those who in all their ways acknowledge Him, did not fail Cecilia. Her constant suffering had undermined her delicate constitution, and the Autumn after Elizabeth left New York, she became very ill. Her soul was indeed poised for flight, but, for a moment, it hovered on the brink of eternity, in order that God's designs in regard to another soul, long the object of her and Elizabeth's prayers, might be accomplished.

It will be remembered that Harriet Seton had deeply sympathized with Elizabeth at the time of her conversion. When Cecilia entered the Church, she showed such interest and approval, as caused her to be kept carefully from contact with her sister, and to be regarded "as a brand snatched from the burning." When Cecil fell ill, however, Harriet's grief was so great, and the sick girl's longing for her so intense, that the guardians of both relented, and allowed Harriet to take part in nursing her. But in spite of all their care, and of the love and tenderness, so long withheld, so freely given now, when it was too late, the shadow of death deepened upon "the idol of the family." Then, at last, her rela-

tives gave up the hope that now, when Elizabeth's pernicious influence had been removed, Cecilia might be won back to the fold, and promised that as soon as she grew strong enough, she should go to Elizabeth. At this the tide turned, and the sick girl slowly regained strength.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth, utterly ignorant of Cecilia's illness, had put her plan into execution. Owing to the kindness of the Filicchis and other friends, she had been able to bring with her from New York, the sum of one thousand dollars, and she had Antonio Filicchi's permission to draw on Murray, his agent in New York, for another thousand. With her mind therefore, at rest, in regard to the funds for her modest little undertaking, she opened a boarding school for young girls, and easily obtained all the pupils that her house could accommodate. The spiritual director of the school was Father Pierre Babad, whose kindness of heart, and winning manner, caused him to be so generally beloved, that he was commonly spoken of by the simple title of *Peré*. He was a man of ardent temperament, and cultivated intellect, and possessed of a graceful fancy that led him to turn pretty sets of verses on all notable occasions. He won Elizabeth's confidence so completely, on his very first meeting with her, that she selected him as her confessor. Under his guidance, she waited, in the tranquil performance of her duties, for further manifestation of God's will in regard to the establishment of a religious community. The first sign was

vouchsafed this very Autumn of 1808, when Father Babad, who had gone to make a visit in Philadelphia, during his vacation, was introduced to a gentleman named O'Conway, who told him that his daughter Cecilia, wished to embrace the religious life, but deplored the fact that she would have to go to Europe, in order to find a religious Community such as she wished to enter. Father Babad was soon after introduced to Miss O'Conway, who told him of her resolve, but dwelt sadly on the necessity of being obliged to cut herself off so completely from her father, in order to accomplish it. Father Babad, under the impulse of a sudden inspiration, answered: "I believe that you will be able to do as you wish, without quitting the United States. There is a holy widow at Baltimore, whose virtue is the admiration of all who know her. You would find, with her, I am sure, the life of retirement, sacrifice, and good works, that you seek." Then, with all the grace and vivacity natural to him, he recounted Elizabeth's story, while Miss O'Conway listened with breathless interest. His words decided her destiny. She at once communicated with Mrs. Seton, and receiving a favorable answer, set out a few weeks later for Baltimore. Her father accompanied her, and on the seventh of December, 1808, confided her to Mrs. Seton, as the offering of what he held dearest on earth, to God. With this edifying young companion, Elizabeth continued her work, and soon received further manifestation of the Divine Will, in regard to it, through the

action of one whose memory deserves to be ever cherished by the Sisters of Charity of the United States, and because of them, by American Catholics.

This benefactor was Mr. Cooper, then in St. Mary's Seminary, preparing for the priesthood, into which he had been led in a rather remarkable manner. Born in Virginia, and bred in religious indifference, he grew up with a passion for travel, which, after he had left college, he proceeded to gratify. After visiting every part of the known world, he returned to Paris, where he fell seriously ill.

During a long convalescence, he chanced to take up, like St. Ignatius Loyola under similar circumstances, the New Testament, and became utterly absorbed in it. Unlike the Spanish saint, however, Mr. Cooper lacked the religious education and training necessary in order to fully profit by its perusal, and the only effect of his reading was to fill him with a love of Christ, and a desire to be His friend and disciple. But where to turn, or what to do, in order to accomplish this, he did not know, and in the solitude of his sick chamber, there was none to ask. At length a voice seemed to sound within his heart saying: "I am near to him who seeks Me. It depends on yourself if you will have Me for your friend!"

He recovered from his illness, and went to London. The Gospels were now always in his hands; he read and meditated on them continually. The different teachings of the numerous protestant sects bewildered him; and he sought counsel of a friend



whose character inspired him with profound respect. The latter's advice was simple: "Study, examine the different Christian communions, with a heart prepared in advance to embrace the belief that appears to you the best founded." Mr. Cooper did so, and was soon persuaded of the truth of Catholic dogma. He returned to America, and took up his residence in Philadelphia, whence he conducted a vigorous correspondence with Bishop Carroll for some time, with the result that on the Feast of the Visitation, 1807, he was received into the Church by Father Hurley, then pastor of St. Augustine's in that city.

One of the passages in the New Testament which had appealed to him most forcibly, was that counsel which gave sorrow to him to whom it was first addressed, but which so many generous hearts have since gladly embraced. "If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell all thou hast, and distribute it among the poor." He was, therefore, eager to dispose of his wealth, and it was while he was considering how he could best serve God's poor in doing so, that Mrs. Seton came to Baltimore.

One morning, after receiving Holy Communion, Mrs. Seton felt a strong inclination to devote herself to the care and instruction of poor female children. That very afternoon, meeting Father du Bourg, she told him of her desire, and that, seeing Mr. Cooper kneeling directly before her, she had thought: "He has money—if he would but give it for the bringing up of poor little children, to know and love God!"

On hearing this, Father du Bourg looked thoughtful, and said it was very strange; that Mr. Cooper had spoken to him that very morning of how his thoughts continually turned to the instruction of poor children, of his willingness to give his money for that purpose, and his wish to know if Mrs. Seton would undertake the work. After discussing the matter with Elizabeth, Father du Bourg requested her to reflect upon the matter for one month, and let him know the result. He said the same to Mr. Cooper. Meanwhile, there was to be no communication on the subject between Mrs. Seton and Mr. Cooper. At the end of the month, they came separately to Father du Bourg, and professed their willingness to do as they had said. There was indeed something plainly providential in the accord of these two chosen souls, by which powerless wealth, and powerless poverty were united and made productive. Bishop Carroll, and the venerable Father Francis Nagot, Superior of St. Mary's Seminary, both warmly approved the proposed work. The next thing was to choose a site for the institution it was planned to establish. The Sulpitians were anxious to have it erected on the vacant land which they owned near the Seminary, but Mr. Cooper argued in favor of the country, and urged that a piece of property for sale in the vicinity of Emmitsburg, a village about fifty miles northwest of Baltimore, be bought for the purpose. His proposal was finally adopted. The property which was known as the Fleming farm,

and on which stood a small stone cottage, was purchased from a Mr. Emmett, of the family after whom the adjacent village was named, and work begun on a house for the new Community.

Meanwhile, the little house in Paca street was steadily receiving new aspirants to the religious life. In April, Maria Murphy, a niece of Matthew Carey, of Philadelphia, famous for his active philanthropy and his determined resistance to British oppression at the time of the struggle for Independence, presented herself to Mrs. Seton, and begged to be received as a candidate. As she had left home without her mother's consent, Mrs. Seton was reluctant to accept her, and tried to prevail upon her to return to her family, but Maria's tears and entreaties were so moving, that Mrs. Seton finally consented to let her remain. A short time after, her parents gave their consent to her embracing the religious life. In May, Mary-Ann Butler and Susan Clossy, of New York, joined the little band. Several young girls in Baltimore and other places were also preparing to enter the proposed Community. One of them who lived in the vicinity of Emmitsburg, wrote to Mrs. Seton: "I stand sometimes whence I can see the happy spot that is to receive you and my sisters, and myself, and I can hardly contain my joy."

It was now deemed fitting by Bishop Carroll and Father du Bourg, that Mrs. Seton and her little band of spiritual daughters should form themselves, as far as was practicable, into a religious Community.

The first step towards this was for Mrs. Seton to take vows which should consecrate her, for a time at least, to the religious life. This she did therefore, at the hands of Bishop Carroll, in the presence of a number of priests, who were deeply interested in the new work. These simple vows which bound her for the space of one year, to the practice of poverty, chastity, and obedience, filled her soul with joy, binding her, as they did, "to that poverty in which she wished to live and to die; to that chastity, which she considered to be so dear and lovely that she esteemed it her true delight to cherish it; and to that obedience which she esteemed as the true protection and safeguard of her soul." Reverend Father du Bourg was appointed the ecclesiastical superior of the new Community, which was as yet without a name or a definite form, the name being difficult to decide upon before the adoption of a permanent Rule, the choice of which, in its turn, was hard to determine, without the scope of the work of the new Community, being fixed. Pending the settlement of these questions, the Sisters called themselves Sisters of St. Joseph. Elizabeth was deeply impressed with the sense of her responsibility as Superior of the nascent Community. Her heart was filled with a conviction of her utter unworthiness for the sublime office, and her inability to train souls to the practice of the virtues required by the religious life. On the evening of the day that had witnessed her consecration to it, while

conversing with the Sisters about the probable designs of God in regard to them, she was seized with a sudden transport of terror and humility. Bursting into tears, she fell on her knees, and after remaining in this position, silently weeping, for some time, confessed aloud, with the deepest contrition, the most humiliating actions of her life. Then, with eyes and hands uplifted to Heaven, she cried in a manner inexpressibly touching to the hearts of her hearers: "My gracious God! Thou knowest my unfitness for this task. I who by my sins have so often crucified Thee, I blush with shame and confusion. How can I teach others, who know so little myself, and am so miserable and imperfect!" The Sisters, who had fallen on their knees about their Superior, were so overcome by this touching proof of her humility, that they mingled their tears with hers.

It was now thought proper for these aspirants to the religious life, to adopt some uniform and suitable costume. Mother Seton proposed the adoption of a dress similar to that which she had worn ever since the death of her husband, and which was a copy of the costume she had seen worn by some nuns in Italy. It consisted of a black dress, with a short cape, and a neat white muslin cap, with a crimped border, and a black crape band round the head, fastened under the chin. Save that the cap is black, and the crape band lacking, this is substantially the costume that is worn by the Mount Saint Vincent Sisters of Charity to-day, and which for

convenience, simplicity, and suitability to the work of a Sister of Charity, could not easily be surpassed. The Sisters assumed this dress on the first of June, 1809, and on the following day—the Feast of Corpus Christi—appeared in it, in St. Mary's Chapel, at Mass, when they received Holy Communion, as the seal of their consecration to God, and to the work to which they had pledged their lives. The joy which dwelt in the countenances of the Sisters on this solemn occasion, was reflected in the faces of the people who filled the chapel, at the prospect opened before the struggling American Church by this band of holy virgins dedicating themselves to works of charity.

Shortly after the adoption of the religious habit by the Sisters, two new candidates arrived: one, a devout widow, named Mrs. Rose White, of Baltimore; the other, Catharine Mullen. These made a total of six now under the guidance of Mother Seton. Filled with ardor, these chosen souls lived according to the provisional Rule provided for their spiritual direction; dividing the day between religious exercises, and the duties of the school which had now greatly increased in numbers. Full of heavenly peace and happiness, indeed, were those days of the infant Community in the house in Paca street, where the little band, who, for many years, all unknown to one another, and in widely separated parts of the country, had longed to serve God in the religious life, had been brought together, to enjoy what must have often seemed to them like a beautiful dream.

The seventh arrival gave Mother Seton exquisite joy, for it was no other than Cecilia Seton who reached Baltimore in June, accompanied by her brother Samuel, and Harriet, who had been allowed to come with them in order to take care of the sick girl. The sea air and the prospect of being united to Mother Seton had renewed Cecilia's strength, and she arrived in Paca street, feeling and appearing, much better for her voyage. Still, she looked so frail and weak, that Mother Seton's heart was smitten with anguish, even in the joy of meeting. But as for Cecilia, no shadow fell upon the perfect joy of the hour, filled as it was with transports of gratitude towards God. Her brother soon returned home, but Harriet remained with her.

Soon, however, Cecilia's strength failed again; all her former langour and feebleness returned. The doctors advised her removal to the country, and Mother Seton whose presence was now needed at Emmitsburg, decided to take her thither.

## CHAPTER V.

1809.

### EMMITSBURG—CONVERSION OF HARRIET SETON— COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE "STONE HOUSE"— DEATH OF HARRIET SETON.

All good thoughts stir within me, and renew,  
Their slumbering strength divine,  
Till there springs up a courage high and true,  
To suffer and to do.

*Newman : Sign of The Cross.*

THE debt which the people of the United States owe to France for her assistance of their country during the Revolutionary war, is far exceeded by the spiritual debt which the Catholics of our land owe to the French priests—the Clergé Emigré, whom the French Revolution sent to its shores. When we read with admiration of the labors of a Matignon, a Flaget, a David, a du Bourg, a Dubois, a Duhamel, and a Bruté, and of the many others, native and foreign, who deserve to be ranked with them; Moranvillé, Garnier, Badin, Richard, Gallitzin, Thayer, Benedict Fenwick, de Nerinckx, Edward Fenwick, Hill, Molyneux, Kohlman, de Andreis, Rosati, Odin, Van Quickenborn, Van de Veld, Blanc, and England, let us remember that



every one of these apostles of the United States might have said with St. Paul: "I have been in voyage and in peril often; peril of floods, peril of thieves; peril in the midst of cities, peril in the midst of deserts; peril in the sea. I have endured all sorts of labors and fatigues; frequent vigils, hunger, thirst, much fasting, cold, and nakedness. And besides all these things, I have had the cares of each day, the solicitude of the churches." On the wild and lonely prairie, amid the primeval forests, and in the midst of heretical cities, these saintly men laid the foundation of the Catholicism that flourishes in the United States to-day, and with the traditions of whose growth, their names are inseparably connected, so that while the American Church exists, Boston will cherish the memory of its Cheverus; Indiana, of its Bruté; Kentucky, of its Flaget; and Emmitsburg, of its Dubois.

Jean Dubois, who was to be intimately associated with Mother Seton in the direction of the Sisters of Charity, and destined also to be the second Bishop of New York, was born, educated, and ordained to the priesthood, in Paris. When the National Assembly attempted to force its impious civil constitution on the clergy, Father Dubois was one of those who preferred exile to accepting it. He sailed for the United States where he knew "the harvest was great, and the laborers few," and landed at Norfolk, Virginia. Recommended by Lafayette to the Randolphs, Lees, and Beverlys, to James Monroe, and Patrick Henry, he received the

kindest and most respectful attention from these distinguished statesmen, and for want of a Catholic Chapel, was allowed to say Mass in the Capitol, and administer the sacraments to the few scattered Catholics that could be gathered together to avail themselves of his ministry.

After devoting some time to learning English, which was taught him by Patrick Henry, he offered his services to Bishop Carroll, who assigned him the spiritual care of the north-western part of the state of Maryland, where the settlements of Frederick, Hagerstown, Westminster, and Emmitsburg, had been hewn out of the primeval forest. From 1794 to 1808, he was constantly passing from one of these places to another, to administer the Sacraments, preach the Word of God, and catechise the young. His residence, in so far as he could be said to have a residence, was at Frederick, a growing town, which owed to him, the building of its first church.

Emmitsburg, which is in the extreme north of Maryland, between the upper stream of the Monocacy, and the Catoctin ridge of the South Mountains, so close to the Pennsylvania border that it is only twelve miles from Gettysburg, where the Civil War reached its high tide, was then a small village, whither Father Dubois went once a month, to say Mass, and give an instruction in a room in a farmhouse, that had been set apart as a chapel. Towards the close of the year 1805, the farmers of that region determined to build a house for their beloved pastor, and asked their brethren of Frederick to

assist them in the work. The two congregations gathered on the Mountain near Emmitsburg, and cleared a considerable plot of ground, on which they built a substantial log-house. The following Spring, they united their forces again, and began to build, not far from the house, a brick church, which was furnished in the year 1808. In the Summer of that year, during a retreat which he was making at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Father Dubois, in accordance with a resolve that had been in his mind for some time, sought admission among the Sulpitians, and when he returned to his missions, it was as one of that Order. Shortly after, Father du Bourg visited him at Emmitsburg, and was so charmed with the beauty and grandeur of the mountain solitude, that he conceived the idea of founding there a *petit séminaire*, where professors might be trained, and vocations formed for the seminary in Baltimore. The project was promptly carried into execution. A tract of land was bought, and buildings begun on its lower part, near the dwelling and church of Father Dubois. The new establishment was called the Seminary of Mount St. Mary, and in the Spring of 1805, all unfinished as it was, received sixteen young seminarists. Father Dubois was made Superior of it, and cheerfully accepted the burden of its direction, weighed down though he was with the heavy charge of his great and widely scattered pastorate. It was in this neighborhood, that it had been decided, in deference to Mr. Cooper's wishes, to locate Mother

Seton's Community. The Fleming farm which the Sisters had bought, was only two miles below the Seminary, in a beautiful valley.

On the twenty-first of June, Mother Seton, accompanied by Cecilia and Harriet Seton, her daughter Anna, and Sister Cecilia O'Conway, set out for Emmitsburg, to prepare for the coming of the other Sisters. The little party traveled by way of Westminster, following mainly the route traversed in our day by the Western Maryland Railway, journeying in one of those huge, canvas-covered, creaking, wains, then in use among the country-people of Maryland. The expenses of the journey amounted to fifty dollars. The country through which they passed was sometimes beautiful, sometimes monotonously ugly, though nearly always redeemed by the sight of the beautiful blue hills of Maryland, rising, as they retreated towards the horizon, into majestic mountains. A journey in those days, in our unsettled country, was no slight undertaking, for besides the heat and the dust, the fatigue, and the jolting on bad roads, there were unbridged streams, and possible freshets, to daunt travelers. But the prospect of serving God in a religious house, made the little band of pilgrims, cheerful, and even gay. "We were obliged to walk the horses all the way," writes Mother Seton to the Sisters, on the journey, "and have walked ourselves—all except Cecilia—nearly half the time; this morning, nearly four and a half miles before breakfast. The dear patient was greatly amused at the

procession, and all the natives astonished as we went before the carriage. The dogs and pigs came out to meet us, and the geese stretched their necks in mute demand to know if we were any of their sort, to which we gave assent."

Moving in this slow fashion, it must have required several days for the party to travel the fifty miles between Baltimore and Emmitsburg, especially as the journey was up-hill all the way. When they did arrive, they found that the cottage on the land they had bought, which workmen, under Father Dubois' direction, were enlarging and preparing for their temporary dwelling, was not yet ready for them. Father Dubois, therefore, gave up his house to them, and went to the seminary. As his dwelling consisted of only two rooms, it was extremely inconvenient for Mother Seton and her companions, especially when after a few days, little Catharine and Rebecca Seton were added to the party. But the little band "were so happy in being united, and free to serve God, in peace, that they made light of the discomforts of the situation."

The State of Maryland is dear to Catholics of the United States, as the cradle of Catholicism in their country, a fact of which the name of the Virgin Mother, which it bears, is a sweet memorial. As is well known, this State is cut from its southern almost to its northern limit, by the Bay of Chesapeake, into two nearly equal parts. The western part forms a vast plateau, which rises gradually from east to west, until it meets the mountains of the

Blue Ridge, a chain of that great Alleghany mountain system, which the Indians called the "endless mountains." The Blue Ridge, whose summits are covered with dense forests, stretch from north to south in parallel lines, between which are inclosed fertile valleys, which in turn, are cut by hills that afford a succession of charming prospects. It is a world of mountains, rising on every side, in every form, an immense world, noble and inspiring, never severe nor savage; so that it seems to the spectator, as if here, nature wrought only to enchant the eye. The abundance of water which descends from divers heights as brooks or rivers, imparts to the region a constant freshness, which adds to its fertility. The climate for the greater part of the year, is delightful, and Winter would be almost unknown, were it not that when the summits of the mountains become covered with snow, the effect is felt in the valleys, making the cold there very severe.

Mother Seton and her young companions, on setting out to explore their future home, were charmed with its beauty. Much of the land had been cleared, but there still remained many magnificent trees, relics of the primeval forest; majestic oaks, gigantic cedars, and sombre firs, intermingled with stately locusts, then bearing fragrant blossoms, spreading maples of every variety, sycamores, tulip trees, and magnolias with their freight of snowy, perfumed, bloom. It was the perfect season of June, when the freshness of Spring still lingers,

and blends with the early maturity of Summer. The delicate pink and white blossoms of the apple and the cherry trees were gone, but the boughs of the latter were loaded with fruit that glowed like rubies amid emerald settings, while beneath their feet gleamed the dull scarlet of the small, exquisitely-flavored Virginia strawberry, growing in riotous profusion amid the moss and ferns. The hedges were bright with roses, varying in hue from deepest purple to the most delicate pink, and surrounded with foliage of dazzling green. Azaleas, white and pale yellow, the thorn-apple with its delicious odor, the superb rhododendron, the calycanthus, whose small, brown flower sheds on the air the perfume of the strawberry; the clinging jasmine, with its long clusters of scarlet flowers; the beautiful, twining convolvulus, with its white trumpet-shaped blooms; the dwarf cypress, with its trumpet-like leaf; the sassafras, whose tiny fruit hung like a ball of jet from a coral thread; the wax myrtle, covered with odoriferous berries; the smilax, the phlox, the begonia, with a multitude of other beautiful shrubs and plants, grew naturally from the soil, in great abundance. Animation was lent to the scene by the countless birds, and myriads of butterflies, that flashed their exquisite hues upon the eye, as they flew from flower to flower; and a brook, which, hastening downward from the mountain, filled the silence of the valley with the sound of its waters.

According to an old legend, well known in that

locality, nearly two centuries before, when Maryland was first colonized, one of the Jesuit missionaries, in quest of Indian tribes, to whom he might make known the glad tidings of salvation, toiled up the hills, and traversed the trackless forests, until he reached what is now the Valley of St. Joseph, and preached the Word of God to the red men whom he found there. Like all the Maryland Indians, whose passions were never roused by the injustice that their race met with in the other English colonies, they received the black-robe with respect, and accepted the true faith. Dark Puritan days afterwards came on Maryland, and the tribe lost their beloved father, but one, at least, among them, never forgot his teachings, and faithfully practiced his religion, as far as he could do so. This was a chief, of rank and importance among his people. He had a special devotion to Our Blessed Lady, and used to say his beads many times a day, often wishing as he did so, in his simple, child-like faith, that he might have the happiness of beholding her. The years went by, and the chief grew old and feeble, but ever told his beads and wished his wish. At length, one Summer day, as he tilled a field, murmuring the while his "Hail Marys," a beautiful and gracious lady, clad in flowing white robes, stood before him, and told him that she was the Blessed Virgin whom he had so longed to see. "Know," she continued; "that in these fields where you have for so many years, prayed to me, there shall one day gather many virgins, who will



sound continually the praises of God." The beautiful vision then faded, leaving the old chief filled with happiness. A statue of the Blessed Virgin, in a grove of oaks, at St. Joseph's, called "Our Lady of the Fields," commemorates this beautiful legend.

The balmy air, and warm sunshine restored Cecilia Seton's strength wonderfully, and she was soon able to walk with Mother Seton as far as the church on the mountain, which the latter visited twice a day. Harriet Seton usually accompanied them as far as the church, but never entered it. This young girl had been engaged for several years to Barclay Bayley, Mother Seton's half-brother, but owing to his unsettled character, and uncertain prospects, was far from happy; yet despite the entreaties of her relatives, and intimations of the brilliant offers that would be made her, if it were known that she was free, she remained loyal to her lover, who was then in the West Indies. "Perhaps you remember Harriet Seton. She was on the top of fashion, and amusement, and the belle of New York," says Mother Seton in one of her letters to Antonio Filicchi. But even in the midst of her social triumph, the youthful beauty began to realize the vanity and hollowness of a worldly life, and when her young sister Cecilia embraced the Catholic Faith, and showed the happiness, which, in spite of persecution, filled her heart because of it, she was deeply stirred, and longed openly to do likewise. Like many others in her position, however, she paused at the threshold of the Church, dreading

to break the ties that bound her to kindred and betrothed. The former, who were aware of her "leaning towards Rome," had solemnly charged her, when they allowed her to accompany Cecilia to Baltimore, not to yield to the influence of Mother Seton, and it was probably because of this injunction, that she never entered the church. But the time had come when the design of God, in bringing her into this solitude, was to be accomplished.

One beautiful evening in July, when she had accompanied Mother Seton and Cecilia, as usual, to the church when they went thither to make their evening visit, she seated herself on a rock, near by. The sun had disappeared, but its rays still gilded the summits of the surrounding mountains, though the shadows of evening filled the valley. The entire scene breathed repose, and harmony; earth and heavens, recounted, to the attentive soul, the praises of their Creator. To Harriet, it seemed as if the voice of nature testified against her insensibility to His pleadings for her soul. Utterly overcome, she sank on her knees, at the foot of a tree, and was found thus by Mother Seton when she came out of the church. She anxiously inquired the cause of her grief, but Harriet continued to weep without answering. Mother Seton, now deeply concerned, entreated the young girl to tell her the reason of her distress, and at length, Harriet cried; "Why may not I go with you to church?" Mother, deeply moved, answered: "Ah! Come! Come! If it is not given you to feel the sweetness

with which the presence of God on our altars fills our souls, you can at least uplift your soul in prayer."

After this, Harriet accompanied her sisters whenever they visited the church, and also attended Mass. Meanwhile, the earnest prayers of many devout souls, and frequent offerings of the Holy Sacrifice, were pleading that strength might be given her to break the chains that held her soul in bondage. On the morning of the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, the twenty-second of July, Mass was offered for her at Baltimore, and at the Mountain. It was a day of exquisite mental anguish for poor Harriet. Her eyes had been unsealed; the divine gift of Faith had been bestowed on her, but the bonds that held her soul from the profession of that Faith, with all that it involved, seemed beyond human power to break. All day long, nature and grace contended in her soul, until night, when, "stealing up to the church, by the light of a full moon," she found in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, courage to make the sacrifice. "Yes;" she answered Mother Seton, when the latter reminded her of all that the step would involve, "I have examined all this in my own mind. I have weighed well the consequences, but I can not remain a protestant, and if, as a Catholic, I am rejected even by this dear one,"—touching the miniature of her betrothed, which, in accordance with the custom of the time, hung suspended from a chain about her neck—"I must save my soul."

Her choice was indeed, a wise one, for life, instead of opening for her, as those about her thought, was almost ended. In a few short months, she was called to the reward of the sacrifice she had made for His sake.

On the thirtieth of July, 1809, Mother Seton and her companions took possession of the Fleming cottage, or as it has ever since been called, the "Stone House," and on the following day, the Feast of St. Ignatius, the Sisters from Baltimore, arrived, bringing with them, the two Seton boys. The house, consisting of a main floor and a garret, afforded only very cramped quarters for the sixteen persons it had to shelter. On the right side of the main room there was a little recess; here, Father du Bourg who had come from Baltimore, had the altar erected, and celebrated the first Mass for the infant Community. During his stay he gave the Sisters their first spiritual Retreat.

The Community at this time, comprised ten Sisters: Elizabeth Seton, Cecilia O'Conway, Maria Murphy, Maria Burke, Suzanne Clossy, Mary-Anne Butler, Rose White, Catharine Mullen, Sara Thompson, and Helen Thompson. It would have been difficult to bring together a number of persons more capable of carrying on their great undertaking. The most different characters and temperaments, the most diverse gifts and aptitudes, were to be found among them; souls disposed to prayer and contemplation; souls attracted to the more active works of charity; minds possessed of executive

ability, and capacities for mastering the details of domestic economy ; and all working in perfect harmony for the general good.

After long prayer and reflection, it had been decided that the new Community should take for a model the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, founded in France about one hundred and fifty years before, by St. Vincent de Paul. This important point settled, the next step was to obtain from the mother-house a copy of the Book of Constitutions and Rules, given to the Institute by its holy Founder. The task of obtaining this was confided to Father Flaget who was about to visit France in the hope of evading the burden of the episcopate, for which he had been named by the captive Pope Pius VII. A long time had necessarily to elapse however, before the Community could hope to obtain this Rule ; in the meantime, the provisional Rule was to be observed.

Many years afterwards, Mother Rose White, describing to Sisters of a later generation, the life of the Community in the " Stone House," said : " All was strange around us ; the new house under cover, and the carpenters at work, and we not knowing exactly what we were to do. However, it was necessary to make some little arrangement of rules, and begin the order of the day. Sister Kitty Mullen was appointed Housekeeper ; Sister Rose, Mother's assistant ; Sister Cecilia, Secretary and School Sister ; Sister Sally, Procuratrix, washer, and baker ; the Sisters, in turn, to cook, all lending a hand to iron-

ing. Our washing-place was the creek, where we took our clothes early in the morning, and remained all day, with not a plank to stand on, nor a covering but the tree, under which we would place our tubs. If rain came we would bring up the clothes all wet—had no accommodation, no water to wash with at the house.”

The Sisters rose at five o'clock. Prayer, meditation, and recital of a third part of the Rosary, occupied them till a quarter to seven. At seven o'clock, they assembled about the little oratory to hear Mass which was celebrated by Father Dubois. After Mass, they recited the second part of the Rosary. At nine o'clock, they breakfasted. Then, after an act of adoration to the Sacred Heart, they separated to employ themselves in the discharge of their several duties until a quarter to twelve. At that time, they gave some moments to examination of conscience, adoration, and reading of the New Testament. At noon, they took dinner, during which one of the Sisters read aloud a portion of Holy Scripture, to which the others listened with profound recollection. After dinner, there was recreation until two o'clock. Reading of the *Imitation*, and work, filled the time from then till five when they made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and recited another third of the Rosary. At seven, they had supper, which was followed by recreation till half-past eight. The day terminated with short spiritual reading and prayer. It was a life tending to the fulfill-

ment of the Apostle's counsel: Pray without ceasing; all that you do, do for the love of Jesus Christ.

On Sundays the Sisters went up to the church on the mountain, for Mass. A forest path, crossed by an unbridged creek, was the only road thither. When the water was low, they made their way over this creek on stones, but when it was high, Father Dubois would send a horse down to the spot, on whose back they crossed one by one, the oldest Sister waiting until all the others were safely over, before she crossed herself.

This difficulty passed, they proceeded on their journey, reciting the Rosary as they went. They had assumed the care of the Altar, and of the laundering of its linens, to the great relief, no doubt, of Father Dubois, and the priests who shared his labors in that isolated spot. They contributed also, to the solemnity of the Divine Offices, by chanting during them, the Psalms and Canticles, which one of their number usually accompanied on the organ.

Often, after Mass, in fine weather, instead of returning home, they would ascend the mountain to where, on the brink of a deep ravine, great rocks formed a rude shelter, in shape not unlike an eagle's nest. Close by, a brook of crystal-like clearness, hastened noisily down the mountain, a gleaming silvery band, bordered with bright flowers, amid the green foliage, until it disappeared in the valley beneath. In this spot, which they called "the grotto", they enjoyed a view which never

palled upon them. The horizon seemed limitless; the sense of immensity exalted their souls; they felt nearer to God, and Mother Seton only gave fitting expression to the awe and adoration that filled all hearts, when she recited, as it was her custom to do, the Canticle of the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, that prayer which calls on all creation to bless and glorify God, its Creator. Not one of those present on such occasions, ever forgot the impression made on her by Mother Seton, as with eyes and hands uplifted to Heaven, she raised her voice, amid the silence and sublimity of Nature, in the inspired words of Holy Writ.

Then all would gather about Mother, and the luncheon which had been brought, would be set forth and eaten, with much flavoring of gayety and pleasant conversation. Afterwards, the party broke up into groups, the more active, perhaps, to climb higher, the others to sit and read, or talk, and enjoy the view, until it came time to descend to the church for vespers. This excursion to the "grotto" was the only pleasure of the little Community. During the rest of the week, labor and mortification reigned supreme in the house.

In October, Archbishop Carroll paid the new establishment a visit, and administered Confirmation, in the tiny chapel, to Harriet Seton, who had been received into the Church some weeks before. The strength which the Holy Spirit imparted to her in this Sacrament, gave her courage to make known her change of religion to her relatives in New York.



The usual storm of reproaches followed, but Harriet was not in the least dismayed. She had decided, if her betrothed would consent to release her from her engagement to him, to seek admission to the Community; and in the meantime, lived as much like a candidate as possible. One of the first in the chapel every morning, cheerfully taking part in the labors of the house during the day, her beautiful face ever radiant with the joy that filled her soul, she was the edification of the Sisters, and made them look forward with pleasure to the time when she would be one of them.

As the beautiful, still, Autumn faded, and the mountains grew black, while heavy clouds lowered on their summits, and icy blasts swept down the valley, the vocations of the little band who had forsaken all things, to come out into the wilderness to serve God, were severely tried. It was the plan of the Sisters to support themselves by conducting a boarding-school for girls whose parents would be able to pay for their tuition; but until they had a place in which to receive pupils, this was of course, impossible. A part of Mr. Cooper's gift had been used to buy their property; the remainder was pledged for the payment of the building of their new house, then in progress. This left them utterly without resources for the time being.

The energies of Mother Seton, and the good-will of her companions were taxed to the utmost during this trying period. Every expedient that the strictest economy could suggest was employed, in order

to maintain the existence of the Community. The price of tea and coffee barred their use ; but as some beverage was essential, the Sisters manufactured a species of coffee from carrot-roots and molasses. Their bread was made from coarse farina. Fresh meat was never bought, except for the sick, and neither butter nor milk was used in the preparation of bread, soups, or vegetables, buttermilk being made to supply their place. Even the stuff for religious habits was lacking, many of the Sisters being obliged to wear ordinary dress. Their dormitory, the garret of the farm-house, had no glass in its windows, only a few rough boards nailed across them, as a protection against bad weather. The snow drifted between these in such quantities that frequently, cartloads of it had to be removed.

Not all this suffering and privation, however, caused even one of those who had put their hands to the plough, to look back. A spirit of holy ardor, of exaltation, made them forget the ease and well-being they had left, and count as nothing the things they lacked. They inured their bodies to cold, and their palates to the coarsest food ; and wore habits full of holes, with utter indifference. "All hearts," says Mother Seton, "applied themselves to mortification with such good will, that they found the carrot coffee, the buttermilk soup, and the stale lard, too delicate food."

Notwithstanding their poverty, and their cramped quarters, the Sisters had begun at once their appointed work ; teaching poor children, visiting the

sick, spinning, weaving, knitting, and sewing clothes for the poor. This regular life was sadly interrupted, however, as the winter deepened, by a visitation of sickness. Whether the overcrowded condition of the house rendered it unhealthful, or its miserable construction and exposed situation, caused the inmates to take cold, does not appear, but almost every one under its roof, seems to have been prostrated in turn, so that for several months the place was simply a hospital. To add to the situation, William Seton, Mother Seton's eldest son, was seized with a nervous fever, and the director of the college, sent him to St. Joseph's. It seems strange that he should have done so, knowing, as he must have, of the state of affairs in the Sisters' house; the lack of doctors, medicines, and proper nourishment for the sick, and the exhausted condition of the inmates, either recovering from illness, or nursing those who were ill; but he may have thought that Mother Seton would prefer to watch over the sick boy herself. For a time, it looked as if the care of him would be brief; he rapidly grew so ill that the last sacraments were administered to him, and the Sisters prepared his shroud. To the surprise of all, however, he rallied, and rapidly recovered.

The spiritual life of the Community during this sad time, went on as usual. Every morning, sturdy Father Dubois, his beard and hair stiff with frost, made his way down the mountain to celebrate Mass, in the little oratory, when the doors of the sick rooms would be opened, so that the inmates could

assist at the Holy Sacrifice, and, if possible, receive the Blessed Eucharist. On Sundays the people of Emmitsburg would attend the early Mass, which Mr. Cooper, who was then pursuing his studies at the seminary on the mountain, would often serve. "It was a sight for angels to see," said Mother Rose White, in after years; "the sick and the well, the old and the young, and the externs, all crowded round the little altar, and sick beds."

Bishop Carroll, writing to Mother Seton, about this time, says: "I can not think with calmness of your situation, and that of your dear Sisters, for the Winter, for I learn from Father du Bourg that your house can not receive you until the beginning of the year, and certainly, that is no time for a removal. I have confidence that in spite of my fears, you will all preserve at least, your lives, in your house, inconvenient and open to all the winds, as it is."

The poverty of the infant Community steadily increased, until, for many weeks, there was not a day that the Sisters knew whence their food would come from on the morrow. The Sunday before Christmas, they esteemed themselves fortunate in having some dried herrings, and a few spoonfuls of molasses, for dinner. Far from being disheartened by this privation, however, Mother Seton glorified God, and rejoiced at being found worthy, with her spiritual children, to have some part in the cross of Our Saviour. "O my Sisters, love Him! love Him!" she would exclaim: "let us be ever ready

to do His Divine Will. Oh! when we shall be in our eternity, we shall understand what a treasure our suffering was for us."

In December, Harriet Seton, after heroic service in nursing the sick, was taken ill herself. A luxurious home, and pleasant life, would have been hers if she would have renounced her Faith, as her relatives implored her to do, but nothing could shake her constancy, and she often declared, amid all the privations of St. Joseph's, that she never had been so happy in her life. For many days she lay in her little cot, suffering from alternate chill and fever, but edifying all about her by her patience and sweetness. One night when the fever was so intense, as to affect her brain, she took a drink, but in the morning was quite unconscious that she had done so, and hoped to receive Communion. She eagerly watched the priest as he went to each one, expecting he would come to her, but seeing him turn to the tabernacle, place the ciborium in it, and lock the door, she began to speak in an exquisitely sweet and plaintive voice, telling Our Lord so tenderly of her disappointment in not receiving him, that every one who heard her, shed tears.

She grew steadily worse, and towards the latter part of December, all hope of her recovery was abandoned. The last days of this angelic young girl, might be described as a veritable triumph of faith. With parched lips, and temples throbbing with a violence that indicated the intensity of the disease, she lay as if already dead. But it sufficed

only to speak of God, of Heaven, or the Blessed Virgin, to arouse her. At the name of Jesus or Mary, she would try to open her eyes, or raise her hand to make the sign of the cross. In one of her rare moments of complete consciousness, she asked to receive Holy Viaticum. Shortly after, she became delirious, but even then, her broken murmurings showed that her mind was filled with thoughts of God, and of her happy conversion. The last sign of consciousness she gave was to join in a hymn, which the Sisters, close by, were singing during the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. On the twenty-second of December, after a stupor of several hours, it became apparent that dissolution was at hand. Cecilia Seton, who was lying ill in the next bed, hearing this, begged to be raised, and leaned over and kissed her, thanking Our Lord that He was taking her to himself. Shortly after, Harriet passed gently away. Some months before, on a bright September day, Mother Seton and the Sisters, had been taking a walk, about their property, and paused for a while at their new house to inspect progress on it. As they turned away, Mother said: "Nothing is lacking, save the place of our final repose on earth. Let us choose where that shall be." The Sisters, accordingly, went from point to point, viewing the ground, and returned to Mother with various opinions. Harriet, who, in the meantime, had sat down to rest beneath a great oak, on the edge of the forest, listened to them in silence, and then exclaimed, "See my place!" As she

spoke, she threw an apple which she was carrying, against the tree, and caught it on the rebound. The Sisters long remembered the picture of the young girl, as she sat lovely, flushed, and smiling, on the edge of the dark forest, lightly tossing the apple, and uttering her prophetic words.

The place she had selected was chosen, and a few months later, the Sisters followed her as she was borne thither in her coffin, the first come to sleep the sleep of peace, in the Valley of St. Joseph.

## CHAPTER VI.

1810.

REMOVAL OF THE COMMUNITY TO THEIR NEW HOUSE — OPENING OF THE SCHOOL — ENTRANCE OF SISTER ELIZABETH BOYLE—DEATH OF CECILIA SETON — MEETING OF BISHOP CHEVERUS AND MOTHER SETON.

Alas for man ! he knows not of the bliss,  
The heaven that brightens such a life as this.

*Newman: Solitude.*

IN spite of Mother Seton's vivid representation to them of the poverty of the Community, and the hardships they would encounter, new candidates continued to arrive, so that by the middle of January, the "Stone House" was filled to overflowing, and it was arranged that some of the Sisters should go up to the new house to sleep. Watches and clocks were luxuries in those days ; and probably, Mother Seton's watch was the only time-piece possessed by the Community ; at all events, there was none to spare for the Sisters in their new house, and the consequence was that in their anxiety not to be late at morning-prayers, Sister Sally, Sister Catherine, and Sister Rose, who were the ones that had been chosen to sleep in the new



house, often arose at two or three o'clock, and made their way over the long stretch of rough-ploughed, muddy ground, that lay between them and the "Stone House," only to find it dark and silent, and its inmates still wrapped in slumber.

On the twentieth of February, 1810, the Community moved to the new house. The removal of the Blessed Sacrament thither, was attended with all the solemnity that the Sisters could bestow. Sister Veronica, as Sister Cecilia O'Conway was sometimes called, walked first with bell and cross; Father Dubois, carrying the Blessed Sacrament, came next, followed by Mother and the Sisters, in procession. Plain, indeed, was the new resting place of the King of kings; a mere shed, whose only ornaments were a picture of the Redeemer, which Mother had brought with her from New York, a pair of small silver candlesticks, and a few vases filled with mountain laurel, and paper flowers. But if rich ornaments and sumptuous furnishings were wanting to this sanctuary in the wilderness, there was what He esteemed far more than these—the joy and adoration that ascended to Him like fragrant incense from the pure hearts of the little band of virgins whom He had led into this solitude.

Two days later, the day-school was opened, and a considerable number of pupils from the village and surrounding country, began at once, to attend it. As the nineteenth of March, the Feast of Saint Joseph, under whose patronage Mother Seton had

placed her Community, drew near, she became desirous to have the solemn invocation of the divine blessing upon her work, take place under his auspices. The first solemn Mass in the Valley, was accordingly, celebrated on that Feast. For one of the Community, it was the last at which she was destined to assist. For many months Sister Cecilia Seton had not been able to leave her bed; and it was in the strong arms of Sister Sally, who carried her to the chapel on this occasion, that she had been borne from the "Stone House" to the new building. She knew that she was dying, and her mind was constantly fixed on things eternal. Suffering only increased her fervor, and brought her into closer union with God.

In the second week of April, in response to the urging of Cecilia's relatives, Mother Seton took her to Baltimore, to the house of Mr. Weise, a gentleman who lived near the seminary, and whose wife had been very kind to Cecilia, when she arrived from New York, ill, the year before. Consumption had made too great progress in Cecilia's case, unhappily, for any change of air to have much effect upon her, but she was glad to be in the city because it enabled her to enjoy many spiritual consolations, which would have been impossible at St. Joseph's; Father Dubois having so many duties that it is a wonder how any one man discharged them all. Father Babad, "Père," hastened to Cecilia as soon as she arrived in Baltimore, and devoted himself to her during the few days that remained to her on

earth. On the twenty-ninth of April, 1810, the saintly young girl, with her crucifix pressed to her heart, and a smile of farewell to Mother Seton, passed peacefully away.

On the following day, a requiem Mass was celebrated for the repose of her soul in the chapel of the seminary, and was attended by an immense number of persons drawn thither by the fame of the saintliness of the dead. After its conclusion, Mother Seton departed for Emmitsburg, taking with her the body, which was laid to rest beside that of Harriet Seton. Writing to Mrs. Sadler, a few weeks later, Mother Seton says: "I have just returned from Baltimore where I had carried the darling Cecilia, with a distant hope that she might be benefited by the ride, change of air, and consultation of physicians; but *He* said no, and that is enough. A happier, more consoling, departure than she took you can not imagine. She was innocence and peace itself. The precious sisters lie in a wood, hard by our dwelling. Every day, the hands of affection and love do something to adorn the sacred solitude."

If God continued to prove His servant by many trials, He also bestowed on her many consolations. Released from her attendance on the sick, Mother Seton was now able to give her attention to the school and soon brought it to what, was, for the time, a considerable degree of excellence. The Winter, that fearful Winter—long remembered at Saint Joseph's—had gone, leaving two newly-made graves

as its memorial, and Spring smiled again upon the mountains, and brought gladness to the valley. As the roads became passable, boarding-pupils began to arrive at the new Academy. The five initial ones reached there the same day, the fourteenth of May, 1810, and as they all came from Frederick County, Maryland, probably together, the first of that long procession that was to come to the Sisters of Charity for Christian education. Before the close of the year, the boarding-pupils numbered fifty, and the day-scholars had increased greatly in number.

The Sisterhood also thrived wonderfully, every day bringing fresh applications for admission into it. Among those who entered about this time, there is one who is of special interest, because of the work she accomplished, and the position she occupied, in later years. This was Sister Elizabeth Boyle, who thirty-six years after her entrance into the religious life, became the first Mother of the New York Community. This admirable Sister of Charity was born in Cecil County, Maryland, of an Episcopalian family of high social position, having their descent on the maternal side from the Lancasters, a noble English family, and on the paternal, from the Irish Boyles, a branch of whom had settled in England in the seventeenth century. The anxiety shown by the old colored family cook, for the recovery of her rosary, which some of the other servants had hidden, for a joke, seems to have first directed the thoughts of the child Elizabeth to

the Catholic religion ; and thenceforth, she was led, slowly and indirectly, but steadily, towards the true fold. When she was about nineteen years of age, she was received into the Church by the Reverend Father Moranvillé, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Baltimore, a zealous French priest, who, perceiving that she possessed a vocation to the religious life, told her of the new religious foundation at Emmitsburg, and inspired her with the thought of becoming a member of it. She accordingly petitioned for admission, and having received a favorable answer, set out at once, in spite of all her mother's prayers and entreaties not to leave her, and arrived at Saint Joseph's about the middle of March, 1810. She was thus in time to experience some of the suffering and hardships of the worst time the Community ever knew ; but she proved herself from the very first, a true Sister of Charity. Delicately reared as she had been, she did not shrink from the hard work and drudgery, but took her part in kneading the bread, fetching the water from the spring, which was quite a distance from the house, carrying the tubs of mortar for the still unfinished new building, and in all the other heavy and repulsive tasks which the Sisters had to perform at that time. The evil one, seeing that it was useless to try to disgust this heroic soul with the religious life by suffering or privation, adopted the more subtle means of filling her affectionate heart with regret for having left her mother, and longing to return to her. The struggle that ensued within her soul,

was terrible, and at length her anguish grew so unbearable, that she decided to return home. "Only that the roads were so muddy," she declared in later years, "I would have set out for Baltimore on foot." One day, she said she was actually dressed for the journey, and was only persuaded to defer her departure a little, by Father Dubois. But God who had thus tried her, no doubt, in order to make her the consolation and steadfast support of those who were to be tried in like manner, now caused Satan to withdraw. Holy week came, with its silence, its recollection, and its sublime offices, and during it, every doubt was banished from Elizabeth's soul, and her resolution to be a Sister of Charity, confirmed. When the novitiate was opened, she entered it, and received her own name in religion, becoming Sister Elizabeth. The stuff of which her habit was made, was so coarse, that, if held up, the light could be seen through it. She seems to have excelled in fine needle-work, an art in which all the gentlewomen of that day were skilled, and this probably caused her to be appointed sacristan, an office she filled for several years, taking charge of the church on the mountain, and that in the village at Emmitsburg, as well as of the chapel at St. Joseph's. Her Saturdays were spent in caring for the two churches to which she had to walk, carrying her bag, filled with altar linens, until a postulant brought to the Community a horse, as part of her dowry, when Mother Seton insisted that Sister Elizabeth should perform her journeys thence-

forth, on horseback. On account of the badness of the roads, and the scarcity of carriages, all ladies were at that period skilled horsewomen, so that Sister Elizabeth felt perfectly at ease in the saddle, wrapped as she was in an ample cloak, with a huge hood, that completely concealed her face and figure. This cloak she retained to the end of her life, as a memento of her early trials.

Writing to a friend, in May, 1810, Mother Seton thus alludes to the condition of the Community, and its plans for the future: "You know the enemy of all good, will of course make his endeavors to destroy it, but it seems our Adored is determined on its full success, by the excellent subjects He has placed in it. We are now twelve, and as many again are waiting for admission. I have a very, very, large school to superintend every day, and the entire charge of the religious instruction of all the country round. All apply to the Sisters of Charity, who are night and day, devoted to the sick and the ignorant. Our blessed Bishop intends removing a detachment of us to Baltimore, to perform the same duties there. We have here a very good house, though a log-building, and it will be the mother-house and retreat in all cases, as a portion of the Sisterhood will always remain in it, to keep the spinning, weaving, knitting, and school for country people, regularly progressing. Our blessed Bishop is so fond of our establishment that it seems to be the darling part of his charge; and this consoles me for every difficulty and embarrassment. All the

ciery in America support it by their prayers; and there is every hope that it is the seed of an immensity of future good. You must admire how Our Lord should have chosen such a one as I to preside over it, but you know He loves to show His strength in weakness, and His wisdom in the ignorant; His blessed Name be adored forever! It is in the humble, poor, and helpless, He delights to number His greatest mercies, and set them as marks to encourage poor sinners."

Meanwhile, Father Flaget, on the other side of the Atlantic, had been exerting all his powers in behalf of the little Community. The success of his mission depended on the Superior-General of the Priests of the Mission of Saint Lazare, to whom appertained the direction of the congregation of the Daughters of Charity, according to the Rule of Saint Vincent de Paul. Father Flaget not only hoped to obtain from him an authentic copy of the Constitution drawn up by Saint Vincent, but trusted to be able to induce him to send to the United States two or three prudent and experienced Sisters who would impart to the American Community the spirit and traditions of the mother-house.

The zealous priest was not disappointed. Three Sisters, then stationed at Bordeaux, were chosen to go to the United States. Happy in the assurance that they would follow in the Summer, the Bishop-elect sailed from Bordeaux in April, 1810, bearing with him, the precious copy of the Constitutions, so longed for at Emmitsburg. He was accompanied



by five French priests, one of whom was the Reverend Simon Gabriel Bruté, afterwards Bishop of Vincennes, and a youthful deacon, who had consecrated their lives to the labors of the American apostolate. The voyage was not without peril. Twice the vessel was stopped by English cruisers, and twice it was allowed to proceed in consideration of the Bishop-elect of Bardstown.

In the month of August following, the Constitutions were placed in Mother Seton's hands. An examination of them showed, however, that in order to be definitely accepted by the American Community, they would have to be changed in some particulars. These, accordingly, became the subject of numerous conferences among Archbishop Carroll, Father David, now Superior of the Community, in place of Father du Bourg who had been appointed Administrator of the Diocese of New Orleans, and Father Nagot, Superior of the Sulpitians in Baltimore.

About this time, a letter was received at Saint Joseph's from Sister Marie Bizeray, the Superior, or, to give her the title which Saint Vincent had bestowed on the local Superiors of his Order, the Sister-servant of the little band who had been chosen to go to the American Community. It ran as follows :

Bordeaux, July 12, 1810.

MY DEAR SISTERS :

As it is not yet in my power to leave France, I write you this letter as a proof that you are the object

of my thoughts. I hope to have the happiness of seeing you in a few months, if it so be that the Almighty who has inspired me, along with several of my sisters, with the desire of being of service to you, shall so dispose events as to allow our departure. It pleases an all-powerful God, who chose poor fishermen, weak and ignorant men, for the foundations of His Church, to employ in our day, for the greater glory of His Name, the most feeble instruments to found an establishment that will be agreeable to Him, since it has for its object, the service of His suffering members. Oh! how beautiful is this vocation which enables us to walk in the footsteps of Our Divine Savior, to practice the virtues of which He gave us the example, and to offer ourselves in sacrifice to Him who offered Himself as a sacrifice for us! What gratitude, what love, do we not owe to this tender Father who has deigned to choose us for so sublime a calling? Let us thank Him, dear Sisters, and pray for one another, that He may grant us the grace of corresponding faithfully to the inestimable privilege that we have received from Him. Let us have recourse to St. Vincent de Paul, our father, to Mademoiselle Legras, our venerated mother, that they may obtain this happiness for us, their dear children. There is no doubt that we are dear to them, because we love them and wish to be subject to them. As M. Flaget must have told you of the sentiments which his zeal and the interest he feels in you, have inspired us with, I will conclude, dear Sisters, soon to be our companions, with the assurance of the sincere and entire devotion of your very humble servant,

MARIE BIZERAY.

“Unworthy Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor.”

This letter was also signed by the two companions of Sister Marie, who were to accompany her to America, Sister Woirin, and Sister Augustine Chauvin. Their hope of joining the new Community, however, was never realized. M. Emery,

the Superior of Saint Sulpice, had been courageous enough to withstand the tyrant Napoleon in his attempt to make the Church a mere appanage of the crown, and was punished by the suppression of his Congregation. The imperial resentment extended so far as to prevent the departure of the three Sisters from Bordeaux, on the ground that their going had been arranged through the mediation of a missionary Bishop who was a member of the society of Saint Sulpice.

In October, 1810, the second Retreat of the Sisters was given by the Superior, Father David, and was marked by deep fervor of spirit, and great spiritual fruit. This wise and prudent director sought above all things to develop the virtues of obedience and simplicity in the Sisters. "I earnestly exhort you, dear Mother," he wrote to her on one occasion, "to caution your daughters against a want of that sincerity, candor, simplicity, so much recommended to us in the Gospel; and to remind them often that the true spirit of religion is a spirit of infancy which knows no disguise."

The Autumn of this year witnessed the consecration of the Bishops for the newly erected sees in the United States. Bishop Egan, of Philadelphia, was consecrated on October twenty-eighth, in the pro-Cathedral at Baltimore, Bishop Cheverus, of Boston, in the same Church on the Feast of All Saints, and Bishop Flaget, of Bardstown, on November eighth, in St. Patrick's, in the same city. The last of these impressive scenes, so new to the Catholics of the

United States, was rendered especially memorable by the admirable discourse of Bishop Cheverus, during which he saluted Archbishop Carroll, as "the Elias of the New Law, the father of the clergy, the conductor of the chariot of Israel in the New World."

These events brought Mother Seton a happiness she had longed for, but never expected to enjoy. It will be remembered how strengthening and consoling to her had been the counsel of Bishop Cheverus, during the period that preceded her admission into the Church. If anything could have added to her happiness at the time of her conversion, it would have been a meeting with him who from afar, had guided her so wisely. This desire on her part was now to be gratified. Bishop Egan, of Philadelphia, had a niece, Mary Egan, among the Sisters at St. Joseph's, whom he wished to visit before departing for his new see. Knowing the interest Bishop Cheverus had in all that concerned Mother Seton, Bishop Egan asked him to accompany him, and Bishop Cheverus, though taken by surprise, gladly consented. On arriving at Emmitsburg, Bishop Cheverus seems to have gone alone to St. Joseph's, and merely requested the Sister who admitted him, to inform Mother Seton that a visitor wished to see her. A few moments later, Mother entered the parlor, and found there, a grave, dignified, priest, who met her questioning look with a growing smile, and then as she approached, evidently endeavoring to recall him as

an acquaintance, said, "I am Bishop Cheverus." Utterly overcome, Mother Seton sank on her knees, took the hand of the good Bishop, and for some moments, wept for very joy. An interview followed such as could be possible only between two such souls as these. The hearts of two saints revealed themselves to each other; confidence found interest; sorrow, consolation; holy joy, affectionate sympathy; docility, pious direction. The subjects touched upon were many and deep; Mother Seton's obligations to her Community; her duty to her children; her anxieties, her solitudes, and her course in regard to unexpected difficulties that had arisen. No letter, no matter how frank, how long, it might have been, could have replaced these moments of intimate conversation. *Causam tuam tracta cum amico tuo.*

Mother Seton then presented her children to the venerable Bishop, who gave them his benediction. She besought him to befriend them in case of her death, an event that her frail health made appear imminent, though God was to spare her for almost eleven years more to direct her infant Community, and inspire it with her own burning zeal in His service. Her maternal affection had only been purified by her call to a higher life, and as she herself said, "my only thought and desire in regard to my children, is their eternity." The assurances of the Bishop, therefore, that he would do as she asked, must have been an unspeakable consolation to her, removing, as it did, the terrible fear that her children, if orphaned before they were able to

provide for themselves, might be consigned to protestant relatives, and thus run the risk of losing their Faith.

The Bishop manifested the warmest interest in the Community, and was deeply edified by the spirit of fervor shown by the Sisters. Altogether, this visit of Bishop Egan and Bishop Cheverus, seems to have given great happiness both to the settlement at St. Mary's, and that at St. Joseph's. Father Dubois heard with sorrow that they were about to depart, and warmly pressed them to tarry at least one day longer. Finding himself unable to prevail, he turned to Mother Seton, and besought her to use her influence, assuring her, that "if her insinuating eloquence had half the effect upon them that it exerted over him, he would not fail to obtain his request." We do not learn whether Mother Seton was successful in persuading the Bishops to stay or not, but we have Bishop Cheverus' assurance, at least, that he enjoyed his visit. Writing to Mother Seton a short time after his return home, he says: "The happy moments I have spent with you, and them (the Sisters), are present to my mind, and still more to my heart. I almost envy their happiness and yours." The impression made on the Community by the Bishops' visit, is best expressed by quoting Mother Seton's words in a letter to Archbishop Carroll: "I need not tell you our consolation in receiving the blessed Bishops, nor how many benedictions they poured upon us. We have been very sensible of this special favor."

## CHAPTER VII.

1811—1812.

DISCUSSION OF MOTHER SETON'S ELIGIBILITY FOR  
THE COMMUNITY—DECISION OF ARCHBISHOP  
CARROLL—POVERTY THREATENS THE EXIST-  
ENCE OF THE COMMUNITY—FIRST ELECTION  
OF OFFICERS.

Look, O Lord, upon Thy servants and thy work,  
And direct thy children.

*Newman : Dream of Gerontius.*

ABOUT one hundred and fifty years before the foundation of Saint Joseph's at Emmitsburg, Saint Vincent de Paul had opened the way for women to lead a religious life in the world, and sanctify their souls by ministering to suffering humanity. In the Middle Ages, the unsettled state of society made the religious life possible only in the cloister, but as soon as the advance of civilization permitted, God inspired the great Saint whose name was to become a symbol of charity, to establish a religious congregation whose mission was to be the repairing of the ravages wrought by sin and passion among mankind, and so nobly have his daughters fulfilled it that almost in every part of the world, and in every language, blessings are invoked upon the Sisters of Charity.

It was, however, a startling innovation that "Mon-

sieur Vincent," as he was called, introduced, in the middle of the seventeenth century. To bring together a number of women, and inspire them to seek after perfection with no monastery to shelter them save the walls of a hospital; no cell, save the space allotted to each in the dormitory; no chapel, save the parish church; no cloister, save obedience; no grille, save the presence of God; no veil, save holy modesty; was a new and altogether strange idea. Even the name *religieuse* or nun, was to be denied to these new workers in the Lord's vineyard; for as Saint Vincent himself says in a discourse to his new Community; "Who says *religieuse*, says cloistered; and the Daughters of Charity must go everywhere; you are not, therefore, *religieuses*." Moreover, the Daughters of Charity were not only not permitted to make solemn vows; they were not even permitted to make simple vows in perpetuity. The vows they pronounced bound them only for one year; at the end of that time, they were obliged to ask and receive permission from their Superiors, to renew them. Their life of self-sacrifice was thus to have the crowning merit of being purely voluntary; they were to have the glory, as each recurring anniversary made them free, of again assuming the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ.

As has been said, the condition of the United States rendered some changes in the Rule necessary. It had to be adapted to the requirements of Sisters separated by great distance from the mother-house, deprived of the support they would have obtained



in Catholic communities, and called to fulfill their mission in a protestant land, in which the exercise of their religion had only just been secured to Catholics. The education of the daughters of wealthy parents formed no part of Saint Vincent's plan; any solicitude on his part in regard to that work would have been needless, as France was well provided with convent-schools.

On the other hand, the generous provision made for the different congregations of the Daughters of Charity, at the time of their foundation, freed them from the necessity of gaining their livelihood, and thus enabled them to devote themselves completely to works of charity. The case was very different in the United States. Here, the only way in which they could exist, was by conducting schools for the education of the daughters of the wealthier class. In modifying the Rule on this particular point, the Superiors believed that they conformed all the more to the spirit of charity that inspired Saint Vincent. All the works of that great saint, many and diverse as they were, had but one object, the glory of God, and charity toward mankind. And surely, at the time of the founding of the Sisters of Charity in the United States, there was no way in which the glory of God and the interests of society could have been better served, than by giving to an influential class the unspeakable benefits of a Christian education.

A greater difficulty arose in regard to Mother Seton herself. The Rule of Saint Vincent required

that widows with children, seeking admission into the society, should have previously so arranged the temporal concerns of their children, as to be free from all claims in regard to their maintenance or direction. Mother Seton, as the guardian of her children, was not in this position, and her eligibility, therefore, for the Community became a subject of discussion by Father Dubois, who had succeeded Father David as Superior, and the other Sulpitian fathers.

Mother Seton, writing to a friend about this time, describes her own sentiments, in regard to the matter: "By the law of the Church I so much love, I could never take an obligation which interfered with my duties to my children, except I had an independent guardian and provision for them, which the whole world could not supply, to my judgment of a mother's duty."

To another friend she writes: "I never could have imagined in this world, a situation more in harmony with my disposition, my sentiments, and my taste for peace; enjoying the liberty of solitude and country life, with all the advantages of intellectual occupation. To think of living away from this valley would seem to me impossible if I belonged to myself. But my dear children have the first right which must ever remain inviolable. That is why I have made a solemn engagement before our good Archbishop, as well as with my own conscience, to prefer before all things the advantage of my children, if it happened that I had to choose between

what I owe to them, and other duties to which I was pledged."

The suspense caused by the consideration of this and some other important questions, was very trying to all concerned, and at length Mother Seton, with her usual selflessness, and desire for the glory of God and the welfare of others, resolved to end it by submitting the matter to the decision of Archbishop Carroll. On the fifth of September, 1811, she addressed him a letter in which she says: "You, my most venerated father, know everything that has passed, from my first union with this house until the present moment,—temptations, trials, etc., etc., and now I cast all at the feet of the Adored, placing every consideration, and all my concerns, in your hands, as His representative, to decide my fate. The rules proposed are nearly such as we had in the original manuscript of the Sisters in France. I never had a thought discordant with them as far as my poor power may go in fulfilling them. The constitutions proposed have been discussed by our Reverend Director, and I find he makes some observations on my situation relative to them; but surely, an individual is not to be considered where a public good is in question; and you know I would gladly make every sacrifice you think consistent with my first and inseparable obligations as a mother. I shall beg the kindness of Father Dubois to hide nothing from you of my dispositions and situation as he knows them, and certainly, as far as I know myself, they are known to him as to God."

Her thoughts, while awaiting an answer to this communication, are shown in a letter written by her to Mrs. Sadler on September eleventh,—the very day as it happened, on which the Archbishop was writing his answer to her; “All is suspense, and I am thinking of preparing myself to recommence life in the world. Whatever happens, we are always under the protection of the Most High, the All-powerful. Truly, I would be happy if I could inspire your dear soul with as much indifference as exists in mine, so long as I know that during the few days that remain of this earthly pilgrimage, the Adorable Will of God is accomplished in me.”

The letter of Archbishop Carroll is marked by the prudence, wisdom, foresight, and grasp of affairs, which rendered him so fitting an ecclesiastical ruler for his time and place.

Baltimore, Sept. 11, 1811.

HONORED AND DEAR MADAM:

Shall I confess that I am deeply humiliated at being called on to give a final sanction to a rule of conduct and plan of religious government by which it is intended to promote and preserve, among many beloved spouses of Jesus Christ, a spirit of solid and sublime religious perfection? When I remember how many prayers, fastings, watchings, etc., were employed by the holy founders of religious institutions to obtain light and assistance from the Holy Ghost, to render their constitutions and rules adapted to the object of their pious zeal, I am so sensible of my unworthiness that I would certainly decline from the task, if I did not entertain a confidence that it may please God to bestow a blessing on the ministerial acts of the ministers of religion whom He has constituted, to which blessing they are not entitled if only their private worth were

considered. Under this impression, therefore, I shall and do now give my approbation to the constitutions exhibited to me by Father Dubois, after they shall receive the alterations suggested to and by him. You will know from him what these are ; and it affords me great pleasure to learn that all the material points, on which a difference of opinion was thought to exist, have been given up by Messrs. de St. Sulpice in their last deliberations. If they had not, I do not think that I should have approved the constitutions as modified in the copy thereof which has been before me. Father Dubois has not exhibited the rules of detail and particular duties of the sisters ; but these being matters of which yourselves and your father-superior will be the best judges, I commit you and them with the utmost confidence to the guidance of the Divine Spirit. I am exceedingly anxious that every allowance shall be made, not only to the sisters generally, but to each one in particular, which can serve to give quiet to her conscience, provided this can be done without endangering the harmony of the Community ; and therefore it must become a matter of regulation. I am rejoiced likewise to know that the idea of any other connection than that of charity is abandoned between the daughters of St. Joseph and the Society of St. Sulpice ;—I mean, that their interests, administration, and government are not to be the same, or, at least, under the same control. This removes many inconveniences for you and for Messrs. of St. Sulpice. No one of that body, but your immediate Superior, residing near you, will have any share in the government or concerns of the sisters, except (on very rare and uncommon occasions) the Superior of the Seminary of Baltimore, but not his society. This, however, is to be understood so as not to exclude the essential superintendence and control of the Archbishop over every Community in his diocese.

Your own peculiar situation required special consideration on account of your dear children. It seemed to me that only general principles for you and your family's case, should be now established, grounded on justice and gratitude ; and that

special considerations should be deferred to the period when the circumstances may require them. At present, too many persons would be consulted, and, among them, some who are incompetent to judge; and even they who are most competent might find their most equitable provisions rendered useless by the changes produced in a few years. Father Dubois has been very explicit in communicating, I believe, whatever it was proper for me to know. On my side, it has been my endeavor, when I read the constitutions, to consult, in the first place, the individual happiness of your dear Sisters, and consequently, your own; secondly, to render their plan of life useful to religion and the public; thirdly, to confine the administration of your own affairs and the internal and domestic government, as much as possible, to your own institutions once adopted, and within your own walls. Your Superior or confessor alone, need be informed or consulted in matters where the mother or council need his advice.

I shall congratulate you and your beloved Sisters when the constitution is adopted. It will be like freeing you from a state in which it was difficult to walk straight, as you had no certain way in which to proceed. In the meantime, assure yourself and them of my utmost solicitude for your advancement in the service and favor of God; of my reliance on your prayers; of mine for your prosperity in the important duty of education, which will, and must long be, your principal, and will always be your partial employment. A century, at least, will pass before the exigencies and habits of this country will require, and hardly admit, of the charitable exercises toward the sick sufficient to employ any number of the Sisters out of our largest cities, and therefore they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable, and permanent object of their religious duty.

I am, with esteem and respect, honored and dear madam,  
Your servant in Christ,  
J. B. Ab'p. of Baltimore.

The matter was thus finally settled. An excep-

tion to the Rule in regard to widows, was made in favor of Mother Seton, permitting her, even after making vows, to act as legal guardian to her children. It was also stipulated that in case she should be elected for a third term as Mother, and the Superiors of the Community should deem her continuance in office advisable both for the general good, and on account of her position in regard to her children, her election might be confirmed. After the Rule had been considered and approved by the Superiors, it was submitted to the Sisters in order that any suggestions on their part might be heard, before its final ratification.

Meanwhile, the trials that attend the foundation of all works that are to endure, were experienced in full measure, at St. Joseph's. Two years and a half had gone by since the little band of pilgrims had journeyed up the mountains, to plant the cross in this wild and solitary valley, and already great tracts of the primeval forest had been cleared, and smiling farm and harvest lands stretched away in every direction from the low, Community-house and out-buildings, save in the rear, where the dark woods still waved, casting their shadow on the graves of the two meek young virgin saints who had already been called away. Holy living, filled with labor and sacrifice for Christ's sake, had blessed the spot, and holy dying had sanctified it.

Yet, during the year 1811, it seemed as if all the effort and suffering expended on the undertaking had been in vain. Even while the Rule had been

under discussion, it must often have seemed to Mother, a matter of great uncertainty as to whether there would be any Community to receive it, for the financial embarrassment of the infant institution was steadily increasing. In June, 1811, Mother Seton determined to make another appeal to the generosity of Antonio Filicchi. The Reverend Nicholas Zocchi was returning to Italy, and she gave him, in exchange for one thousand dollars, a draft for that sum on the Leghorn banker. At the time the money was almost a matter of life or death to the Community, yet fearing lest she had trespassed too far on her friend's generosity, Mother wrote as follows: "It is almost useless to tell you that the New Yorkers have given me up altogether and entirely. . . . I find my name cannot be mentioned before them. . . . Does it hurt you that I press so hard on you, and make no further application to them? Consider, how can I apply to them for means which would go to the support only of a religion and institution they abhor?—while, what is taken from you is promoting your happiness in this world, and bringing you nearer and nearer to the Adored in the next. But, again, let me repeat, if I have gone too far, stop me short forever, if you find it necessary, without fear of the least wound to the soul you love, which receives all from your hands as from that of Our Lord, and whenever they may be closed, will know that it is He who shuts them who uses all for His own glory as He pleases."



The answer of Filicchi was worthy of the trust reposed in him. "Chase your diffidence away ;" he says "speak to your brother the wants of a sister, and trust in the One who knows how to clothe and feed the birds of the air, and make the grass of the earth to shine."

This assistance tided over difficulties for a short time, only. The income from the board and tuition of the pupils sufficed to support the house, but did not furnish means to pay the debts incurred by the improvement of the property. It was evident that recourse must be had to some plan to raise money, and various schemes were devised, one of which was for Mother Seton to make a tour through the country, to solicit aid. This however was soon abandoned, probably in consequence of a letter from Bishop Cheverus in which he says: "I am much grieved at the troubles you are in, and the more so because I do not see how you are to be extricated from them. Yourself to leave your house and make collections, etc., does not appear to me an eligible plan, although it would procure me the happiness of seeing you in Boston ; and in the present situation of affairs, very little, I am afraid, would be collected. An application by a circular letter would hardly produce anything, but at least it would not be attended with the same inconveniences as your personal attendance. . . . I am still in hopes that some pious and generous souls will give, or at least advance, the money you owe, and that your invaluable establishment will subsist."

Mother Seton finally resorted to a private appeal to the liberality of friends, among whom were General Robert G. Harper, the son-in-law of the illustrious Charles Carroll of Carrollton, and, from first to last, a firm friend of the institution. The appeal was a generously responded to, and the little Community was enabled to take root.

But at Christmas, all was still uncertain. This however, did not prevent the inmates of St. Joseph's, from enjoying the deepest spiritual happiness, as may be seen by Mother Seton's letter to Father Babad, in Baltimore. "Between the adoration of midnight, and the Mass of four o'clock, what moments! Our happy retreat ended, the flame of love ascending, every innocent heart beating. Those who had communed before, preparing and desiring as if for the first time; and the meltings of love going from mother to children, and children to mother. At half-past eleven, she called them from their short slumber, or rather, found most of them watching for her. 'Come!' Gratitude and love resounded in a moment through all the dormitories, from young and old; even dear Anina, lying in her fever, joined the loud chorus. The Altar, dressed by our truly angelic sacristans, Sisters Veronica and Elizabeth, adorned with the purest taste, and blazing with lights made by their virgin hands—oh, my Father, words have but little meaning. You can understand. All we wanted was the *vere dignum et justum est*, we were so often delighted with in former days. Peace to memory!—let all be hushed in the darling Babe."

The year 1812, "was a blessed one" in the annals of St. Joseph's, for during it, the Rule of Saint Vincent was formally accepted by the Community. On the twelfth of January, the twenty sisters then comprising the Community were assembled, and informed that they were under no obligation to accept the Rule; that it was a matter of choice; and that they were perfectly free to leave the Community if they wished to do so. All, however, were invited to remain, even those whose health had failed since their entrance. They were then asked to signify their acceptance of the Rule by raising their hands. All, with one exception, did so. The Rule was then sent back to Baltimore to receive the formal sanction of Archbishop Carroll, and of Father Tessier, who had succeeded Father Nagot, as Superior of St. Mary's Seminary. It was soon returned to Mother Seton with the following appended:

I have read, and endeavored, in the presence of God, to examine the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity which have been submitted to me by the Reverend Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, and have approved them, believing them inspired by the Spirit of God, and calculated to conduct the Sisters to religious perfection.

+ JOHN, Archbishop of Baltimore,

Baltimore, January 17, 1812.

After having read, with great attention, the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity, and approved all that they contain, I have presented them to the Very Reverend Archbishop Carroll, to obtain his approbation. At the same time, I have confirmed, and here confirm anew, the nomination of Reverend John Du-bois as Superior General of the Congregation.

JEAN TESSIER.

The government of the Community was vested in a Superior-General, (a clergyman) a Mother Superior, an Assistant-Mother, a Treasurer, and a Procuratrix. The Superior-General was to be consulted on all important matters, both temporal and spiritual. The Mother Superior was to exercise a more immediate supervision over affairs, and particularly over the mother-house of the Community in which she was to reside. To be eligible to this office, it was necessary that the candidate should have attained thirty-five years of age, and have been a member of the Community twelve years, that she possess good judgment, and ability to govern, and above all, be exemplary in the practice of the virtues which the vocation of a Sister of Charity demands. She was to be elected in a general assembly of the Sisters, by a majority of votes, for a term of three years; at the conclusion of which she could be re-elected for a second term. A third consecutive term of office was not permitted.

The offices of Assistant-Mother, Treasurer, and Procuratrix were also conferred by a majority of votes, but for only one term of three years. These officers were to form the council of the Mother Superior, to the consideration of which were referred all matters relating to the interests of the congregation. Besides the Mother and her council, there was to be a Mistress of novices, in the mother-house, who was to be chosen by the Mother Superior and the council, to form those who were admitted into the society, in its spirit, and instruct them in their

duties. Another Sister was to be chosen, in the same way, to superintend the academy. Every establishment that sprang from the mother-house was to be governed by a Sister, also chosen by the Mother Superior and her council, who was to be called the Sister-servant.

For the origin of this peculiar title, so familiar to all who are acquainted with the Sisters of Charity, we must go back to the twentieth of June, 1642, when Saint Vincent was giving a conference to his beloved Daughters. During it, he told them that in the monastery of the Annonciades, founded by Saint Jeanne de Valois, he had heard the Superior called *Ancelle*, or handmaid (from the Latin *ancilla*.) "That has given me the idea," he went on, "that henceforth you should no longer call your Superiors by the name of Superiors, but instead, call them servants. What do you think of this?" All approved. "It is the name the Pope takes," added Saint Vincent, "for he calls himself 'the servant of the servants of God.' I have long wished," he continued, "that our Sisters should have attained that point of respect among themselves, that the outside world could not tell which Sister was the Superior."\*

Candidates for admission to the Order, were required to be not under sixteen years of age, nor over twenty-eight, unmarried, of good character,

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\* Saint Vincent de Paul, His Life, His Time, His Work, and His Influence. By the Abbé Maynard, Paris, 1864.

and respectable family, sound of mind and body, and able to discharge the duties of the state they wished to assume; and above all, possessed of a firm resolve to serve God all their lives as servants of the poor and suffering, and in the education of youth, in utter submission to the will of their Superiors and the utmost fidelity to the Rule of the Order. If they possessed these qualifications, they were to be allowed to enter the novitiate, where they were to be instructed in the duties, and formed in the spirit, of their vocation. At the expiration of the novitiate, if the Superiors deemed it advisable, novices were to be allowed to make the simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and continuance in the Community for one year, according to the Rule, though of course, with the understanding that they were to remain in the Society, for their entire lives.

The first duty which the new Community had to perform, was to elect officers—a Mother-Superior, an Assistant-Mother, a Treasurer, and a Procuratrix. In a letter to Mother Seton, Archbishop Carroll impresses on the Sisters the importance of conducting the election, “with that spirit of charity and humility, and entire submission to its event, and with that preparation by prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would insure constant tranquility and regularity.” We may be sure that it was in such holy dispositions that the fervent souls at St. Joseph’s, exercised their prerogative. Mother Seton, for her part, realizing that she

would, in all probability, be chosen Mother Superior, was filled with concern at the responsibility which would rest upon her, now that the government of the house was to cease to be provisional, and assume the serious character of that of a regular religious Community. One of her companions did much to allay her misgivings by counsels replete with sound spirituality, and good common sense. She reminded the timid mother-elect, that the qualifications of a Mother-Superior, are simply those of a Christian parent who must combine prudence and judgment, firmness and moderation. "Be a mild, patient, and firm mother," continued this excellent adviser, "and you need not tremble under the burden of superiority. Jesus can never give you a task above your courage, strength, or ability. Don't let fear and uneasiness appear so plain to the weak. You must at least be the moon, if the sun is too bright and dignified a character. The more gentle and modest light will suit our valley in the growing fervor of your little company. I do not want you to dart the rays of the great Saint Teresa; times, places, and circumstances change the order of this life."

These counsels went far to re-assure Mother Seton as to the discharge of her office, but the dignity and greatness of it made it seem very awful in her eyes, as is shown by the following note, jotted down on a scrap of paper, found after her death: "Mother! What a celestial commission intrusted! Mother of the Daughters of Charity, by

whom so much is to do for God through their short lives!"

On account of the smallness of their number, and the short time that had elapsed since the formation of the society, the greater part of the regulations in regard to elections, was dispensed with. The Sisters then proceeded to make their choice, according to the constitutions. Mother Seton was elected Mother-Superior; Sister Rose White, Assistant-Mother; Sister Catharine Mullen, Treasurer; and Sister Anna Gruber, Procuratrix.

In order to begin the practice of the Rule with fervor, the Sisters entered upon a spiritual retreat, on the second of February. They were then told that the period of a year would be granted them in which to try their vocations. At the expiration of that time, those who wished to, were at perfect liberty to leave.

Though the pattern of the habit had been decided upon, as far back as the time in Paca street, the straitened circumstances of the Community had thus far prevented its members assuming any uniform costume. How hardly pressed in this regard of dress, they must have been, is shown by the fact that when, in 1810, a piece of linsey, of that dismal hue known as "pepper and salt," was bought, the habits made from it were considered very nice, compared with others then in use. Its effect on visitors, however, may be inferred from a remark of Bishop Cheverus, who seeing a Sister attired in it, go by, inquired of Mother, "if she was under penance."



After the income of the Community had increased, black bombazine was used for habits, but later on, for several reasons, flannel was substituted, and is still used, both in Summer and Winter, by the Mount Saint Vincent Sisters of Charity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1812—1813.

DEATH OF ANNINA SETON—SPIRITUAL DESOLATION OF MOTHER SETON—THE SISTERS MAKE THEIR FIRST VOWS.

Now then at length she is at rest,  
And, after many a woe,  
Rejoices in that Saviour blest,  
Who was her hope below.

*Newman; A Birthday Offering.*

DURING the course of the year given for the trial of the Rule, no less than ten new candidates sought admission to the Congregation; several of whom did the greatest honor to their holy vocations, though their span of life was brief. Among them was Anna, or as Mother Seton loved to call her, Annina Seton, she, who in childhood, had accompanied her parents to Italy, and done so much by her tender little ministrations to soothe the last days of her dying father, and comfort her afflicted mother.

This lovely, winsome child had grown into a girl of exquisite beauty, which was but as the outward and visible sign of the angelic virtue within her heart. She was her mother's consolation, pride, and joy. While still only a pupil in the Academy,

she had begged to be allowed to observe the rules of the Community, at least in part. Every day in the year, even in the severest weather, she rose at five o'clock and went to the chapel, where she passed an hour in meditation, on her knees, in preparation for Mass. The leisure portion of the day, she devoted to helping the Sisters in the classes, and other works of charity.

The example of her rare virtue, which her extreme youth rendered peculiarly lovely and attractive, made a profound impression on the pupils of the Academy. Several among them, wishful to advance in piety by imitating her conduct, formed an association of which she was the life and soul. This edifying little society, divided into bands of ten, each of which was called a decury, had its rules, its particular practices of devotion, and prescribed visits to the chapel. The mere presence of Anna in the midst of her companions was an encouragement to them towards perfection. To look upon her face, radiant with goodness and intelligence, to hear her conversation, which revealed an innate nobility of soul, and to follow her graceful movements, instinct with piety and modesty, made it easy to understand the influence which she exercised on all about her. She, alone ignorant of her power, reigned without being conscious that she did so. Her mother, who saw with joy, divine grace thus influencing Annina's soul, made no effort to turn her to the quest of religious perfection; but it was her secret, dearest, hope that she might one

day consecrate this child of her heart to the Lord, as one of his chosen spouses. And when the day came on which Anna sought admission to the Community, Mother Seton felt that the greatest earthly happiness which she could ever know, either as a Christian or a mother, had been accorded her.

But the joy was soon turned into grief. Our presentiments unceasingly deceive us, and it was no doubt to teach us this, that Our Divine Master had in view when He bade us to *be not solicitous about the morrow*, and told us that *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*. Mother Seton's heart had often been disquieted by the consciousness of her failing health and the forlorn situation in which her children would be left by her death, but the thought that it would be her bitter portion to see any of them die, seems never to have entered her mind. Yet it was this martyrdom of the heart that she was now called upon to undergo; to behold Anna, the joy and consolation of whose companionship she had believed secured to her till her own death, by the common bond of their religious life, dying slowly on her bed of pain.

The Winter of 1811-12 was extremely cold. Anna, always severe to herself, relaxed none of her mortifications, assumed no warmer clothing, and continued to go out in all weathers to succor the sick. She was already ailing, when, one day, she was drenched by the rain, and took cold. In a short time, chills and fever, a severe pain in the chest and

in the side, and a hacking cough, left no room for doubt that consumption had developed.

Father Faber tells us in his *Spiritual Conferences*, that in Italy, death from consumption is called "the death of the predestinate." He goes on to point out, however, that the length and uncertainty of the disease, and its peculiar character which makes bodily comfort so essential, and penance almost impossible, hardly give sufficient support to this beautiful belief. In Anna Seton's case, however, consumption was no insidious malady, with intervals of deceitful calm, and apparent well-being, but a short, fierce, agony, that, like an intense fire, purified the virgin gold of her soul from all earthly alloy. But physical suffering never mastered her. Even when consumed by fever, racked with pain, or covered with cold sweat, and gasping for breath, there was a sweetness and peace, and at times, even gayety, about her, that revealed the soul leading its own serene life, and regarding with calmness, as it were, the destruction of the body that held it captive. "Eternity! eternity"! she would often cry out, "eternity of joy that shall never cease; eternity of sighs that shall have no end! O, may I escape those dreadful torments!" The sound of the Psalms and Canticles, sung in the chapel from which only a thin partition separated her sick-bed, seemed to raise her soul to Heaven. Utterly detached from things of earth, she felt only one desire, to be a Sister of Charity, and thus consummate, even on the threshold of death, the sacrifice she had made to

God in the flower of her youth. This joy was granted her; and as the period of probation for the Sisters had not yet expired, it was abridged for her for whom time was ending. On the thirtieth of January, she made her vows in the presence of Father Dubois. The end was then thought to be at hand, but the frail sufferer rallied again, and lingered on, edifying the whole house, and, it may be said, the entire Catholic body of the United States, by her patience, and joy in suffering. Archbishop Carroll, in writing to Mother Seton, only voiced the general sentiment when he declared that, "viewing Anna almost as the happy inhabitant of another world, he felt for her an awful respect," and he might add, "veneration".

It is by Anna's dying bed that we first become familiar with one of the most striking figures among those great French missionaries who helped to make the early annals of the American Church so beautiful and touching. Simon Gabriel Bruté, in later years, Bishop of Vincennes, had come to America, it will be remembered, with Bishop Flaget, and after spending some time at the seminary in Baltimore, in order to learn English, had been sent by Archbishop Carroll, to assist Father Dubois.

The latter confided to him the spiritual care of St. Joseph's, and thus afforded Annina Seton the priceless boon of his guidance and ministration, in her last illness. He would appear to have entered on his duties about the time of her religious profession, for the first mention we have of him in

Mother Seton's diary, is on the eighteenth of February, when she relates as follows: "I said to Anna: 'Father Bruté is much pleased that you are now a Sister of Charity.'" "Yes," answered Anna; "I have somehow had to check a rising wish to live, ever since that day." "Why, darling," I answered, "it seems you would rather have reason to fear, if you should live, the danger of not keeping to your engagements." "Oh, to be sure, mother, if it depended on me, but Our Lord is so good, and has so long kept that thought in my mind, that supposing I lived the longest life, it would be but one moment to eternity, and short enough in which to serve Him; and I do not believe there can be a better way in which to serve Him than as a Sister of Charity. This has long been my thought. Oh, Our Jesus, how boundless is Thy goodness!"

The morning of March twelfth, the day she died, she begged her little sisters, Catharine and Rebecca, to kneel at the foot of her bed, and sing her favorite Canticle:

Though all the powers of hell surround,  
No evil will I fear,  
For while my Jesus is my friend,  
No danger can come near.

It was a heart-rending scene. The wish to satisfy their dying sister, made the poor children try to sing, but the tremulous strains soon died in sobs and tears. Mother Seton, kneeling beside the bed,

like Mary at the foot of the cross, pressed the crucifix to the lips of her dying child. As the death-agony became more intense, some of the Sisters gently raised Mother, and one of them took her place, while the others led her to the chapel where she remained till all was over.

As soon as the fact of Annina's death was known, the house resounded with cries and lamentations. The pupils went in a body to look upon the remains of their saintly young companion, and then proceeded to the chapel to pray for her soul.

The following day, she was borne to the little graveyard, and laid to rest beside Harriet and Cecilia. A white-robed procession of the pupils followed her coffin. All, both Sisters and pupils, wept bitterly as the body was lowered into the grave. Mother Seton, alone, remained silent and tearless, more like an image of sorrow, than a human being. She stood at the edge of the grave until the terrible sound of the first frozen clods of earth striking the coffin, smote her ears. Then raising her eyes to Heaven, she said slowly: "My Father, Thy Will be done," and turned silently away. In her journal, after recording the death of Annina, she adds: "O mother, mother, give a thousand thanks all your life, every day of your life, until you meet with her again."

Under this heavy cross, Mother Seton's only solace was the spiritual guidance of Father Bruté. Already well advanced in the spiritual life, she learned from this new guide, who seemed so emi-



nently adapted to the peculiar needs of her soul, how to mount still further those mystic heights by which the soul draws near to God. With her heart still bleeding from its awful wound, she moved with weak and faltering steps, sometimes, like her Divine Master, falling prostrate, unable, of herself, to rise again, so that she did not realize her progress. The time had gone by when, her natural energy rallying to the support of her ardent faith, she welcomed each new task, however hard or disagreeable, and pressed forward, day by day, without ever casting a glance backward. It was not that she lacked resignation, but that, while faith made her generous in sacrifice, nature seemed unable to go any further than a passive acquiescence in the will of God. Her strength had been exhausted by sorrow. In her weakened state, the obligations of her position grew heavy. The duty of governing the Community, and of directing and instructing the Sisters and pupils, seemed to her especially irksome, and it was only supreme effort that called to her lips those touching exhortations, in which she excelled. God and her director alone knew of the struggle going on within her soul.

“It is in your dear Bourdaloue,” she writes the latter, “that I always seek for my Sunday instruction; he is the source whence flow many little brooks that serve for our needs. Poor, poor poverina! obliged to preach! Oh! if you knew but half of my repugnance to give an instruction on the catechism—formerly the delight of my heart—it

seems to me that you would despise this wicked and ungrateful sinner. But the dear Master says to me: 'You must do this, solely because you know that I will it. Confide to me your feeble heart and aching head; I will act for you.'

"Sometimes—the demon has such cruel contrarities—when one thinks one has had evident success, he suddenly shows himself and says: 'Look how touched they are, how silently and attentively they listen to you; what respect, what loving regard they show!' And he seeks to distract me in every manner. The poor, poor, soul accords him not even a glance; she goes straight on in the way that leads to her dear Lord; but the heart is so saddened, so weighed down by the vile suggestion. Again, in the refectory; my tears escape in spite of me—my weakness—that of a new-born infant—overcomes me. But the dear Master says to me: 'Think, if you were at ease, eating your food, of a kind that you would like, alone, where would be the part that I would have with you in such a repast? Your place is here, to maintain order, to direct the reader; to give example, and to eat joyfully the little that you take, in the spirit of love, and as if you were before my tabernacle. I will do the rest; abandon thyself, abandon all to Me.' Yes, dearest Lord, all is abandoned to Thee! But do you, my father, pray, pray, continually for the poor unfortunate.

"It is true, my being, my existence, is a reality, since I pray, meditate, speak, and direct the Com-

munity, and that with regularity, resignation, and simplicity of heart. However, it is not I, but a species of machine, pleasing doubtless to the compassionate Father; but a being altogether different from the one in which the soul acts. . . . In meditation, prayer, Communion, I find no soul. In the beings who surround me, I, who love them so tenderly—I find no soul. In the tabernacle, *where I know that He is*, I do not see Him, I do not feel His presence. A thousand deaths might be suspended over my head in order to force me to deny, and I would brave them all rather than hesitate even for a single instant, yet, it seems to me that He is not there for me.

“Yesterday, however, I once more realized His presence, but it was only to see Hell open under my feet, and to understand how terrible are His eternal Judgments. . . . Here I am writing, at my table, facing the door of the chapel, my eyes turned towards the Tabernacle. My soul calls on God within it; that which it experiences, is it not a continual martyrdom?

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“I am only an atom, and Thou Art My God; my misery is my only title to Thy Mercy! . . . There are so few saved! If we are lost, will the patience which has awaited us, be less adorable? My soul plunges into the abyss of this mystery, and dwells in its profundity. But outwardly, it plays with the children, recreates with the Sisters, descends into all the minutiae, shows itself attentive

to all the needs, and thus acts with the liberty of the philosopher who suffers in silence, willingly permitting the machine to be tortured in order that nothing may be lacking in the beauty of the general order. Alas! alas! and in all this not a spark of supernatural action, but rather the movements of nature fallen after original sin. Nothing save the desire to act, to be loved, to please. . . . All this is so far from that simplicity which comes from grace, and which transmutes into gold, the work of every moment. . . . And after, when the soul returns, confused, into the Presence of the Tabernacle, it regards itself as if it had come from playing the fool, or as if it had acted like those people who seek to please the world, and keep all their ill humors for home.

“All around me are so loving, so attentive to the slightest glance of the Mother, so visibly affected by the smile or the shadow that passes over her face! I tremble at the danger that my interior situation would have for them, if it were not as clear as the day, that that is one of the means which God makes use of to advance His work. Ah! This work, it is indeed His. I was little formed to contribute to it! If I listened to nature, I would prefer a hundred times rather to drink the most bitter beverage, to take the most nauseous medicine, in a word, to endure every kind of bodily pain, rather than speak a word to a living creature. Sad and indolent nature, enemy to all effort, that would prefer to be only an animal, and to die like one,

without thinking of anything! O my God! all that I can do, is to prostrate myself, and abandon myself to Thee! How good it is of Thee to permit me still to do this!

“The soul is not guilty in all this; the spirit of evil, it is true, is very active, but the good spirit keeps its station at the foot of the cross, and fixes its gaze thereon, all during this desolation, adoring, submitting itself, abandoning all to God; seeing only Him, humbling itself before Him, forgetting all creatures; answering *Amen*, to the *Alleluias* that resound in Heaven; ready at any moment to precipitate itself into Hell, rather than add a single offense to the mountain of sin it has already heaped on the shoulders of the Saviour.”

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A visit which Archbishop Carroll made about this time to Emmitsburg, contributed greatly to give Mother Seton the strength to surmount what she called her “unworthy abasement.” The venerable Archbishop was penetrated with admiration of her resignation, her empire over herself, and the visible effects of her direction of the Community. The piety of the Sisters who rivaled one another in their zeal to press forward in the way of evangelical perfection, deeply edified him.

Some weeks later, Mother Seton, thanking her eminent friend for the consolations which his visit had given her, concludes thus: “I have had many, and heavy, trials in my life, but assuredly, you will felicitate me on this; since the fire of tribulation, is

without doubt, destined to consume the numberless imperfections and evil dispositions which Our Lord finds in me. In truth, the fire burns sometimes so fiercely, that it is impossible to conceal that I am *suffering*. By degrees, however, habit inures us to suffering. I am resolved to eat my daily bread, however dry or hard it may be, with as good a grace as possible. Sometimes, I carry it to show to our Lord, and He makes me laugh at myself, and asks me what kind I would have, other than that which He chose for Himself, and which all His disciples have likewise chosen."

She was so changed by suffering and incessant temptation, that all about her seemed different from what it had been formerly, though, in reality, there had been no change. Obedience to her Superiors, which she had pledged herself to with holy transport at the time of her first vows, that obedience which she called "the safeguard of her soul," had become for her a heavy chain, which nature, sometimes languishing, sometimes rebellious, found it hard to endure. "The Rule, prudence, subordination, opinions, etc., are, in truth, terrible walls for a soul like mine, ardent and independent. I resemble a mettlesome horse that I owned when I was young; they wished to tame him, and harnessed him to a heavy cart. The poor beast was so humiliated that neither blows nor caresses had thenceforth any effect on him; he was gradually reduced to a skeleton, and died. As for me, every day I ask myself what I do for God in

the modest lot that has fallen to me; and I see that I do nothing, only smile, give caresses, exercise patience, write, pray, and live, in the expectation of the Lord. O my dear Lord, let Thy reign begin."

One day, when more exhausted than usual by her struggles against this new form of temptation, she went out early, and began to climb the mountain. A little dog, which usually accompanied her, but which she did not want on this occasion, insisted upon following her. "In order to drive him back" she says, "as he paid no heed to my command, I took a stick and threatened him. What did the poor little animal do? He lay down beneath the stick, and began to lick its end. The stick not moving, he crept nearer and nearer, till he had reached the feet of his mistress, and began to lick them with manifest love and joy. The poor mistress was so touched by this lesson, that she threw away the stick, took the faithful little creature in her arms, and covered him with kisses and tears, the sweetest tears that she had shed in many weeks: "Yes, beloved Saviour," she said, "my Adored Master, I too, will kiss the rod that is raised over me to strike me, and I will embrace the feet that are ready to crush me." Then, opening her prayer-book, the first lines that met her eyes were the resolutions of a soul determined upon complete abandonment, who said among other things: "I will obey the will of those for whom I feel the most repugnance. I will place myself beneath the feet of every one."

While their suffering Superior was thus passing through the valley of darkness, and spiritual desolation, her daughters in Christ were steadily progressing, under her admirable direction, in the way of perfection. Among them, none was more remarkable for virtue than Sister Maria Murphy, who had been the second to enter the Community. Holy poverty, and bodily mortification, were her favorite virtues, and in times of scarcity, it became necessary to watch her in order to see that she did not deprive herself of her portion of food, that there might be more for others. She was very delicate, and had frequent attacks of illness, which at length developed into consumption. She contrived, however, even in the infirmary, to practise her beloved mortifications. Once, when the infirmarian directed her to bathe her feet in warm water, she put her feet into the tub which the Sister had placed by her bed, but quickly drew them out, saying the water was too hot. The infirmarian insisted that it was not, whereupon Sister Maria at once put her feet back into the tub, and bore in silence, pain whose intensity was only revealed by the inflammation which it produced in her feet. Until almost the last, she performed her duties, leading in the midst of her active life, that hidden life with Christ, which made her a great lover of silence, yet caused her to meet her Sisters with a smile so sweet, that it seemed like a benediction. Yet the "dove" as Mother Seton was wont to call her, on account of her gentleness, once gave proof of



wonderful courage and presence of mind. During the first days at Emmitsburg, when she had gone up, one evening, with Mother Seton, to the mountain church, to make her evening adoration, she saw at her feet, just as she was about to kneel down, a large snake. She calmly made the sign of the cross over the reptile, then, seizing it by the tip of the tail, carried it out of the sacred place, into the woods, and let it go in peace.

As the Summer of 1812, waned, it grew plain to the Community, that the "dove" was about to take flight. During the Autumn, she grew daily weaker, until at length, it was deemed advisable to give her Holy Viaticum. As the Sacred Host was borne towards her, her face grew radiant with delight, and she almost sprang from her bed to go and meet It, crying as she did so, "O my Jesus, my dear Lord!" Then, as if recollecting herself, she fell back on the pillow, and quietly received Him whom her soul loved. On Saint Theresa's day, she gently expired, leaving to her Sisters in Christ, the memory of a true Sister of Charity. The splendor of the Autumn was upon the hills, as the funeral procession that followed the second member of the Community to the tomb, moved through the stillness, to the shadow of the forest. How Mother Seton's heart must have bled, as she stood again by an open grave, and listened to the burial service that she had last heard over her daughter's! But Annina's grave was not now a black, yawning pit, about to swallow the last trace of the dear one,

but a bed of flowers that spoke rather of the sleep that the Lord had given the pain-racked body of his beloved, when He took her rejoicing soul to Himself. "She has gone to praise the Lord in the land of the living," Mother wrote in her diary, of Sister Maria; and thenceforth, this thought seems to have risen above the sense of loss, in regard to Annina, also.

The year fixed for the trial of the Rule, had now gone by, and the Sisters, eighteen in number, prepared to make their vows. These first American Sisters of Charity were: Elizabeth Seton, Rose White, Catharine Mullen, Ann Gruber, Elizabeth Boyle, Angela Brady, Cecilia O'Conway, Susan Clossy, Mary-Ann Butler, Adele Salva, Louise Roger, Margaret George, Sarah Thompson, Eleanor Thompson, Martina Quinn, Fanny Jordan, Theresa Conway, and Julia Shirk. They pronounced their vows on the nineteenth of July, the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, 1813. A few weeks later, a Noviate was formally established, with Sister Catharine Mullen as Mistress of Novices. The number of the latter, was ten, nine of whom had been admitted during the preceding year. The organization of the Congregation was now complete, and it was ready to extend in whatever direction Providence might indicate.

The future work of the Community was naturally a subject on which the Sisters were much given to speculating. Seated around Mother, during recreation, they often spoke of it; many wondering if

the Lord would ever call them from the mountain valley, in which they appeared to be forgotten, to work for Him in the busy world beyond. One day, a young, lively, Sister who had been listening in silence to a discussion on the subject, suddenly cried: "My dear children, don't grieve so much; depend upon it, the valley, quiet as it is, will, one day, give such a roar that the noise will sound all over America. Don't you remember what was said of the silence of Saint Thomas Aquinas?" Mother Seton was much amused at the magniloquence of the youthful prophetess, and many of the Sisters declared that they, at least, would never live to see the prediction realized, but, a few months later, all witnessed the beginning of its fulfillment.

## CHAPTER IX.

1814.

FIRST MISSION OF THE SISTERS ESTABLISHED, AT PHILADELPHIA — UTTERANCES OF MOTHER SETON IN REGARD TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE— SISTER ELIZABETH BOYLE MADE MISTRESS OF NOVICES.

Help Thou my darkness, Lord, till I am light.

*Newman : Evening.*

THE sufferings of the universal Church during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth, reached their acme, when she beheld her Pontiff a prisoner in the hands of Napoleon. A solemn avowal of their attachment to Catholic unity, and to the Chair of Peter, from all the Bishops of the Christian world, proved to the tyrant, however, that while the material part of the Church was his to crush, if he chose, her spirit and functions were beyond his power. The Bishops of Ireland took the initiative in this act of faith and devotion, to their persecuted Head. Terrified at the dangers which menaced on all sides, they communicated with their brethren in the episcopate, in regard to what course it would be best to adopt under the circumstances.

Upon the reception of their letter, the American Bishops held a consultation, and decided that Bishop Cheverus should answer it in the name of the Bishops and priests of the United States. The magnificent profession of Catholic Faith, and loyalty to the Holy See, which this illustrious man, himself in exile from his own dear and unhappy country, as a witness to the Faith, sent across the Atlantic, was a harbinger of the great future of the American Church.

The fall and imprisonment of Napoleon, and the restoration of her legitimate sovereign to France, brought happier days to the Church. The deliverance of Pius Seventh, and his return to Rome, were celebrated by Masses of thanksgiving, chanting of *Te Deums*, and illuminations of the churches. These joyful events were followed by the re-establishment of the Society of Jesus, the restoration of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the renewal of relations between Rome and all the Churches of the Christian world.

These consolations were vouchsafed to American Catholics, during a war, into which their young, and weak country had been forced by the systematic oppression practised towards her by Great Britain since the close of the war of Independence. The outrages committed by that power, in carrying on her "right of search" of American vessels, became at length so unbearable, that even the cautious Madison, then president, became convinced that war was the only thing possible for the United

States, under the circumstances. War was accordingly declared against Great Britain, in June, 1812. It was what the people wished, and was hailed with satisfaction as the only way of obtaining relief from injustice, but it caused great distress to many, and considerable privation to all, by cutting off our new and undeveloped country from the markets of Europe. The conditions of life became much harder than they had been, especially in places remote from great centers. This was the case with St. Joseph's. After a period of comparative prosperity, poverty again appeared—to use the words of Holy Writ—like an armed man, and threatened the very existence of the Community. But it was endured with the same patience, or, rather, with the same eagerness for suffering, as before. Far from complaining, these holy women deemed themselves happy in the necessity of observing more closely, the evangelical counsels. The war was raging with violence, when, in the Summer of the year 1814, the Community was first called upon to exercise its charity beyond the limits of St. Joseph's, by taking charge of the Orphan Asylum in Philadelphia.

In the year 1799, after a visitation of yellow fever, an asylum had been founded in that city, to shelter the hundreds of children that had been orphaned by it. A house adjoining the church of the Holy Trinity, was bought for the purpose, by a charitable association, and here the children were lodged, and cared for by an aged woman, assisted by a few young girls. This asylum had for its managers, the

trustees of Trinity Church, and possessed a zealous protector in Father Michael Hurley, the pastor of Saint Augustine's.

The unsatisfactory conduct of the asylum had long been a source of sorrow to this excellent priest. At length its condition became so bad that even the trustees were convinced that some change must be made. A meeting was called for the purpose of considering the matter, and at it, Father Hurley suggested that the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg, be asked to undertake the charge of the asylum. His suggestion was warmly approved by Bishop Egan, and finally accepted by the trustees, and a letter was dispatched to Mother Seton containing the request. The letter found Mother in great financial embarrassment, from which there appeared to be no hope of relief. But when she had weighed her many reasons for refusing to undertake the work, against her wish to respond to this appeal to her charity, they seemed but as the dust in the balance. So she replied to the managers of the asylum, in the affirmative, and chose three Sisters to go to Philadelphia, along with Sister Rose White, who was appointed Sister-servant.

The preparations of the Sisters assigned to this, the first mission of the American Sisters of Charity, were made in a few hours. One is reminded in reading of them, of the incident related of that daughter of Saint Vincent, in the mother-house in Paris, who on being suddenly informed by her Superior that

she was to go to the Crimea, answered: "I am ready, Mother, only let me go up-stairs for my apron." Whoever has seen one Sister of Charity, has seen all. In each of them, perfect simplicity is joined to perfect obedience.

On the twentieth of September, 1814, Sister Rose White and her companions set out for Philadelphia. Their journey was a tedious and painful one. In the previous year, Admiral Cockburn, at the head of an English fleet, had entered Chesapeake Bay, and committed acts unworthy of a great and civilized nation. One of his first exploits had been to destroy Frenchtown, a little hamlet, composed of six cottages and two great storehouses, at which the packet-boats that plied between Baltimore and Philadelphia, were accustomed to stop. Owing to this fact, and the presence of the hostile fleet, no regular communication existed between the two cities. Winter brought a respite from the enemy's attacks, but with the opening of the Spring, they resumed their depredations, and no longer content with ravaging the coast, carried desolation miles into the interior. In August, Washington was sacked, and the Capitol, the Executive Mansion, and many private buildings, set on fire. The glare of the mighty conflagration in the federal city, destroying what was inexpressibly dear to the heart of every American, was visible in Baltimore, and aroused the patriotic feelings of its inhabitants to such a degree, that when the English attacked it, three weeks later, they were utterly defeated. It



was but a few days after this glorious victory of its principal city, that the Sisters of Charity passed through the State of Maryland. The English no longer harried the interior, but continued to ravage the coast, so that the travellers prudently took the inland route leading through Taneytown and Lancaster. From motives of economy, they had been directed to ask for hospitality on the journey, wherever circumstances permitted them to do so. They obeyed, and were welcomed and entertained, by Catholic families all along the route.

When they arrived in Philadelphia, their first act was to go into a church, and thank God for having conducted them thither in safety. They then proceeded to the house of a Catholic lady, where they remained for several days, while the necessary arrangements for their entering into possession of the asylum were completing. On the sixth of October, they removed thither. The condition of the house and the orphans, thirteen in number, was such as required all the zeal and charity of even the daughters of Saint Vincent, to grapple with. Added to this, the children were in rags, and without even a change of them; and the number of beds was not half sufficient for their proper accommodation. Nor was the outlook at all hopeful. There was a debt of four thousand dollars on the house; while the annual income allowed by the managers for the maintenance of the institution, was six hundred dollars. A small additional sum was contributed by a society of ladies that had been formed to aid the

asylum, but the whole was so inadequate to its needs, that the Sisters endured the utmost privation. Their coffee was made of corn, and taken without sugar. They had no fire in the house, save in the kitchen, and that was made of bark, gathered from the tan yards.

One day, when the Sisters were too busy to go out, an orphan was sent to the market with twelve and a half cents, all the money in the house, to buy a shin of beef for dinner. To their astonishment, the child returned with a large piece of meat, the twelve and a half cents, and fifty cents more, and told them that an old market-woman had asked her if she was one of the orphans, and when she said she was, had given her the money, and the meat, and told her to tell the Sisters to call on her whenever they were in want. This woman became a firm friend of the institution, and labored indefatigably in its behalf. Others were influenced by her charitable spirit, to help the good work. Gradually, too, the self-sacrifice and devotion shown by the Sisters to their little charges, made a deep and lasting impression on the people of Philadelphia, and caused them to contribute generously to the support of the asylum. "When I contrast the amiable and devout conduct of our Sisters with that of worldlings," wrote a lady of Philadelphia, "I love religion and Our Lord tenfold more. They are the pride of our city, and the ornament of our religion; they are loved by every one." In three years, thanks to the charity of the Philadelphians, and the

zeal and wise management of the Sisters, the institution was freed from debt; and in the course of time, grew from the "little mustard seed" as Mother Seton was wont to call it, into the two magnificent asylums which to-day, adorn the city of Philadelphia, and serve as a lasting monument to the charity of its Catholic people.

The conduct of the Philadelphia mission was the first proof to the American people, of the blessing that had been vouchsafed to them by the founding of St. Joseph's. It showed the result of Mother Seton's spiritual training, and example, for she was the model Sister of Charity; though, as she humbly declared in a letter to Archbishop Carroll, she felt like "a dry and barren tree" in the midst of her spiritual daughters. But they knew that there was not a virtue she strove to inculcate, which she had not already made her own. The following extracts from her writings will serve to show her admirable methods in the spiritual guidance of her Community. Speaking of the interior life, she says: "You must be in right earnest, or you will do nothing. First, it requires a constant guard over our senses. What sort of interior life would you lead, if, every time the door opens, or any one passes you, you must look up? If you must hear what is said, though it does not concern you? Or, even though you remain silent, and in modest attention to your duty, what would be your interior life, if you let your thoughts wander from God? . . . I will tell you what is my own

great help. I once read, or heard, that an interior life meant but the continuation of our Saviour's life in us; that the great object of all His mysteries, was to merit us the grace of this interior life, and communicate it to us, it being the end of His mission to lead us into the sweet land of promise—a life of constant union with Himself. And what was the first rule of our dear Saviour's life? You know it was to do His Father's will. Well, then, the first end I purpose in our daily work, is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner He wills it, and thirdly, to do it because it is His will. I know what His will is, by those who direct me; whatever they bid me do, be it ever so small in itself, is the will of God for me. Then, do it in the manner He wills it, not sewing an old thing as if it were new, or a new thing as if it were old; not fretting because the oven is too hot, or too cold. You understand, not flying, and driving, because you are hurried, or creeping like a snail because no one pushes you. Our dear Saviour was never in extremes. The third end is to do this will because God wills it; that is, to be ready to leave our work at any moment, and take up anything else we may be called to."

In regard to living in the presence of God, one of the principal aids to the spiritual life, she says; "You know how apt your mind is to wander, and how easily you are led away by sensible objects. You will never receive any lively impressions of grace, until you overcome this dissipation of mind.

Though you be ever so fervent at your prayers, and desire ever so much to be good, it will be all like putting hartshorn into a bottle, and leaving the cork out; what will it be worth? So all the prayers, readings, and pious conversation, you love so much, will be to little purpose, unless you place a sentinel at the door of your heart and mind. You often lose in ten minutes, by your dissipation of mind, more than you have gained in a whole day, by mortification. See your dear Saviour alone in the midst of your soul, like a shepherd; he calls for all the powers of your soul, all the affections of your heart to come around Him like His own little flock. But how they are scattered about! See, he holds a paper in his dear hand: what is written on it? Speak little, my child, pray much; let everything that passes, pass, mind nothing but what is eternal."

Exhorting her daughters to be faithful in corresponding to the grace of God, and to act with purity of intention, she would say, "Not a single grace is given you but was bought with the blood of Jesus, your compassionate Saviour. Not one grace is given but might become for you, through your fidelity to it, an eternal treasure. Not one grace is given you, but you must give an account of, in the day of judgment. St. Augustine says: "Our least action, when done for God, is precious to Him, while the greatest actions, without this pure intention, are worthless and contemptible in His eyes. With what a lively, cheerful, heart we

go to work, even when the thing we are to do is displeasing to nature, if only grace cries out courageously: "It is all for Thee, My God!" You know every step we take all day long, is a step of nature, or a step of grace. . . . Think how great is our blindness and misery, when for want of directing our intentions to this end, we lose the merit of all we do, instead of gathering up heavenly treasures, and weaving our bright crown for eternity. "Alas!" says St. Augustine, "why, for the short time we have to live, are we not busy in gaining our rewards? With so rich a harvest before us, why do we not gather it? All is ours if we will but take it." We suffer and toil through our days, and after all our labor, instead of coming before God loaded with merits, we shall stand empty-handed in His presence, and have nothing to offer, but our useless regrets, and bitter remorse, when both will be unavailing. You have been many times told that to avoid this sad evil, we must take care not to do our actions as through custom and without motive; not to do them through vanity or pride; not to do them through human respect, or self-love, which tries to poison all we do.

The rule given us for securing the heavenly practice of pure intention, is to be careful of our morning offering, which seals the whole day; since Fénelon says, that if it is made fully and sincerely, even though we forget to renew it from hour to hour, (as we commonly do) if it be not retracted by an act of our will, or vitiated by mortal sin, it

secures all we do for the day. What a consolation that is! Yet do not neglect to renew your offering, from time to time, when you think of it—especially of your principal actions—uniting them to those of Our dear Saviour, and reviewing them now and then; for it often happens that we begin well, but suffer many miseries of nature to step in before we finish.”

Mother Seton also clearly explains the fundamental principles of the spiritual life, and the difficulties which stand in the way of leading it. “You wish so much to be good, and to please Our dear Lord,” she says: “that you will not tire, if I tell you what the spiritual guide says of the obstacles to the interior life. The first is, the little knowledge we have of ourselves and of our faults, for, as by an interior life we wish to be united to Our Lord, a pure heart must be prepared, in which He may reign, as in His own Kingdom. Self-love does not like to hear it, but our heart is very corrupt, and we must do continual violence to our evil nature, to keep it in order. Our love of God is always opposed by our self-love, our love of one another, by the miserable pride and pretension which creates jealousy, rash judgment, and the pitiful dislikes, and impatience, which so often trouble us, and wound charity. Curiosity, too, which keeps us engaged in what is doing or saying, brings home many a foolish companion for our thoughts, to break the silence and peace, Our Lord desires to find in us. Who that reflects on her own nature,

can doubt of its corruption and misery? You know how unwilling we are to deny ourselves, how unwilling to be reprov'd or contradicted, how trifling a thing makes us sad, how we delight in being commended, while, with a sort of natural cruelty, we see faults in others which we are scarcely willing to excuse. How can we live an interior life until some of our natural rubbish is removed? How can we walk valiantly with Our Saviour, dragging our foolish attachments after us, and ready to faint if the least weight of His cross presses on us? The less sensible we are of our misery, the greater our evil is, for an immortified soul cannot bear to hear the truth nor to be reprov'd even for its evident faults; so it remains buried in its darkness, and the enemy tries to deepen its blindness, while, sick and weak, it scarcely struggles against its imperfections, much less thinks of entering the sanctuary of an interior life. How is it that many of us keep the rule as to the letter of it, and even look pious? There is no want of good-will, no idleness; and in a house where it would seem so easy to become saints, one would say: What is the matter? Why are we not saints? Why is there so little progress in perfection, or rather, why are so many tepid, heavy, and discouraged, going on more like slaves, in a workhouse, than children in their own home, and the house of their Father? The answer is, because we do not watch over our interior, do not watch the impulse of nature, and grace, in our actions, nor



avoid the occasions of the habitual faults we live in, when it is in our power to do so, or keep a good guard on ourselves when it is not. Frequent indulgence of useless thoughts, inconsiderate words, expressions of natural feeling, and changes of temper, all are at variance with the sweet interior life, and stop the operations of grace, too often, even to grieving the Divine Spirit, and driving Him away. One immortalized passion, a single bad habit not corrected, a natural attachment, though innocent as to appearances, will lie like a great stone at the door of our heart, and prevent us for whole years from advancing in the Kingdom of Our Lord. For how can such imperfection, and miseries, produce a spiritual harvest, any more than seed planted in dry, hard, earth, and choked with thorns and weeds, could result in harvest? Will you shut your hearts to grace? You can make so fair a beginning now; if you only go to work courageously, you will soon gather the fruits of your care. But if you do not, your soul, unfaithful to its beautiful graces, will grow weaker and weaker, and drag life along like a sad slavery, instead of a prelude to the joys of eternity, which it should really be in our blessed condition, when our very pains, and trials, are but gems for our crown, if we use them in the beautiful spirit of our rule. One point in particular, you must attend to; as soon as you have committed a fault, make your act of contrition for it at once, lest it draw you into another, as one weight pulls another after it. Make your

sincere act of contrition, by a loving and sorrowful uplifting of your heart to Our dear Saviour; and then, instead of pondering on the fault, try to think no more about it, only in so far as is necessary in order to guard against repeating it, or to recite Our Fathers and Hail Marys, as penance for it, while you work.

Every day must bring its own trials; why then should you be troubled or surprised by them? You young people, especially, should fight cheerfully, since Our Lord has so kindly called you in the morning of your days, and thus saved you from the anguish and remorse we feel after so many years of sin. It moves my very soul to see you young people taken and sheltered by Our dear Lord; and yet you often look ungrateful. . . . Can you expect Heaven for nothing? Did not Our dear Saviour track the whole way to it with His tears and His Blood? And yet you start at every little pain! . . . The gate of Heaven is very low; the humble, only, can enter it; the path to it is very narrow and beset with our bad habits, our evil inclinations, and our deceiving passions, which all unite to draw us aside, and unless we are always on the watch, we soon go astray. You will think it hard to lead a life of such restraint, unless you keep your eyes of faith always open. Perseverance is a great grace. To go on gaining and advancing every day, we must be resolute, and bear and suffer what our blessed forerunners did. Which of them gained Heaven without a combat?

By what road did they reach it? Some of them came out of caves and deserts in which they had lived buried from the world, and from the enemies of God; others from prisons and dungeons,—glorious confessors of the faith; others covered with the blood which they had shed for it. We are inheritors of their faith, but we are not tried as they were. What are our trials? By what name shall we call them? One cuts herself out a cross of pride, another of causeless discontent, another of restless impatience, or peevish fretfulness; all mere children's play, if viewed with the common eyes of reason, much more the pure eyes of Faith! Yet we know as a certainty, that God calls us to a holy life; that He gives us grace, every grace, in abundance; and, though we are so weak of ourselves, this grace is able to carry us through every obstacle and difficulty. But we want courage to keep the continual watch over nature, and therefore, year after year, in spite of our thousand graces, multiplied resolutions, and fair promises, we run around in a circle of miseries, and imperfections, and, after a long time in the service of God, come nearly to the point whence we set out, perhaps with even less ardor for penance and mortification, than when we first consecrated ourselves to Him. You are now but setting out; be above the vain fears of nature, and the efforts of your enemy. You are children of eternity; your immortal crown awaits you, and the best of Fathers will reward your duty and your love. You may sow here, indeed, in tears, but you shall reap there, in joy."

Towards the close of the year 1814, Sister Catharine Mullen, the Mistress of Novices, died, and Sister Elizabeth Boyle was chosen by Mother Seton to take her place. That so young a Sister should have been selected for this work, shows what progress she must have made in the religious life, for St. Vincent asserts that the Mistress of Novices should be an angel. It is indeed, one of the most difficult and most responsible posts, in a religious Community, that on which the future character and destiny of the Order mainly rest. Sister Elizabeth, filled as she was with the spirit of her exalted vocation, fully realized the greatness of the office she was called upon to discharge; but, with perfect humility, she accepted it, trusting to God for strength and wisdom to guide and form the souls given to her care. How well qualified she was for it, to the discerning spiritual gaze of Mother Seton, appears from a letter written by the latter to Father Bruté a short time before in which she says: "You have no idea how quietly all goes on here, Sister Elizabeth in her baptismal innocence, I think. Gradually I try to draw her to the charge of the Novices, that they may imbibe her pure and heavenly spirit."

## CHAPTER X.

### CHARACTER OF MOTHER SETON—HER TRAINING OF PUPILS, AND INFLUENCE UPON THEM.

God formed her out of sinful dust,  
She knelt, a soul defiled,  
She rose in all the faith and trust,  
And sweetness of a child.

And in the freshness of that love,  
She preached, by word and deed,  
The mysteries of the world above,  
Her new-found, glorious creed.

*Newman: A Martyr Convert.*

MOTHER SETON'S nature was noble, her character refined and beautiful. Even in her youth, she had been singularly free from all self-seeking, and the unlovely cravings of the world. The intense realization of a spiritual existence had given her simplicity and child-likeness, and but slight hold upon much that the world finds important. The Catholic Church was indeed the true home of such a soul. For many years, it had languished, in spite of all its efforts, in the chilling atmosphere of a heretic Church, but on entering the true fold, it gained strength, and attained its full stature, with every natural grace and charm, intensified. A spirit of love diffused itself about her, that drew

out of every soul brought into relation with her, the best it had to give; and sustained her spiritual daughters in their efforts to attain to the renunciation of self, and union with the divine will, the opposition to nature, and fidelity to grace, that were clearly visible in her. She was full of beautiful intuitions, of helpful thoughts, of graceful kindnesses, and tender ways. Her strong sense of duty, and her absolute sincerity, fostered the same virtues in others, while her deep, un failing, charity taught her Sisters the most needful of all virtues in a religious Community.

So great was the charm of her manner and conversation, that every one who approached her felt its influence. Many whose faith seemed to be dead, felt it stir within them, as they gazed on Mother Seton's noble face, lit with beautiful eyes that glowed with almost celestial ardor, and listened to the exquisite tones of her voice as she spoke of God and eternity, and were turned from the way of indifference and sin. One remarkable instance of her influence was shown in the case of a gentleman of New York City, who had two daughters in the Academy at St. Joseph's. He was a nominal Catholic, but openly and notoriously indifferent to religion. His pastor had made many attempts to reclaim him, but in vain. His daughters became convinced that if he were to have an interview with Mother Seton, it would have some effect in rousing his conscience. They, therefore, prevailed on him to pay them a visit, during

which he was introduced to Mother. The result was more than his daughters had hoped. With happy intuition, she so guided the conversation as to appeal irresistibly to his heart, and while he gazed on her enraptured face, and abandoned himself to the delight of hearing her talk, his long slumbering Faith awoke. He said afterwards that he would willingly travel six hundred miles to see Mother Seton's eyes, even though she were not to open her lips. Nor was the impression which she made on him a transient one. On his return home, he was at once reconciled with the Church, and continued to lead a most edifying life for the short period that remained to him.

Mother Seton was noted for her love of poverty, and mortification of the senses. Her clothing, furniture, every article that she made use of in daily life, revealed this spirit of self-denial. Her writing-paper was of the coarsest and cheapest kind; her pens, the refuse of the class-rooms. A Sister once observed to her that her pens were nothing but stumps, whereupon she smilingly answered: "Well, my dear one, that is to atone for your waste of pens;" thus playfully teaching a lesson. Though her health was always delicate, and her digestion weak, she would eat no other food than that which was provided for the Community. If any other kind was prepared for her, she would refuse to eat it, saying that she owed an example to others, and that no food would hurt her, if taken in small quantity.

Like all the saints, she had a deep love for the Holy Eucharist, and found in its reception the supreme joy and consolation of her life. She communicated frequently, and sought to inspire her spiritual daughters with the same love and desire for the sacrament as glowed in her own heart. She once gave a gentle but keen reproof to a Sister who had failed, on a Communion-day, to approach the holy table. Meeting her after Mass, she asked her, with a searching look: "Why, my dear child, did you not come to Our Lord for your recompense this morning?"

"Mother," replied the Sister, "I felt a little weak, and took a cup of coffee before Mass."

"Ah! my dear child," rejoined Mother: how could you sell your God for a miserable cup of coffee?"

Like St. Ignatius, she had a special care and tenderness for the sick. She visited them twice a day, and strove to procure for them all the comforts in her power. If too ill to visit them herself, she sent the Assistant-Mother, of whom she made careful inquires as to their condition. She often said that the sick were the blessing of the house, and she loved to dilate to the Sisters on the numberless occasions for merit, which sickness afforded, and on the tender and compassionate care which it would be their work in the future, to bestow on their suffering fellow-creatures.

Led by such a guide, it is small wonder that St. Joseph's Community advanced rapidly in the way



of perfection, and aroused the deepest interest and admiration among the Catholics of the United States, who regarded it as one of the greatest blessings vouchsafed by God to their new and struggling country.

Mother Seton was no less assiduous in the conduct of the Academy than of the Community. Realizing as only a woman with her experience of the world could, the temptations peculiar to women who have to pass their lives in it, she endeavored to prepare the pupils of St. Joseph's, to withstand them. The evil, atheistical, eighteenth century had just passed, with its Rousseau, leaving behind it, a trail of sickly sentimentality, miscalled sensibility, than which, Satan never set a more deadly snare for women's souls. Along with this, the United States was afflicted with evils peculiar to itself. The rude conditions of life in a new, sparsely settled country, abounding in plenty, and the physical well-being resulting from it, had engendered a coarseness of conversation and manners, which was perilous to youthful souls. Speaking of the condition of Catholics, in the United States, when he was first made Prefect Apostolic, Dr. Carroll remarks; "The abuses that have grown among Catholics are chiefly those which result from unavoidable intercourse with non-Catholics, and the examples thence derived; namely, more free intercourse between young people of opposite sexes than is compatible with chastity in mind and body; too great fondness for dances and similar amuse-

ments; and an incredible eagerness, especially in girls, for reading love-stories"—at a time when there was not a decent love-story written—"which are brought over in great quantities from Europe. Then, among other things, a general lack of care in instructing their children, and especially the negro slaves, in their religion." . . .

The only remedy for such a state of things was to give a Christian education to the generation, especially the young girls, then growing up. No matter how zealous pastors may be, they can never give to a country that Catholic atmosphere which religious Communities impart. Society in Catholic Europe was steeped in this atmosphere, and gained from it, much of its charm, its refinement, its serenity, and its touch of asceticism. Many a poor, struggling priest, even in our day, to whose lot it has fallen to dispense the bread of life in some of the isolated parts of our country, has encountered the cold, materialistic, spirit of those earlier days, so alien to the Celtic race, into whose American descendants it has entered, and has longed for the presence of the "Sisters" to combat it.

In the early days of the Academy, Mother Seton herself took charge of the spiritual training of the pupils of St. Joseph's, but when she had the aid of competent instructors, she resigned most of her scholastic duties to them. Every day, however, she visited the class-rooms, to show the interest she felt in the pupils' progress, and to utter a few words of encouragement. Nothing but illness prevented

her from doing this. On one occasion, she said to the directress of the school; "I feel uneasy, sometimes, that I cannot take my daily walk, and see the dear girls; yet I console myself with the thought of your being there, for you have a mother's heart." How deeply she felt the sacred trust confided to her in these young souls, may be learned from the direction which she gave to the Sisters in charge of them: "Be to them as our guardian angels are to us."

With her firmness in the guidance of the pupils, there mingled a deep tenderness, and a sympathetic consideration of their age and character. One day, when they were out in the grounds during recreation, a terrific thunderstorm came on, and in their terror, they fled to the chapel, and fell on their knees in fervent prayer. The Sister who had charge of the recreation, hastened after them, and bade them leave the chapel, adding, that they were very ready to fly to God in the hour of danger, but that at other times they did not show such eagerness in seeking Him. As the house was small, Mother Seton, no doubt, had heard the noise of the pupils' entrance into the chapel, and wondering why their stay there was so short, was led to inquire the cause. When she heard it, she calmly reversed the Sister's order, which, as it was too severe, she could do without detriment to the respect of the young for authority. "To whom," she asked: "should they fly in time of danger, if not to Our Lord?"

In the same spirit, she wrote to a father who had written too stern a reproof to his daughter for some faults which she had committed: "You and I speak all for eternity; but take an advice from your old Mother. I am a hundred to your thirty in experience—that cruel friend of our earthly pilgrimage. When you ask too much at first, you often gain nothing at last; and if the heart is lost, all is lost. If you use such language to your family, they can not love you, since they have not *our* microscope to see things as they are. . . . The faults of young people must be moved by prayers and tears, because they are constitutional, and can not be frightened out."

An American, Mother Seton understood perfectly how to adapt the discipline of the school to American pupils. The restraint, and constant espionage which were, and are still, perhaps, employed in schools conducted by Europeans, were never in force at St. Joseph's. On the contrary, all the liberty that any reasonable being could ask, was accorded to the pupils. The rules were few, and so evidently founded on common sense, and adapted to securing the well-being of all, that even the wildest, or giddiest, pupils, were seldom tempted to break them. The system devised by Mother Seton still obtains in the schools of the Sisters of Charity, and the writer, who has had experience of it, believes that none better calculated to make the school years happy and fruitful, could have been chosen.

Deploring the little attention that female education had received in her youth, she gave the pupils at St. Joseph's every advantage in her power, in this respect, and unceasingly urged them to make good use of their opportunities. She took care, however, that they were not too heavily taxed in their studies; ample time for recreation was accorded through the day, while generous meals of plain, but well-cooked, food, set forth with an exquisite cleanliness and neatness that invited appetite, preserved their health and strength.

Mother Seton used but little severity with her pupils. Realizing that to make human beings happy is to make them good, she strove to make those in her charge happy. She loved them, and let them see that she loved them, and inspired their young souls with an affection for her in return, that made them seek, in all things, to please her. Even when reproofing their faults, there mingled with her firmness, so much kindness, such persuasiveness to better things, that, as a rule, the most rebellious heart was soon conquered. If a culprit proved obstinate, however, she was placed, alone, on a bench, beneath a crucifix. This rarely failed to bring her to a sense of penitence, which after due expression of it had been made to Mother, caused her to be dismissed, with a kiss on the forehead, forgiven and happy.

As for the new scholars, Mother was their hope and refuge. Usually, there is not enough sympathy felt for them. As Father Faber remarks, the

young are not kind, and though the older pupils remember perfectly their own sufferings as new scholars, they are as a rule quite indifferent to like suffering in others. Mother Seton, however, never forgot these disconsolate young creatures, and until their homesickness had passed, and they had become happy in their new life, they were her special care. A lady who had been a pupil at St. Joseph's, describing, in after years, her arrival at the school, said: "Never can I forget my first meeting with our beloved Mother. Separated from my parents and home, a child of but eight years, I alighted from the carriage at St. Joseph's, and felt, for the moment, I was a stranger. A band of young ladies came forth with joy to meet my traveling companions, whom they knew, and in advance of them there walked a lady with outstretched arms, who kindly welcomed and embraced us. So maternal was her manner that she gained my heart at once, and I was happy under the same roof with Mother Seton."

Twice a week she gave familiar instructions to the elder pupils. In these might be said to consist her special training for a truly Christian life in the world. There was no formality, no display of authority, in these little instructions. Speaking as one who knew the world, she told them of its temptations, and of the virtues necessary to conquer them. She often assured them that she was not trying to teach them to be good nuns, or Sisters of Charity; but rather, to fit them for the world,

and make them good mothers, and good mistresses of households. "Yet," she would add, "if the dear Master selects one among you to be closer to Him, happy are you! He will teach you Himself."

Warning them of the inconsistency of those who have courage enough to brave the world's criticisms in the gratification of their vanity or pride, while they fear them when there is question of serving God, she said: "I have seen many girls in the world delighting even—through what they called an independent spirit, but which was, in truth, a silly pride—to practice many singularities in dress and manner. They said: 'I cannot help what people think,' and they did what was much more difficult than to observe the little practices you are bound to, and the subjection to the spirit of charity, which, while it would preserve your peace of conscience, could, at last, but secure you, after the first obstacles were overcome, the true love and respect even of those whose blame would most discourage you. Such will be the case, when they see that your perseverance is through a principle of duty; whereas this dirty world is the first to laugh at those who subject themselves to it, especially if this subjection is against a better light, as must be the case with any of you, who have so often been instructed in your duty."

"Beauty," she taught them, "is but a superficial grace," but when a fair soul is in a fair body, the latter may be cherished as a gift of the Creator. Beauty should be used as an attraction to

virtue. When profaned, it is a violation of the temple of God, and "a tearing away of the victims that should have been offered at His altar." In regard to dress, her advice was to shun singularity, and to follow a middle course, avoiding extravagance on the one hand, and carelessness on the other. In regard to the danger of being present at balls, and at the theatre, she often related the following fable. "A butterfly asked an owl what she should do to keep from burning her wings, because she could never go near the candle without singeing them. The owl counselled her to abstain from looking even at the smoke of it."

She frequently reminded them of the merit they could gain by sanctifying their actions. "Remember," she said, "it is a great point to direct your actions, and to have some simple good intention, even in the least of them. If a painter should draw his lines without proposing any idea to himself, his work would be a blot; or should a sculptor give a number of strokes to his block without intention to shape it, what would he do but weary himself to no purpose? The least of our actions may carry grace with it, if we turn it right. Every good action is a grain of seed for eternal life. It was an excellent word of St. Bernard; "As your actions pass on, let them not pass away."

Such instructions, given in a manner as impressive and winning as was Mother Seton's, must have had an extraordinary influence on those to whom they were addressed. That it was a lasting one, was



shown by their conduct in after years. One young girl herself told that having been urged by her friends to appear at an entertainment in an extremely décolleté costume, she finally yielded. But, in the ballroom, she seemed to see Mother's beautiful eyes, filled with sadness, fixed upon her, and hear her voice, uttering words of reproach, until at length, she became so utterly miserable, that she could endure it no longer, and hastening to her room, exchanged her dress for more modest attire. A century has gone by since Mother Seton's words were uttered, and all that was mortal of those who heard them, as well as of her who spoke them, has long since been dust. But we know that the spirit they awoke did not die, but lives in the descendants of those privileged ones, and of those to whom they communicated it, working through the passing of the generations, to the saving of souls.

Mother Seton's charity was shown in every relation of her life. The domestics of the institution found in her a true and sympathetic friend, as well as a kind mistress. As for the poor, they had been the object of her special care from the time that she was able to serve them, and her conversion to the true Faith, and entrance into religious life, had only deepened her love for them. In the first days of St. Joseph's, the straitened circumstances of the Sisters did not permit the exercise of that almost boundless charity which distinguished the Order in later days, but even in the midst of poverty and privation, Mother sowed the good seed, that

in more prosperous days, was to bear fruit one hundred fold. Even then, her charity so quickened her naturally resourceful nature, that she always managed to do something for any suffering poor that she learned of. Thus, one Winter evening, as she was returning from the mountain church, she caught sight of four or five little children, standing at the door of a miserable hut, and almost perishing for want of food and clothing. The following morning she entered the study-hall, and told the pupils the scene she had witnessed. The latter at once made a generous offering of pocket money, and plied the needle with such energy that, before night, there was a substantial pile of clothing for the suffering little creatures. Mother Seton, accompanied by two of the Sisters, went at once to the hut, washed and dressed the children, and ministered to the wants of the parents. On her return home, she told the children of the happiness their gifts had bestowed, adding: "Oh, my children, how sweet will be your repose to-night!"

That the kingdom of God might be extended everywhere in the souls of men, she wished that his priests should be worthy of their sublime and holy calling. Bishop Bruté, whose own ideal of the sacerdotal character, we know, was very lofty, declared that no one else impressed his soul as forcibly as did Mother Seton, with the idea of what a true priest ought to be. "Oh!" he said, "that priests felt for themselves as Mother Seton felt they ought to feel!" How much did she not suffer in witnessing

their imperfections! How sorrowfully, yet how charitably, did she consider their faults! To hear a priest preach without having taken time to prepare his sermon, or instruction, gave her great pain. On one occasion, she did not hesitate to speak plainly to a young priest, who had preached in a very slovenly manner the day before, and admitted that he had not taken much trouble in the preparation of his sermon. "Sir," said Mother, "that awakens my anger. Do you remember a priest holds the honor of God on his lips? Will you not trouble yourself to spread the fire He wishes so much enkindled? If you will not study and prepare when young, what when you are old? This is a mother's lesson."

To another priest, who was stationed in Baltimore, but who had a preference for Emmitsburg, she writes; "How much purer is your service where you are, above the mist of earthly attraction! One thing I hope you are convinced of, (I, as a wretched sinner, know it well,) that, wherever we meet a little prop of human comfort, there is always some subtraction of divine comfort; and for my part, I am so afraid to cause any such subtraction, that I feel a reserve and fear in every human consolation, that makes them more my pains than my pleasures; yet the liberty of the children of God, I hope in all. I only mean to say we should be too happy when the providence of Our God keeps us wholly to Himself. . . . You are remembered and loved too much here, to make it a safe place for you, unless

you were sent by God Himself without the least agency of your own, and even then, I fear, my brother would grow lean. Pray for us, I pray. Your own poor Mother."

As might be expected, Mother Seton cherished a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the mother of all faithful souls. She was full of confidence in her intercession, and taught all under her direction to honor her and invoke her assistance. As a special tribute of love and veneration, she promised Our Blessed Mother, that her spiritual daughters would ever bear her name. In accordance with this pledge on the part of their venerated foundress, the Sisters of Charity all assume the name of Mary with their religious habit, though in cases where it does not form a euphonious combination with the particular religious name of a Sister, it is not used.

Mother Seton had developed her intellectual powers solely by reading and reflection. She possessed the poetic temperament, and from her early childhood, found delight in reading the English poets, of whom Milton and Thompson were her favorites. The Bible, however, as has been already said, was the book she loved best. Her style of expression, in earlier years, was characterized, to a certain extent, by the artificiality of the eighteenth century, but this disappeared almost entirely after she became a Catholic. Her well-stored mind was of the greatest service to her Community, and by the command of her Superior, her ready pen made it of benefit to future generations

of her spiritual children. Her acquaintance with French ascetical literature was extensive, and she made many translations from it, among which were, portions of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, and of Saint Francis de Sales; extracts from Saint Theresa's works; Lombez' Interior Peace; Saint Ambrose's Treatise on Virginity; parts of Dupont's Meditations; commencement of The Life of Saint Ignatius; passages from the works of Pere Judde, and of Berthier; Antiphons of Advent, by Avriilon; Life of Saint Vincent de Paul, and Life of Mademoiselle Le Gras. We know now, that the hymn, "Jerusalem, My Happy Home," formerly ascribed to her, was composed by a devout priest, while imprisoned in the Tower, during the Elizabethan persecution. She, however, set it to music, along with many other hymns, in a manner which shows that she possessed considerable musical talent.

Her letters, and her utterances to her Community on spiritual subjects, contain, therefore, all that we possess of her original thoughts. In these her soul reveals its mystic beauty. The greatness of God, the wonderful destiny of the soul, the insignificance of all that passes, are themes upon which she delights to dwell. Nothing, however dear to her heart, with its almost boundless capacity for affection, ever obscures these truths for her; her clear, spiritual, gaze is fixed on them almost from the dawn of reason, to the moment of death.

When she first became Superior of the Community, her timidity, and distrust of her own judgment,

made her sometimes appear weak, and with less of the extraordinary about her than is seen in the lives of saints. The long interior suffering and desolation which she endured, seemed, however, to remove this almost completely. Like that great river which, passing through the Lake of Geneva, leaves there all its sediment, and issues from it crystal clear, Mother Seton's soul emerged from the bitter waters into which God had plunged it, with the imperfections which had dimmed its beauty, no longer apparent.

## CHAPTER XI.

1815—1816.

WILLIAM SETON GOES TO LEGHORN—RE-ELECTION  
OF MOTHER SETON—ELECTION OF SISTER ELIZA-  
BETH BOYLE AS ASSISTANT-MOTHER—DEATH  
OF ARCHBISHOP CARROLL—DEATH OF RE-  
BECCA SETON—LAST MEETING OF MOTHER  
SETON AND BISHOP CHEVERUS.

Dearest, gentlest, noblest, best!  
Deep is thy mysterious rest,  
Now the solemn hours are over,  
And the angels around thee hover,

*Newman: A Birthday Offering.*

TO the anxieties and cares inseparable from the direction of a Community, was now joined in Mother Seton's mind, solicitude for her eldest son, William, who was ready to leave college. He had a strong wish to enter the navy, but the lack of all religious safeguards in such a career, made his mother shrink from the thought of it. She was too wise, however, to openly combat his desire; but trusted to time, and patience, its great ally, to turn his thoughts in some other direction. An opportunity for doing this soon presented itself. Political changes having brought

happier days to Europe, the Sulpitian Fathers at Baltimore concluded to send Father Bruté thither, to try and procure more priests for the American mission. His going was decided on so suddenly, that Mother Seton only learned of it when he came to take leave of her. She at once conceived the idea of sending William with him to Leghorn, where, safeguarded by the Filicchis, and formed by their instruction and example, he might gain a knowledge of business that would enable him to establish himself in the world. The unexpected overwhelms mediocre minds; but the intelligent seize at once upon any advantage that it offers. Only one difficulty suggested itself to Mother Seton's mind. For over two years she had received no news of her Italian friends; and this, at a time when every ship that crossed the ocean bore news of the fall of some throne, or the crash of some kingdom, and of the transformation of many things in the old world, made her fear lest the Filicchis might not have escaped the pecuniary misfortunes which had overtaken so many other business houses. There was no time, however, to learn anything on this point, so Mother Seton confided her son to Father Bruté, "as the elder Tobias confided his son to the angel Raphael," and saw him depart in the hope that all would be well at Leghorn. Three weeks after, while he was still on the ocean, she addressed two letters, one to Filippo, and one to Antonio Filicchi, in which she requested them to receive her son, and if



he showed aptitude, to teach him the business. Both these letters reveal the inmost heart of the Christian mother, whose chief concern is for the eternity of her child, and the love for him which makes the parting, as she expresses it, "like a tearing of soul from soul."

After an uneventful voyage, Father Bruté and William Seton, arrived at Bordeaux, to find that city convulsed by the excitement created by Napoleon's return from Elba. His fear of being arrested as a priest, caused Father Bruté to hasten to conceal himself, but before doing so, he saw his young charge off for Leghorn. After some difficulty in getting through the lines of the armies in the south of France, William arrived at Leghorn in the month of July, and was cordially received by Antonio Filicchi, who then conducted him to a vast chamber, in the obscurity of which he was at first unable to perceive anything. It was not until he felt his hand in the cold grasp of another hand, that he realized that he was standing by the bedside of a sick man. It was thus, on his death-bed, that Filippo Filicchi received the son of his beloved friend, and embracing him tenderly, welcomed him to Leghorn.

In July, 1815, the second election for Superior was held at St. Joseph's, and resulted in the choice of Mother Seton for Superior, and of Sister Elizabeth Boyle for Assistant-Mother.

The re-election of Mother Seton, gave joy to the whole house, with the exception of Mother herself,

whom it saddened. Since the death of Annina, the longing of her heart had been for repose and solitude, and if such a thing could be said of one who already lived so interior a life, for obscurity. But she accepted, without hesitation, the burden that was laid upon her. *To ask nothing, to refuse nothing*, was one of her holy rules of conduct. Shortly after the election, the second mission of the Sisters was established; three of them being sent to Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, in order to lighten the burdens of Father Dubois, by devoting themselves to the care of the house, as some return for his labors at St. Joseph's. The departure of Father Bruté for Europe, had left Father Dubois in sole charge of the mission at Emmitsburg. The labor which it involved was enormous; and if he did not succumb, it was because his devotion to the work seemed to miraculously recruit his strength. The gayety and simplicity of this good priest, were equalled only by his forgetfulness of self. No shadow of weariness, either mental or physical, ever seemed to rest upon him, and no consideration could turn him for even a moment, from his work. It is told of him, that he one day arrived at St. Joseph's with his hair cut very short, after he had worn it for some time long enough to fall on his shoulders. "See my cropped head," he said, laughing, to Mother Seton: "I met the barber in the woods, he made me sit down on a stone, and did his work. I had no time at home."

Father Bruté returned to the United States in

November, but was placed in charge of the college and Seminary at Baltimore. It was not until three years later that he was sent back to Emmitsburg.

Towards the close of this year, 1815, the American Church sustained an immeasurable loss in the death of Archbishop Carroll, who, filled with years and good works, passed to his reward on the third of December, the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, one of the chief glories of the Society of Jesus, of which the Archbishop was a member, and which he loved so well. He had governed the American Church since the year 1784, first as Prefect-Apostolic, then as Bishop, and finally, as Archbishop. When he began his pastoral rule, he found the Church poor, persecuted, and unorganized; he left it full of vitality, and the spirit of progress, with several Bishops, a numerous body of clergy, a population almost doubled in numbers, and possessing convents, colleges, and a seminary. Long and arduous had been the labor of this mighty toiler in the Lord's vineyard, and the vines were loaded with rich fruit, when the Master called him to his rest. After intense suffering, which he bore with patience, and even serenity, he told those about him that death was near, and in his humility, asked to be laid upon the floor, where he calmly expired. He had placed his diocese, and himself, under the protection and special patronage of the Blessed Virgin, and this seemed to fill him with confidence as he drew near the judgment seat of God. He had been noted for his charity to the poor. His

forefathers had possessed great wealth and vast domains in Maryland; his relatives still possessed them, and held a high position in life. They gave liberally of their wealth to the Archbishop, and this, added to the simplicity and frugality of his life and of his household, enabled him to show a truly Christian generosity to the poor of Christ. His house was hospitable, but devoid of any approach to luxury. His days were filled to overflowing with the cares and labors of his pastoral charge, but in the evenings, he was accustomed to receive all who presented themselves at his house. The urbanity of his manner, and the charm of his conversation, drew thither the most distinguished and intellectual people of the city, both Catholic and non-Catholic, and the intercourse with the varied minds thus brought in contact with his, seemed to give the Archbishop rest and enjoyment. But no matter how engrossing the conversation, or absorbing the topic, he invariably rose at the sounding of the hour fixed for evening prayers, and courteously taking leave of those present, went to conduct those devotions, at which his entire household, down to the lowest negro servant, was required to be present.

The whole country mourned the loss of the great prelate, while the memory of his services as a citizen, drew from the Union public acknowledgments of gratitude and respect. Even the daily papers were put in mourning, as at the death of Washington. At no place, however, was he more sincerely mourned

than at St. Joseph's. Sisters, pupils, and orphans, all had been wont to rejoice in the sunshine of his presence, as, simple, gentle, and forgetful of all ceremony, he mingled with them, watching the children's little games, and smiling at their pleasantries. None, down to the least of them, felt any awe of him, for he had the delightful manner that places childhood at ease, and attracts those of all ages. The sweetness and tenderness of his soul were reflected in his face and manner, and made his personality so winning that, one day, when a little scholar came to Mother Seton with her catechism in her hand, to ask the meaning of the great, strange, new, word, benignity, which she had just encountered in its pages, Mother, after reflecting an instant, answered: "My dear child, look at Archbishop Carroll, and you will see in his appearance, his conversation, and his manners, the meaning of the word benignity."

It was hard to replace this great Pastor in the American Church, where the laborers were, as yet, so few. Archbishop Carroll's coadjutor, the venerable Archbishop Neale, succeeded him, but he was so bowed down with the weight of years and infirmities, that he felt himself unequal to the work, and asked the Holy Father to give him a coadjutor, who might become his successor. He designated Bishop Cheverus as the one whom he wished, and his choice was approved by the Holy See. But Bishop Cheverus, realizing that for him to leave the infant church of New England, would be to retard

its growth, represented to the Holy Father how necessary it was that he should remain in Boston, and how fitted for the post of coadjutor, were many priests in Baltimore; and succeeded in obtaining permission to remain where he was.

Archbishop Neale then summoned him to Baltimore, to help him choose a coadjutor, and at the same time, to bestow on him the pallium, the symbol of his Archiepiscopal rank and authority. This ceremony took place in the parish church at Georgetown, on the twenty-fourth of November, 1816. In a letter of Bishop Cheverus to Mother Seton, he informs her of the event, adding, that at an early hour of the same day, he had celebrated Mass in the Chapel of the Visitation Convent, where the edifying scene around him recalled vividly to his mind the happy time he had passed, six years before, at St. Joseph's. The letter from which this passage is taken, was probably one of condolence to Mother Seton on the death of her youngest child, Rebecca, whom she was wont to call "the child of the cross," on account of a painful affliction, which she had endured for many years.

Between the buildings at St. Joseph's, and the little stream that flows through the grounds, there is a spot, beneath great, spreading trees, which is still pointed out to visitors, as the place where a spring gushed from the earth, which was called Mother Seton's spring, because, in the Summer days she loved to sit beside it, and watch the children at play. A little further on, the spreading waters of

this spring formed a small pond, on which, when Winter had frozen its surface, the children loved to slide. One day, little Rebecca Seton, full of the excitement of the fascinating sport, ran from the top of a little hill above the pond, and with the impetus thus gained, was fairly flying across the ice, when she suddenly fell, and was taken up a cripple. Dr. Chatard, of Baltimore, succeeded in easing her pain, and enabling her to go about on crutches, thus making it possible for her to take part in the active life of St. Joseph's, where her angelic disposition, and helpless condition, endeared her to all. But with her growth, the trouble grew worse, and in the Autumn of 1815, an abscess appeared on the injured leg. It was, therefore, decided to send her to be treated by an eminent surgeon in Philadelphia. Mrs. Julia Scott, of that city, the friend of Mother Seton's girlhood, who had remained true to her throughout her change of fortune and religion, and had constantly given her the most substantial proofs of affection, begged to have the suffering child sent to her house. Though this would have insured her every comfort and luxury that wealth and affection could give, Rebecca pleaded to go to Sister Rose at the Orphan Asylum, where she could be among the Sisters, as at St. Joseph's. So to the asylum she went, but Mrs. Scott lavished attention on her, and insisted on defraying much of the expense attending the affair. Rebecca remained under the care of the surgeon, who bore the appropriate name of Dr. Physick, until the beginning of November, when

she returned to Emmitsburg. Mother Seton is silent in her letters as to any improvement in her condition, so it may be concluded that the child's journey and suffering had been fruitless. But if her mother had the pain of witnessing her growing physically worse from day to day, she had also the happiness of seeing her soul become strong and ripe for Heaven. In one of her charming letters to her brother William, in Leghorn, written in the early part of April, 1815, the patient little sufferer tells him that, "the Spring is so far advanced that we already hear the turtle-dove cooing, which sits on the tree over Annina's grave," and William, reading, must have wept, for he realized from his mother's letters, that when Spring came again, the dove's soft voice would be sounding over Rebecca's grave also. Six months before her death, she knew scarcely any surcease of pain. But her patience and resignation, never failed. Once, after a peculiarly severe period of suffering, her mother asked her if she had not said at least one little prayer during it, whereupon she replied, that she had been praying almost every moment. One day she said; "If the doctors were to say to me; 'Rebecca, you are cured,' I would not rejoice. My dearest Saviour, I know too well the happiness of dying young, and *sinning no more.*" Sometimes, the thought of leaving her mother, however, troubled her, and once she said, embracing her as she did so: "You will return alone, dear Mamma, and there will be no little Bec behind the bed-curtains. . . . But that is only



one side; when I look at the other side, I forget all else. You will have consolations, for you hope that my salvation is assured."

At the least lessening of her pain, she took up some work, for she could not endure to be idle. She loved to make paper flowers, a work in which she excelled. Two days before she entered into her last agony, she cut out a dress for a poor child. On the eve of All Saints, she received the last sacraments, from the hands of Father Hickey, one of the priests from St. Mary's. On the morning of the Feast, he returned, and gave her the final indulgence, for which she thanked him in a faint voice. Night came, and with it such terrible agony, that Mother Seton grew fearful lest the patience of so young a sufferer should prove unequal to its patient endurance. Happily, Father Dubois arrived, and seeing Rebecca's condition, offered to stay with her. The presence of a priest seemed to calm her, and give her strength against the powers of darkness. She begged him to recite his office near her, and asked him with a smile, if he remembered how he had been wont to call their little room "the tabernacle of the just."

The following day, the paroxysms returned, and the heroic mother, her heart torn by the sight and sound of her child's agony, strove to strengthen her, so that she might not lose the eternal reward of her unspeakable suffering. Rebecca no longer asked, as she had been wont to do, about the time of her death. Her eyes and her thoughts remained

fixed on the crucifix. At night, Father Dubois returned and promised to stay with her to the last. "Again and again" to quote her mother's words, "she bowed her little agonizing head (in which all her misery seemed centered) to the holy water he signed her with. At last, near four in the morning, Sister Cecilia beside her, and mother's arms lifting her, she sank down between us, and the dear head fell on the heart it loved so well. 'Think only of your Blessed Savior, now, my darling,' I said. 'To be sure,' she answered, and said no more, dropping her head for the last time, on her mother's heart."

Pressed as he was for time, Bishop Cheverus could not leave Maryland, without seeing Mother Seton after this new affliction. The little grave beneath the leafless trees, was still newly made, when he went thither, early in December. No other earthly consolation could have been so sweet to Mother Seton's heart, as the sympathy of the saintly Bishop, and she poured forth her heart unreservedly to him. They spoke, no doubt, of all the changes that had taken place since their last meeting, six years before; of those who had gone to their reward; the patient little sufferer who had just been laid to rest; that worthy Christian gentleman, Filippo Filicchi, who had died in the month of August previous; of the great Archbishop, and of Annina; of the establishment in life of Mother Seton's sons, of the wonderful growth and prosperity of the Community, and other matters dear to both their hearts. It was their last meeting on earth. For the Bis-

hop, there was yet a long career of service to the Church, both in America and in France; but for Mother Seton, life was ending. It may have been that they realized this, for when saying farewell, the Bishop presented her with a little English prayer-book, on the fly-leaf of which he had written :

“ Dear Sister, remember in your prayers, your affectionate servant in the Lord. + John, Bp. of Boston.”

How sweet was this glimpse of religious life in Community, to the Bishop, exiled as he was from France, and the French Catholic life of which it must have reminded him so keenly, may be seen from a passage in a letter which he wrote to Mother Seton after returning to Boston; “ The eighth and ninth of December, treasured up in the memory and affection of my heart. Your excellent Sisters, their happy and edifying pupils, the Mother, with her children in Heaven, and on earth; all, all, in my heart and prayers, and ever will be.”

The close of the year 1816, was marked by the death of Sister Magdalen Guerin. She was the widow of a West Indian planter, and left Martinique in the year 1811, for the double purpose of accompanying her sister to St. Joseph's, whose Community that lady was to enter, and to place her son at Mt. St. Mary's College. The voyage was a terrible one, owing to constant and violent storms, and Madame Guerin, fearful of shipwreck, made a vow to wear a brown dress for three months, if she reached her destination in safety. This vow seems rather absurd now, but it must be

remembered that in those days brown was far from possessing the status it now holds among fashionable colors; being regarded as a hue fit only for menials, or penitents, so that for a lady of Madame Guerin's position to assume it, was no small act of self-denial and humility. On her arrival at Emmitsburg, she placed her son as a pupil at Mt. St. Mary's College, and became herself a boarder at St. Joseph's, where she went about clothed in the brown attire of her vow.

Before this was fulfilled, however, divine grace had won her to make an offering of herself to God in the service of her neighbor, and she petitioned for admission into the Community. Not only was she accepted, but it was also decided to adopt her brown attire as the future dress of the novices. The custom, thus begun, still obtains in the Mt. St. Vincent Community, where the novices are often spoken of as "the brown Sisters." Madame Guerin received the name of Sister Magdalen. Accustomed to the ease and luxury of a West Indian planter's home, she found many privations in the religious life, but she bravely and cheerfully bore them all, and made rapid progress in the way of perfection. She eagerly sought to perform the meanest work, and discharge the lowest offices. Often in Winter, her beautiful white hands would be seen bleeding from exposure or rough work. One day, as she was coming down the stairs, carrying a bucket, she met the reverend Superior, on his way to administer the Blessed Sacra-

ment to one of the sisters. Fearing lest she had been lacking in respect, though she did not know that the Blessed Sacrament was passing her, she took the first opportunity to kneel before Father Dubois, and ask his pardon. He replied; "What offence have you given? The God of all charity met a Sister of Charity performing an act of charity, How could He be displeased?" Her union with God made her usually silent, but the sweet, gentle, smile with which she answered, if spoken to, and her obliging disposition, revealed the sweetness of her soul. After deeply edifying the Community by her patience and resignation, during her illness, she died, on December twentieth, 1816, leaving to her sisters in Christ, another precious memory.

## CHAPTER XII.

COMMUNITY WONDERFULLY PRESERVED FROM A  
LAW-SUIT — MISSION ESTABLISHED IN NEW  
YORK—FAILING HEALTH OF MOTHER SETON—  
HER RE-ELECTION—OPENING OF FIRST FREE  
SCHOOLS.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise ;  
In all His works most wonderful,  
Most sure in all His ways.

*Newman : Dream of Gerontius.*

AS our lives decline from their morning, even though the shadows of evening, or the chill of night, have not yet touched us, there is still a feeling that the time for farewell is at hand, and that we must make ready for departure. The Divine Master seeks to inspire us with the wish for Heaven, by taking from us, little by little, all that is dear to us on earth. We must say farewell to the duties and interests that filled our lives, and renounce, one by one, our affections for creatures. "Trees torn from their place by the wind are not fit to transplant," says Saint Francis de Sales ; "those only can successfully undergo this process whose roots have been disengaged gently, one after another, little by little, from the earth.

Thus, since we are to be transplanted from this miserable world into that of the living, it is necessary for us to withdraw ourselves, and detach our affections, from it."

This work of detachment had been begun early in the case of Mother Seton. One after another, the creatures to whom her loving, tender, heart clung, had been taken from her. Her father, her husband, her sisters, Harriet, Rebecca, and Cecilia, her daughters, Annina and Rebecca, and the dear friend and brother, Filippo Filicchi, who had so courageously pointed out the way of truth to her, all were gone. The deepest and strongest roots of her heart were indeed loosened from earth, and like the great apostle, she, too, longed, "to be dissolved and be with Christ."

The work which God had chosen her to begin, was now on a firm foundation. There remained only to give it a legal existence, and this, the directors, towards the end of the year 1816, proceeded to do. As things stood, the property of the Community was vested in the three persons, whose names appeared in the deed registered at Emmitsburg in 1809; Samuel Cooper, William Valentine du Bourg, and John Dubois; and it was deemed wise, for many reasons, to transfer the property from them to its real owners. When the subject was first mentioned to Mother Seton, she asked what advantages would be gained by the incorporation of the Society; and when she was told that one of the chief would be the right of the Sisters to sue, and

be sued, she answered that she did not think that much of an advantage. She yielded in the matter, however, to her advisers. In January, 1817, a bill was, accordingly, introduced in the Maryland legislature, for the incorporation of the Sisterhood, and passed, mainly owing to the exertions of General Harper. Immediately after, the property of the Sisters was transferred to them by the three nominal owners. As if to justify Mother Seton's view of a legal existence not giving any great advantages, the transfer had no sooner been made, than Mr. Emmett, the former owner of the property, attempted to regain possession of it, on the ground of there being a defect in the title-deed by which he had conveyed it to them. He instituted legal proceedings against the Sisters, who, on their part, had recourse to prayer. The matter was ended by the sudden decease of Mr. Emmett, who, while walking, in apparent health, through the streets of the village which bears his name, suddenly fell dead. The event caused a great sensation throughout the country, and was generally regarded as an intervention of Divine Providence to save the Sisters from injustice. The heirs of the dead man abandoned the proceedings.

It would appear as if God now granted to Mother Seton what Job asked for in the midst of his sufferings: "to breathe a little, before going hence, to return no more." Writing to her friend, Mrs. Sadler, in January, 1817, she says: "Since dearest Bec is gone, I am free from so many painful cares,



and able to fulfill so many more duties in the service of our little world at St. Joseph's, that everything seems to show a new color, and life has a charm for me which I often wondered could be found in it."

She conceived the deepest interest in the third mission of the Sisters, which was to be established in the city of New York. That city had never been favored during the colonial period as the more tolerant Quaker City had been, by having resident priests. There was, it is true, a tradition among Catholics in later days, that the saintly Father Farmer used to occasionally minister to the spiritual needs of the New York Catholics of his time. The late Dr. John Gilmary Shea, in his monumental work, "The History of the Catholic Church in the United States," says that Archbishop Carroll, who was associated with Father Farmer in the ministry for twelve years, stated positively, that the latter had not only a little congregation in New York city, but a small chapel, which was burned during the war, probably in the great fire which followed the evacuation of the city by Washington's army. But this was all. When the formation of the United States gave her freedom, the Church in New York had to begin at the beginning, as in a newly-discovered country; but from that time, she grew steadily. The great waves of Irish immigration which brought the whole United States so vast a Catholic population, did not reach its shores until towards the middle of the nineteenth century; but from the time

of the establishment of its independence, there was a steady stream of emigration from Ireland to the port of New York; bringing to the flourishing young city, a host of eager youths and men who asked only for the opportunities it offered, to gain, in a few years, wealth and position, and form a representative body of Catholics, many of whom, were, later on, to support Archbishop Hughes in his historic struggles, and to give, generously of their means, their time, and their practical business experience, to establish institutions for the safeguarding of the moral and social interests of their race. These men, with their families, constituted a refined and pleasant Catholic society, which welcomed Ives, Huntingdon, Brownson, Anderson, and other illustrious converts from protestantism, and saved them from the loneliness and isolation which Mother Seton endured after entering the Church, for lack of Catholics in her own position in life.

In 1808, New York was erected into an episcopal see, and the Reverend Luke Concanen, an Irish Dominican monk, was chosen by the Pope to fill it. He was consecrated at Rome, with great pomp, and soon after, set out for Naples, intending to embark at that port for America. The difficulties placed in the way of his leaving, however, by the French who were then in power at Naples, so wore upon him in his advanced age, and weak health, that he fell ill and died. Father Anthony Kohlman, the great Jesuit theologian and missionary, whom Arch-

bishop Carroll had sent to govern the new diocese as Vicar-General, until the Bishop's arrival, organized it, and established a Jesuit college. He remained in charge of New York until 1814, when the Holy Father appointed the Reverend Doctor Connolly, another Irish Dominican, to that see. Bishop Connolly arrived in New York at the close of the year 1815.

In 1817, the Catholics of New York city decided to organize an orphan asylum, and seeing the happy results of the Sisters' conduct of the one in Philadelphia, requested Bishop Connolly to ask Mother Seton for Sisters to take charge of the one they purposed to support. We can imagine Mother Seton's thoughts on reading Bishop Connolly's letter, and how deeply it caused her to ponder on the admirable designs of Divine Providence. In that city where, ten years before, she had suffered all the harshness of intolerance, and the sorrows of desertion, her representatives were now to appear, to minister to the fatherless and the needy, and inculcate by their lives and their acts, the divine lessons of charity.

Mother Seton did not of course understand the full significance of this step, nor dream of the great northern Community whose root she was about to plant, but the fact that the Sisters were going to her native city, where she still had such a host of relatives and whilom friends, made her realize that great care would have to be exercised in the selection of Sisters for the new mission. She and her

council finally decided that Sister Rose White who had shown such prudence and discretion as the head of the Philadelphia mission, should take charge of that in New York, with Sister Cecilia O'Conway, Mother Seton's eldest spiritual daughter, and Sister Felicité Brady, one of the foundation stones of St. Joseph's, to assist her. These Sisters arrived in New York on June twenty-eighth, 1817, greatly fatigued by the journey, especially Sister Cecilia, who was much indisposed. They took up their abode in Mott street, now the heart of the Italian quarter, in a frame house, part of which, small as it was, a dress-maker rented for her business. During the first year, they received only five children. A few weeks after their arrival, Mother Seton wrote to her protestant friend, Mrs. Sadler, as follows; "Will you tell our dearest Duplex (her friend who had been converted to the true Faith) that the Sister Cecilia who has been in these eight years what she herself would wish to have been in our sick rooms, and death-bed scenes, is with Sister Rose? I hope she will see them as soon as she can. Perhaps you, too, dearest Eliza, would call with her for a moment, as they can not call on you. You may suppose what both are to my heart, after so many years of pains and comforts together."

In the Spring of this same year, William Seton who had now been almost two years with Antonio Filicchi, announced to his mother, his dissatisfaction with a commercial life, and his unaltered determination to enter the navy. This was a keen disap-

pointment to Mother Seton, but she had at least the satisfaction of feeling that her son was now twenty-one years of age, with some knowledge of the world, and consequently better able to withstand the dangers and temptations of the career he longed for so ardently. She therefore acquiesced in his resolve to return home, and promised to exert every effort to advance him in the way he had chosen.

In June, William arrived at St. Joseph's, and Mother Seton had the happiness of seeing about her once more, all her surviving children. Pending his appointment to the navy, for which application had been made, his mother established him in the 'Stone House,' whence he came every day, to pass some hours with her. He had brought with him a letter from Antonio Filicchi, in which that gentleman, with his accustomed generosity and thoughtfulness, offered to take Richard Seton in William's place. Mother Seton gladly accepted the noble-hearted Italian's offer, and sent Richard to him, in September, with the following letter :

" My dear Antonio :

Here is my Richard. You say that a good will, and good hand-writing, are all that you require him to possess. I hope he will display both, and moreover, a heart burning with the desire to prove to you, in the name of us all, the love and gratitude we all feel for you. Your offer to take him is a true favor of Providence, for it would appear as if there never had been so much difficulty, as there is now, in establishing young men. Mr. Barry writes me that he has been compelled to send his son abroad, on account of the depravity

of young men in our cities, in these sad times. . . . Richard's disposition is entirely different from that of William. His temperament is quick, and joined to his want of experience, exposes him to continual dangers which William escapes. . . . William is bent on the navy, and I can no longer put any obstacle in his way. I leave all to God. If He be not offended, I shall be content. But that is the torment. This career is so full of dangers for both soul and body. The head of the Naval Department, has promised an appointment, before Christmas, alas! All our affairs at Saint Joseph's, progress with the blessing of God. We now have Sisters established in New York, as at Philadelphia, to care for the orphans. Both these colonies went from our house. They are sowing the little grain of mustard-seed. Religion is progressing in our country in many ways. The arrival of Bishop du Bourg with his forty missionaries, is a great blessing, the interior settlements being so numerous, and many of them deprived of priests to break the bread of life to them."

Shortly after Richard's departure, Bishop du Bourg, of New Orleans, visited St. Joseph's. The meeting between Mother Seton and the Bishop, who had been the chief instrument, after herself, in the foundation of the Sisterhood, had served as its first ecclesiastical Superior, and aided it generously out of his personal means, was joyful, indeed. Returning as he was from Europe, and his successful quest for priests and alms for the struggling American Church, in which he had been one of the first to profit by the charity of the newly-founded Society for the Propagation of the Faith, he could not deny himself the happiness of turning aside, on his way to his diocese, to view the progress of the blessed work at St. Joseph's. He was amazed to

see the proportions which it had already assumed—thirty Sisters, beside those already called to their reward, seventy pupils, receiving the unspeakable advantage of a Christian education, and many orphans, sheltered from misery and moral danger, and being prepared to earn their own livelihood. During his stay, the Bishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to several of the pupils and novices.

In the Spring of 1818, William Seton entered the navy with the rank of midshipman, and was assigned to the frigate Independence, then in the port of Boston. The sadness and foreboding which seem to have filled his heart on parting with his mother, are shown in a passage of a letter which he wrote to her shortly after reaching his ship: “When I compare the time that has just gone by with my present situation, I cannot help feeling astonished at my—I was going to say folly,—in wishing to quit a place where, it now seems to me, I could have been happy all my life. But there is something that urges me on! Assuredly, there is a current which directs our destinies! If it were not so, I can not conceive that anything could draw me from you. I please myself by looking forward to the time when, if it shall please God to preserve me, I shall hold you once more in my arms.”

At the beginning of the following Winter, Father Bruté returned to Emmitsburg to assist Father Dubois in his labors. This holy and learned priest, who has been justly styled “the angel-guardian of

the mountain," thus became once more the spiritual director of the Sisters, and continued in that office until the year 1834, when he was made Bishop of Vincennes. Under the guidance of such a director, the Community must have made great advance in perfection. The late Mother Jerome, of happy and holy memory, who ruled for so many years the Community of Mount Saint Vincent, and who had enjoyed the happiness of Father Bruté's guidance, used to say that he seemed insensible to all save God, and the things of God. Even as a child, his piety and love of God had been so marked, that during the Reign of Terror in France, he was frequently chosen to carry the Blessed Eucharist to the dying, so that even if the priest who followed him to administer It, should be apprehended, the Blessed Sacrament would be saved from insult. This proximity to Our Blessed Saviour under the Sacramental veil, which he had been privileged to experience, seemed to have filled his heart with an intense love for the Blessed Eucharist, so that he was accustomed to set down in his note-book, the number of times he had touched It during the day. No matter how severe the weather, he came from the Mountain four mornings in the week to celebrate Mass, and often did so with his frozen garments clinging to his body. Along with performing the duties of a professor in the seminary, and those of spiritual director to St. Joseph's Community, he served as pastor of the Church at Emmitsburg. He filled all these offices with a zeal and ability rarely



witnessed. "His lessons of heavenly wisdom and piety, illustrated and enforced by his own example, were irresistible in their effects," says one of his biographers.

About the time that Father Bruté returned to Emmitsburg, Mother Seton was seized with inflammation of the lungs, which looked as if it would be fatal. The entire Community was bowed down by grief at the thought of losing her; she alone welcomed the prospect with joy. Her work was on a firm foundation; and her children were provided for, with the exception of Catharine, who, however, she probably foresaw, would eventually enter the religious life. Nothing, therefore, held her to earth, and she looked forward with ecstasy, to being reunited in God, to those whom she had loved and lost. Writing to one of her former pupils on the anniversary of Rebecca's birth, she says: "Rebecca's birthday! She would be sixteen, but counts time no more. What a thought! To go to her, and to Annina! To go to God!"

Bishop Cheverus, on hearing of her illness, and her desire to be released, wrote to her, that far from pitying, he envied her, hastening as she was to the embraces of Him who is love, and of the saints of whom she had been the happy mother. "You will meet in Heaven," he concludes: "the venerable and dearest friend who is going to be taken from me. Dear Sister, pray that I may be endowed with some portion of your faith and resignation."

The friend to whom Bishop Cheverus alluded was

Doctor Matignon. This holy and venerable priest, who had been laboring in New England for twenty-six years, was slowly dying, worn out by the toils and fatigues of what had been a veritable apostolate. His great learning, admirable power of expression, and charming, aristocratic manner, urbane, yet stately, the gift of the "ancien régime," would have been wasted, one might suppose, in the New England wilderness, but so far from this being the case, they were of peculiar service in dissipating Puritan prejudice against the Church; and, joined with his holy life, gained for him a respect and esteem that found expression on the day of his funeral, when as Bishop Cheverus described it; "one would have thought Boston all Catholic." As the body was carried in procession through the streets, to the sound of a solemn dirge, followed by Bishop Cheverus in his episcopal robes, and his mourning congregation, the non-Catholics who lined the streets, stood in respectful silence, rendering mute homage to the saintly dead.

Bowed down as he was by this irreparable loss Bishop Cheverus rejoiced to hear that Mother Seton was to be spared a little longer. Death, indeed, after drawing close to her, passed on, and she regained strength, to the unspeakable joy of her Community. In the month of July of this year, 1818, the third election of a Superior took place, and by a special exception which the adapters of the constitutions of the Society had made in her case, Mother Seton was elected to that

office for a third consecutive term. She did not seek to evade the burden thus laid upon her, but in a letter to one of the Sisters, she speaks of it as "an election of the dead." She knew, indeed, that it was but for a little while, and devoted all her powers to the discharge of her duties; directing the home Community, and the missions, with a vigilance and care that were wonderful to those who saw her feeble condition. The mission Sisters received, from her many invaluable counsels, and lessons in prudence, charity, and patience; all given in a cheerful, almost playful manner, that revealed nothing of what it cost her to write them. To one Sister who was ailing, and rather discouraged at not being able to attend more to her duties, she writes: "My own dear Sister, I take a laugh and a cry at your flannels and plasters. Never mind, God is God in it all. If you are to do His work, the strength will be given you; if not, my precious child, some one else will do it; and you may come back to your corner. No great affair where His dear atom is, if only His will is done. Peace, dearest Soul, from our Jesus. I look a long look at our dear crucifix for you. All are here nearly as you left; our faithful God the same! Ever your little Mother."

To a Sister about to undertake the charge of a mission, she gave the following admirable instructions: "Knowing as I do so well, your heart's full desire to serve Our Lord purely, I can say nothing to you, dearest Soul, but to keep well to what you

believe to be the grace of the moment. You will so often be at a stand for what is best in a situation so new; but only do for the best, as you always have done, and leave the rest for our dear God. Try only to keep in mind, as I know you wish, to be guarded, and very careful, in disapproving or changing anything until you have been there a little while, and can see through the meaning of everything. O, may our dear Lord strengthen you on that point, and you will see how well all will go after a little while. We separate, dear child, but you go to do, what we stay to do—the dear will of God—all we care for in this poor life. May He bless you forever.”

To a Sister with a particular attraction for a cloistered life, whom Mother had determined to send on the mission, she gave the following advice: “My dear Sister, going on her heavenly errand, and to crucify *self*! Bad, wicked thing; you owe it a good grudge; pay it well. My child, often I shall say in my solitude among a hundred, “My Sister is with Thee, My God! I find her in Thee; every moment she will be serving Thee, and loving Thee with me! . . . Love Our Mother above; she will comfort you. If you suffer, so much the better for our high journey above. The only fear I have, is that you will let the old string pull too hard for solitude and silence; but look to the Kingdom of Souls—the few who work in the vineyard of the Lord. This is not a country for solitude and silence, but for warfare and crucifixion.

You are not to stay in the silent agonies of the garden, at night, but go from post to pillar, to the very fastening of the cross. . . . My Sister, child of my soul, to God I commend you."

In the Summer of 1818, William Seton was assigned to the *Macedonian*, a frigate ordered to a station in the southern Pacific, for two years. She was to sail in September, in order to double Cape Horn during the fine weather. Before setting out on this long voyage, the young man wished to make a flying trip to Emmitsburg, to take leave of his mother, who, however, forbade his doing so. "Do not dream of coming, my well-beloved;" she writes, "even though your departure be put off until October or November. The only thing in the world that I would be unable to endure, would be taking leave of you. . . . We must be firm. This world, it is certain, is not the place you and I are to enjoy our love in. Don't be uneasy about my health. . . . I may live to welcome your joyful, happy return from many a cruise."

As the time drew near for his sailing, however, the anguish and anxiety in regard to his spiritual dangers, which filled her heart, broke forth in a letter which she well calls "the cry of a mother's soul," and which reached him: "just as the ship was preparing to get under way, all hands called to send up top-gallant yards, and unmoor ship, a stiff breeze blowing." And so the *Macedonian* sailed away, bearing the young midshipman from his native

land, and from the mother whom he was never again to see on earth.

Grief, however, was never allowed to engross Mother Seton, and so a few days later, we find her writing to Antonio Filicchi, a letter introducing General and Mrs. Harper, who were going to pass the Winter in Italy, for the General's health. "To tell you the boundless goodness of General and Mrs. Harper to my own family, as well as to the Community, would be impossible," she writes. "You can, however, imagine, how much I wish your beloved Amabilia to make the acquaintance of so elegant a person as Mrs. Harper, belonging to our country; and on the other hand, how much I wish Mrs. Harper to know so sweet and charming a woman belonging to yours. . . . My dear giant (a name she playfully gave her son Richard, on account of his height and strength) told me that you were in good health in May. Since then I have received no letter from him. Will you tell him that we are all well? . . . All goes well, my dear Antonio, for religion. The Archbishop (Maréchal) says that he never would have believed that the progress of the true faith could have been half so great, if he had not seen it during the visitation that he has just made. As for myself, I assure you, if I had another house as large as that we occupy, I could fill it, with Sisters and children. We are obliged to refuse applications continually, for lack of room."

The prosperity enjoyed by the Community led

Mother Seton to hope that she might see the long-cherished wish of her heart gratified by the erection of a chapel. "We have a dwelling for ourselves and pupils," she said, why cannot we have a small but neat chapel for the dear Master who condescends to reside among us on our altars?" The statement of the Treasurer that the house was out of debt, and that there was sixteen hundred dollars in the treasury, made her eager to begin preparations for the new building. As soon as her health permitted, she went over the grounds with the Sisters, and selected the site for it. The remote preparations were completed, and some of the materials for building, even, obtained, when, after further deliberation, it was decided to postpone the work for a time.

Another project which Mother had long cherished, however, she was fortunate enough to see accomplished. This was the erection of a free school for the poor children of the neighborhood. A school of this description had been in operation at St. Joseph's from the first, but the very limited accommodation which the house afforded to even its regular inmates, made it impossible to give the work scope. A two-story brick school, was, therefore, erected on the grounds, in 1820. Twenty scholars were enrolled at its opening, and this number steadily increased. These children were the objects of Mother Seton's deepest interest and care, and she arranged that along with their instruction, they would receive every day, a substan-

tial meal. Two years before, a free school had been erected in Philadelphia, for the children of the German Church, and placed in charge of the Sisters of Charity of the asylum in that city. Thus did the American Daughters of Saint Vincent begin what is, perhaps, to-day, their chief work—and which so many religious orders have followed them in taking up—teaching in the great parish schools that rise under the shadow of the churches, throughout the cities of the United States, and are the best promise for the future of the American Church.



## CHAPTER XIII.

1820—1821.

SISTER ELIZABETH BOYLE TAKES CHARGE OF  
THE PHILADELPHIA MISSION—LAST ILLNESS,  
AND DEATH OF MOTHER SETON.

So long Thy power hath blest me sure it still,  
Will lead me on ;  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent till  
The night is gone ;  
And with the morn those angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

AFTER labor, rest ; after combat, victory ; after the night, the splendor of eternal day ! The Winter is gone ; arise, my well-beloved, come. And to the Voice which called her, the soul of Elizabeth Seton answered : “ It is the Voice of my Well-Beloved ; He knocks at the door. I will arise, and I will open to my Well-Beloved.”

The release of Mother Seton from a body that had been worn out by a succession of sorrows, and almost unceasing mental anguish, was slow and gradual. Her disease, consumption, manifested itself in an intense langour, and failure of strength, which led her so gently towards the grave, that her progress thither was almost imperceptible. She alone realized that the Heavenly Bridegroom was

approaching, and watched her lamp carefully, so that He might find it burning with a clear and steadfast flame. "The little daily lesson, to keep softly and quietly in His presence, trying to turn every little action on His Will, and to praise and love Him through clouds and sunshine, is all my care and study," she writes to a friend. "Satan offers his battles from time to time, but Our Beloved stands behind the wall, and keeps the wretch at his distance."

As the Spring came,—the last she was to see,—with its bright sunny days, she resumed her walks, enjoying the sight of the tender foliage that veiled the hills like a green mist, and the sound of the songs of the birds. But the beauty of nature served only to intensify her clear, inward, vision of God. "Seated on a rock, this afternoon," she says in a letter to another friend, "in presence of one of the most beautiful scenes of nature, I adored God, and glorified Him for His magnificence and His goodness. My weary eyes could not, it is true, take pleasure in half of what they saw, but the soul cried: 'O God! O God! give yourself, what is all the rest?' A voice of love, a silent voice, answered; 'I am yours.'—'Ah, dearest Lord,' I cried, 'keep me as I am while I live, for this is true content,—to hope for nothing, to desire nothing, to expect nothing, and to fear nothing.' Death! Eternity! Oh! how small are all objects of busy, striving, restless, blind, mistaken, human beings, when at the foot of the cross, these two prospects are viewed!"

On the eighteenth of April, 1820, she wrote to Antonio Filicchi, and after dwelling on her anxiety because of not having heard from her son Richard since the September before, says : " But after the first agitation is past, I place all cordially, sincerely, and with every confidence, in the hands of Divine Providence, who has blessed us all far beyond what we dared to hope. For my part, I try to make every breath of my heart, a continual means of grace. No one can understand better than my dear Antonio, what is the feeling of my heart towards God ; he who knows so well, what I have been, and what chastisements I have merited, instead of the happiness of living in a veritable sanctuary, filled with the presence of God ; rising every morning, sleeping every night, almost in the presence of the Sacred Host.

" If you knew, Antonio, with what tender gratitude I remember you and yours, especially Patrizio and my Giorgino ; their likeness is vividly impressed on my memory, and also that of your dear daughters. William has talked so much of the other little ones that it seems as if I had seen them also. May God bless you, as I implore Him to ! May He preserve you, forever, in faithful and persevering love, you and your dear, excellent Amabilia, who is also so dear to me, and to all who know her ! . . . Love and pray for your devoted Sister."

This letter, in which the note of farewell is plainly audible, was written in a weak, trembling, hand, which is difficult to decipher. With the exception

of a letter to her son William, and a brief note to Sister Elizabeth, it was, so far as the writer can learn, the last letter Mother Seton ever wrote. The physical effort demanded by letter-writing, was now beyond her strength. Her former pupils, whose memories still turned so fondly to St. Joseph's, their parents, the Sisters on the mission, the tried friends of her early days, and the dear ones gained in later years, all of whom had been used to receive from time to time, those beautiful letters,—veritable emanations from her saintly soul,—were to taste the joy of receiving them, no more. The circle about her grew narrower; many things began to fade from her horizon; she lived much alone with God, behind closed doors.

In May, she writes to her son William: "The long Winter over, and a cheerful Spring around us, sweet roses, green fields; Kit just come from a pleasant walk to the river, and the dear old falls, where you cut our names. Your last received, was dated January. No hope then of an earlier meeting than next Winter. How sure we were, dear Kit and I, it would have been this Spring; she would consent to go nowhere until your letter told us your delay. Oh, our talk and surmises, hopes and fears about you last Winter, and the love and blessings poured on you from our doting hearts! Yet I often please myself with the thought that whatever hardships you go through, you do not suffer as I do, the sharpness of the pains of separation. You find so many things to take your attention. It is

too late, my beloved, not to dote on you with a tenderness proportioned to your dangers, and my fear of losing you forever, for you know that the long, long, day to come is all I care for. How often am I upon your deck with you! How often by your hammock! Every fresh breeze, every calm, the sighing of the wind through the trees over our dear graves, the creaking of the willow at the back porch—it sounds so like the noise of masts in a gale—all speak of you. O my love, my love, how my heart and soul hang continually around you! May I but once more hold you in these poor arms! Oh, may God bless you! My soul's darling, look up to the blue heavens, and love Him. He is so good to us. Your own forever."

This letter does not betray the poignant anguish which fills that other letter which she herself called, "the cry of a mother's soul!" Instead, there breathes amid its sadness and tone of farewell, a calm which shows that the last stronghold of human affection had been carried by Divine Love, and that resignation had given place in her heart to perfect unity of her will with His!

During the Summer, she still continued well enough to walk out in the balmy air. Every day, she visited the graveyard, now green and bright with flowers, tended by affectionate hands, and gazed at her resting-place beside Annina. The graves of the Setons were no longer solitary. Only eleven Summers before, Harriet Seton had chosen the spot as the resting-place of the Community, and

before the close of the year, had been laid there, the first to rest in it; and already long rows of graves, marked by simple crosses, stretched beyond those of her and her kindred, reminding the dwellers at St. Joseph's, that here is no continuing city. Sisters Maria Murphy, Eleanor Thompson, the young Benedicta Corish, who, in the space of six months, had been pupil, novice, professed Sister, and had passed away; Agnes Duffy, Catharine Mullen, the first Mistress of Novices, Mary Llewellen, Martina Quinn, Mary Egan, Helen Brady, Magdalen Guerin, Mary Elizabeth Wagner, Mary Ignatia Torney, Camilla Corish, the first to die on the mission; Jane Frances Gartland, the first pupil of St. Joseph's to enter the Community, and Mary Theresa Mills. The days in which it was given to these first Daughters of Saint Vincent to labor, had been few, but they had been made perfect in a short time, and gone before, a goodly company, to welcome their spiritual Mother, in Heaven, leaving behind them precious memories of virtue, that still live in the Valley of Saint Joseph.

After Sister Elizabeth Boyle's term of office as Assistant Mother had expired, she became again a private Sister, though she remained Mistress of Novices. During her administration, she had spared Mother Seton as many cares as possible, and consequently increased her own immensely. But as was said of her; "She knew how to pass through many cares, as it were without care, not after the manner of an indolent person, but by the prerogative of a

free mind." There were many points of resemblance between her and Mother Seton. Both bore the name of Elizabeth, both were converts, and both looked so much alike, that once when Mrs. Post, Mother Seton's sister, visited Emmitsburg, and Sister Elizabeth, who did not know her, opened the door for her, she was so hurt at what she thought the coldness of her sister's greeting, that she burst into tears. Of all the Community, the young Sister Elizabeth seems to have been dearest to Mother's heart. The closest union existed between the two; every thought, and hope of each, were known to the other; and Sister Elizabeth profited so much by the companionship, that she was able to impart to the Community which she afterwards governed, the spirit of the Order's saintly Foundress. Somebody once remarked in after years in Mother Elizabeth's presence, that Mother Seton had contemplated a union with the French Sisterhood, "No," answered Mother Elizabeth, "had she even thought of it she would have told me, for she never concealed anything from me."

In September, 1820, Sister Elizabeth was sent to take charge of the Philadelphia mission. It is always a trial to a Sister to be called on to leave the mother-house, and in Sister Elizabeth's case, the sorrow of leaving Mother Seton in her frail state of health, and distrust of her own fitness for the responsibility she was called on to assume, added to the trial. The evening before her departure, her beloved Novices entreated her to pass the recreation

with them. She had hoped, no doubt, to spend this time with Mother, but ever forgetful of self, she yielded to the request of her spiritual children. As she was passing out of the chapel after night prayers, Mother Seton met her, and said ; "Your last evening at home, and you did not pass it with poor Mother." She then gently drew Sister Elizabeth into her room, where they both sat down, and passed almost the entire night, in devout converse on the things of God. It was Sister Elizabeth's last night at Emmitsburg ; she went forth from it on the morrow, and never again returned to it ; but we may be sure, the remembrance of those precious hours of communion with the dying saint, remained in her recollection, with the utmost vividness, to the last.

Shortly after Sister Elizabeth's departure, Mother Seton went out one day, to inspect progress on some work, and was exposed to a sharp wind, which caused her to take cold. She became very ill, and for a short time, her life was despaired of, but after receiving Extreme Unction, she slowly recovered. Towards the close of October, she was so far restored as to be able to sit up some hours every day, near the fire. Even in her sick room, she continued, as far as possible, to follow the Rule, by having a Sister to help her with the prayers, spiritual reading, and other religious exercises, thus endeavoring to live as a Sister of Charity to the end. On October twenty-fifth, she wrote a brief letter to Sister Elizabeth, which as she tells her, took her all



day to write, owing to her difficulty of respiration, and gave her an account of her illness and recovery. "You speak of writing home to the Sisters," she concludes: "It would be the delight of my heart, my child. Write as often as you can. One thing I beg of you; when you write to me, scribble without care. Say much, and never mind how it is written. Give love to all for me. I believe I have told you all." The yellow sheet on which these words are traced, in pencil, in faint, uneven characters, so unlike Mother Seton's usual firm, beautiful handwriting, as to show her weakness and the effort they cost her, is carefully treasured by the Community at Mount Saint Vincent, as the last letter Mother Seton ever wrote.

As the Winter approached with its long nights, her weakness increased. She withdrew more and more into silence and recollection, seeing nothing in this world, "save the blue sky and the altars." Long before, she had written to an old friend: "Oh! How close eternity seems to me now! Oh! How long it will last, this day without a night, this night without a day! May we pass it in adoring, in praising, in blessing forever!" And so we know what thoughts were passing in her mind as she lay silent, with closed eyes, apparently insensible to the busy, active, life, going on close about her; how her soul had sped to the brink of eternity, and there, rapt in contemplation of the life to come, lingered, as if loth to return.

She always roused herself from this meditation,

however, to welcome visitors to her sick room, whether Sisters, or pupils from the Academy, or the free school. Often, she asked to have some of the smallest children from the latter school, brought to her room, in order that she might watch them as they played around her bed, and enjoy their pleasure in the little dainties and gifts which she provided for them.

One day, a pupil of the Academy, who was about to leave St. Joseph's, and go on a long journey, came to say good-bye to her. Kneeling by Mother Seton's side, she asked her blessing. Mother, laying her wasted hands on the fair young head, said tenderly: "May God bless you, my beloved child. Never forget Mother's last advice: Seek God in everything. Submit all your words and actions to this infallible test."

"Will this be approved by Him who sees all things?"

"If you do this, you will live in His presence, and you will preserve the graces of your first communion. You will never see your Mother again on earth, but we shall meet in Heaven." . . . Pressing the sobbing girl tenderly to her heart, she added: "A few years, quickly passed, and then we shall be re-united, to part no more. Once more, God bless you!"

As the Winter advanced, her steadily increasing weakness made it impossible for her to leave her bed at all. The exhaustion and languor of her disease gave way to acute suffering, but her patience

and sweetness remained unaltered. Only by the moans which escaped her lips at times did the watchers learn the intensity of her pain. Even for these involuntary admissions of suffering, however, she reproached herself, and hastened to seek absolution, for she strove to keep her soul, as she had been wont to say it should be kept for the reception of the Holy Eucharist; "like a vial of crystal, filled with the purest and most limpid water. The least imperfection in this would be perceived, therefore none must be allowed within it."

Obliged as she was to accept many comforts, and exemptions from the Rule, she excused herself to her Sisters for her feebleness. If she believed that she had allowed herself to accept anything that was not absolutely necessary, she reproached herself, and endeavored to repair her weakness by mortifying herself more. Once she sent for Father Bruté, and accused herself, with many tears, of having found great consolation in a little mattress on which Rebecca had rested during her last days, and which she had had placed on her own bed.

After a time, the acute suffering she endured, passed away, and was succeeded by even more intense weakness and languor than she had at first experienced. Her mind, however, retained all its clearness and vigor. She became more and more penetrated with the idea of the immensity of God. "What is distance? What is separation, when our souls, plunged in the ocean of infinity, see all in the bosom of God. Our God is our all. God, alone

is all. My God is infinite, and I am only an atom." Such were the sublime utterances of this mystical soul, whose sojourn on earth had been a trial, in its separation from God, as it saw the frail, emaciated body that had been its prison, crumbling, and felt itself about to return to its Creator.

She had always felt a holy fear of the eternal judgment, of the punishment due to sin, and the greatness of her own offences, but as she drew near the end, God inclined her heart rather toward love than fear. If, sometimes, the latter threatened to prevail, she simply took refuge in the Heart of Him whose justice terrified her. "Are you afraid of God?" asks Saint Augustine; "throw yourself into His arms."

The peace and love which filled her soul manifested themselves even in her answers to inquiries about her condition, the discussion of which she always made as brief as possible. "How are you, Mother?" "Quiet." Often she answered: "Very quiet." At other times, her answer to the same inquiry would be: "Tranquil," or "Very tranquil." Sometimes, the Sisters, inconsolable at seeing their Mother dying so long before the age to which they might have naturally hoped she would live, found it impossible to restrain their tears, but she gently reproved them for this, saying: "May His Will be done, may His holy Will be done!"

The Master whom she had served, the Saviour whom she had loved so tenderly, appeared to favor her already with the sweetness of His presence.

"I do not suffer," she said, one day. "I am weak, it is true, but each day passes so calmly and happily! If this is the road that leads to death, nothing is so peaceful and so sweet. But, even if I should have to return, how delightful it is to repose in the arms of Our Lord! I have never felt the presence of Our Blessed Lord so sensibly, as since I have been ill. It is as if I saw Jesus and His holy mother here, continually, seated at my side, under visible forms, to console, to cheer, and encourage me during the long and weary hours. That surprises you," she continued, to those about her, "and you will laugh at my imaginations. Never mind! He who is our all, has many ways of consoling His little atoms."

She frequently spoke of her happiness in dying in the fold of the true Church. "O how few know the value of such a blessing," she would often say. Some one having asked her what she considered to be the greatest grace she had ever received from God, she answered instantly: "Having been brought into the true Church." In this she resembled Saint Teresa, who as her biographer, Father Coleridge relates, was wont to say in her last illness, "After all, Lord, I am a child of the Church."

As the Christmas of 1820, passed it became evident that the end was near. On Saturday, the thirtieth of December, Holy Viaticum was administered to her by Father Bruté. She rallied again, however, sufficiently to be able to receive with the Community on the following day, Sunday. The

improvement continued all that day and night, so that when after midnight, the Sister who was watching at her bedside, pressed her to take a prescribed potion, she refused, saying: "A Communion more, . . . and our eternity!" and awaited the morning, fasting, when she received for the last time.

On the second of January, at mid-day, all were summoned to the bedside of their dying Superior who was to receive Extreme Unction. The hush of death at once fell upon the house, and its active, busy life was completely suspended, as the Sisters hastened to the sick room. Only a few could enter, but through the open doorway, many could see, as well as their blinding tears would permit, the radiant face of the dying Saint, transfigured with the joy of the Christian who has run his course, and won his crown. As she was too weak to address them herself, Father Dubois, before administering the Sacrament, addressed the assembled Sisters in her name, saying: "Mother Seton being too weak, charges me to say to you, at this sacred moment, in her place: first, to be united, as true Sisters of Charity; second, to stand most faithfully by your rules; third, that I ask pardon for all the scandal she may have given you—that is for indulgences prescribed during her illness, by me or the physician."

In the silence which followed Father Dubois' words, the faint voice of the dying Mother was heard, saying: "I am thankful, Sisters, for your

kindness in being present at this trial. Be children of the Church; be children of the Church." She repeated the words in a manner which revealed her intense realization of the great grace and consolation which she was about to receive in the sacrament of Extreme Unction. When it was being administered to her, she kept her eyes raised to Heaven with an expression that language can not describe, any more than it can the accent with which she uttered the one word, "O, thankful!" when the priest had finished. So visible were her Faith, and her union with God during its reception, that it almost seemed to those about her bed, as if they could see what was passing in her soul at each unction.

All that day she rested, silent, happy, and in deep recollection. Neither the night nor the morning brought any change. On the afternoon of Wednesday, the third of January, Father Bruté who had come to begin the retreat for the children who were to make their First Communion on the following Sunday, visited her before going back to the Mountain. "Pray," he said to her, "for your dear children." Her unchanged condition must have given him a little hope, for he added: "Perhaps you will unite with them on Sunday." Mother gently smiled, and slightly shook her head, as one who doubts, but made no reply. Father Bruté then said: "Ask, and you shall receive, Our Lord says. Ask him, therefore, for Heaven, in order that you may love and praise Him there forever."

Mother Seton made a gentle motion of assent to these words, the last that any priest addressed to her.

She continued to rest easily until between ten and eleven o'clock that night, when her condition became so much worse that one of the Sisters who was watching by her bedside, summoned Sister Xavier, the infirmarian. When she entered the room, Mother Seton looked at her, and said: "Is it you, Xavier, how are you?" showing, in her dying moments, an amiability and exquisite politeness such as had marked the last hours of Archbishop Carroll.

The Sisters who had been roused, and told that the supreme moment was at hand, now silently glided in, filling the little room, lit by the pale, mystic glow of the blessed candles. By Mother Seton's side, knelt her daughter Catharine, the only one of her children that was present at her death bed. The prayers for the dying were begun, and after they were finished, Mother Seton asked for the recital of that prayer which she had been accustomed to say every day, as the expression of the utter submission of her soul, and abandonment of her will to Divine Providence: "May the Most Holy, the most Powerful, and the most amiable Will of God be accomplished forever." After this had been said, Mother, speaking with difficulty, begged one of the Sisters to say that short and ardent prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola, for which she had ever had a predilection, "Soul of Christ, etc."



The Sister began, but her emotion overcame her, and her voice died away in sobs. Not a voice was found to continue the prayer; the sound of weeping filled the room. Catharine Seton, realizing anew from the anguish of her mother's spiritual daughters, the loss she was about to sustain, gave a low cry, and fell back in a swoon. Mother Seton alone remained calm; even her daughter's agonizing cry, failing to disturb her. Finding that no one went on with the prayer, she finished it herself. Then she committed herself to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and besought them to support her in her agony. At the conclusion of her prayer, she strove to pronounce once more the Sacred Names, but was able to articulate only, Jesus! when speech failed her. A few minutes later, towards two o'clock on the morning of Thursday, January fourth, 1821, the end came, so gently that even those close to her bedside, knew not the exact moment of the passing of her soul.

Father Bruté, who had been summoned, arrived a few moments after she had expired. Of the thoughts which must have surged through his mind as he looked down upon the calm, peaceful, face, of the dead, the innermost secrets of whose life he had known, in its continual aspiration towards God, we may gain some idea from the sentences which he set down in his note-book, the following day. "O Mother! O Elizabeth! O faith profound! O tender pity! O recollection in the expectation of your Divine Master, and in your abandonment

to Him! So much more perfect, as your weakness grew, and your end approached! O simplicity! O true humility, with so much knowledge! O goodness, in all goodness! . . . Her eminent character; her indulgence to others; her pity for poor sinners; her charity, so careful to spare others; to find excuses for them, or to remain silent. Her attachment and gratitude to friends! Her deep respect for the ministers of God, and the least things of religion! O heart so loving, so compassionate, so religious, so generous with all its possessions, so disinterested in everything! O Mother, excellent Mother, we lose you, we mourn you! But you are happy!"

On the following day, they bore her body to its resting-place beside Annina. At the call of God, she had arisen, and left home and kindred, and come to die in a strange land. But God had given her other kindred, those whom her example had drawn after her to the solitude whither He had conducted her, who had given her in overflowing measure, the love and affection which her fidelity to grace had cost her; and it was beside those of them who had gone before, that she was now laid to rest, in the hope of the resurrection!

In the Spring of 1821, the "Macedonian," which had for more than two years, cruised in the southern Pacific, beneath strange constellations, again doubled the Horn, and sailed up the Atlantic until she came again beneath the Polar

Star, and felt the Gulf Stream rippling about her bow. In June, she anchored off the lighthouse in Boston Bay, and William Seton at once dispatched a letter to St. Joseph's, announcing his coming. "My dearest Mother," ran this missive to her who was never to read it, "my dearest desire seems about to be fulfilled; happiness, like a star which gleams through a wild and stormy night, appears to rise before my eyes! But alas! the horizon does not clear, and my poor star trembles, as if it would be obscured by clouds. You can imagine with what anxiety I await the reception of the first lines that you will write me. Your last letter was dated the month of May, 1820. That is more than a year ago. I dare not let my thoughts rest on the changes a year may bring. Do write me soon, and tell me how you are. Embrace Kitty for me. My regards to my friends at the Mountain. I keep my long stories for the time when we shall be together; or rather, to speak truly, I feel my heart so full at this moment that I can say no more."

Without waiting for an answer to this letter, the young man obtained leave of absence, and hastened with all speed to Emmitsburg and to St. Joseph's. The place was bright with the beauty of early Summer, the roses that his mother had spoken of in her last letter were blooming on all sides of him, shedding their sweetness on the soft and balmy air; but he sped on, unheeding. He rapidly ascended the hill; the long, low, building that he had so often seen in his dreams in distant southern seas, rose

before him. The door opened; his heart beat rapidly; was she who had come so often in those blessed visions of the night, to smile on him, and embrace him, about to come forth now, to welcome him? Ah! no, it was a priest, it was Father Bruté, who came slowly towards him, with an unopened letter in his hand.

## CHAPTER XIV.

MOTHER ROSE WHITE SUCCEEDS MOTHER SETON—  
NEW YORK SISTERS SEPARATE FROM EMMITS-  
BURG, FORM A NEW MOTHER-HOUSE, AND ELECT  
SISTER ELIZABETH BOYLE AS SUPERIOR—DE-  
VELOPMENT OF THE TWO COMMUNITIES.

A sea before  
The Throne is spread—its pure still glass  
Pictures all earth-scenes as they pass,  
We, on its shore  
Share, in the bosom of our rest,  
God's knowledge, and are blest.

*Newman ; A Voice From Afar.*

MOTHER SETON was succeeded by Mother Rose White, who governed the Community with wisdom and prudence. Towards the close of the year after her election, she removed Sister Elizabeth Boyle from Philadelphia to New York. This Sister who was to be identified with New York for so many years, arrived in that city, on Christmas Eve, 1822. She continued to direct the orphan asylum, which was then in Prince street, with brief intermissions, until the year 1846, when she was sent to Rochester, to found a mission in that city. During her absence from New York, it was decided to erect another asylum, the existing one being already taxed to its utmost capacity. The site chosen for the new

asylum, was then beyond the city, in the midst of green fields and running brooks, but to-day, it is the very centre of fashionable New York, and the Sisters have departed with their young charges, to the pleasant rural district of Fordham Heights, leaving the former site of the asylum to be covered by great mansions and clubs.

Thirty-eight years had now gone by since Mother Seton had founded her Community, and its growth during that time had surpassed all expectations. The log building, the Mother-house of early days, had been replaced by several substantial brick buildings, from which colonies of Sisters had gone forth to found asylums, schools, academies, and hospitals, in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Washington, New Orleans, Vincennes, Milwaukee, Richmond, Utica, Conewago, Pittsburg, Pottsville, Albany, Lancaster, Frederick, Norfolk, St. Louis, and Martinsburg. The prediction of the youthful prophetess of Mother Seton's time, had, indeed, been fulfilled.

A crowning proof of the blessing which God had bestowed on the Catholics of the United States in the Community, was given during the visitation of Asiatic Cholera in 1832, and in later years. The Sisters manifested the most burning zeal in responding to the request of the civil authorities in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, to nurse the plague-stricken, and many of them fell martyrs to their charity.

In the meantime, the successive directors of the

Sisterhood had gradually changed, in many particulars, the system hitherto observed at Emmitsburg, for that which obtained in the French Community. In 1846, Father Louis Deluol, then Superior, notified the Bishops in whose dioceses the Sisters were conducting asylums for boys, that they would no longer be allowed to take charge of them. Bishop Hughes, of New York, objected to this. A brisk correspondence followed, which ended by Father Deluol announcing that all the Sisters in New York would be recalled on the twentieth of July following. Bishop Hughes replied by a solemn protest against the act. He then resolved to take a step which the distance from the mother-house, and consequent difficulty of maintaining the intercourse essential to preserve a Community spirit, had led Bishop Dubois to consider in his time. This was to form a new mother-house in New York. He therefore applied to Father Deluol for permission for the Sisters in New York to do this. Father Deluol gave it in a circular letter addressed to the Sisters in the New York Diocese, in which he dispensed such as were disposed to remain there, from their vow of obedience to their former Superior, and counselled them to join the new Community, assuring them that his approval and blessing would be with them. Bishop Hughes received Father Deluol's letter on the eighth of December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1846, and in gratitude to God, he ordained that that day should thenceforth witness the renewal of the Sisters' annual

vows, and be observed as the general Feast of the Community.

The question which now rose to agitate the Bishop's mind, was, how many of the Sisters would avail themselves of the permission to remain and form the new mother-house. It was, indeed, a hard thing that was asked of them—to break the ties that held them to the Community which had received them at their entrance into the religious life, which had been endeared to them by tender memories of their postulancy, and novitiate, and hallowed by the presence of their saintly foundress, whose memory was still green at St. Joseph's. To many of the Sisters who had known Mother Seton, it must have seemed almost like deserting her. But on the other hand, were, the great maxim Saint Vincent had inculcated: "Never abandon one good work under the pretence of undertaking new ones;" and the silent, moving appeal of the children, whose condition would be so pitiable, for a long time, at least, if the Sisters were to abandon them.

Time was given the Sisters in which to consider the matter before God, but they were wisely forbidden to seek counsel of one another. There does not seem, however, to have been much hesitation on their part, as to their course. Of the forty-five Sisters in New York, thirty-five remained. Sister Elizabeth, than whom, as has been shown, no one had been more closely united to Mother Seton, or, as assistant Mother, more identified with Emmits-



burg, never had the slightest doubt that it was the will of God, that she should remain to labor in the place whither He had called her. But both she and all the other Sisters who cast in their lot with the northern Community, ever retained a loving memory of their southern home; and even to the last, could never speak of it without emotion.\* A few years later, the Sisters of Charity at Cincinnati, also separated from Emmitsburg, and founded a new mother-house. The Community grew rapidly, and is now a large and important one, with a wide sphere of usefulness in the middle West.

The first election of the New York Community was held on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1846, when Sister Elizabeth was chosen Mother, and Sister Mary Angela, a sister of Bishop Hughes, Assistant Mother. The names of this noble band, who counted their own rights or feelings but as dust in the balance, when weighed with the opportunity to serve Christ's suffering members, were, besides the two Mothers: Sisters Magdalen Shirley, Mary Veronica Goff, Ellen Timon, Susan Knott, Mary Jerome Ely, Ann Borromeo Obermeyer, Mary Constantia Hull, Mary Domitilla Fanning, Mary Basilia McCann, Mary Philipine Beaven, Williamanna Hickey, Mary Francinia Bigham, Mary Hickey, Mary Frances Wallace, Mary Arsenia Burchill, Mary Editha Barry, Frances Borgia Taylor,

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\* The facts in regard to the separation of the two Communities have been taken from Shea's History of the Church in the United States.

Mary Regina Lawless, Mary Cornelia Finney, Mary Valeria Roan, Mary Beatrice Healey, Mary Ambrose Lessen, Mary Josepha Hadden, Mary Ulrica O'Reilly, Mary Catherine Livingston, Mary Callista Delany, Ann Assissum Bird, Mary Pelagia Boyd, Mary Anna Connolly, Mary Vincentia Conklin, and Mary Alphonse McDonald. Some of them lived long enough to be known to us of this generation; Sister Beatrice, long directress of the Academy of Mt. St. Vincent, and so loved by the pupils for her unvarying kindness, her warm-hearted, Southern manner, and her tenderness to the sick; Sister Mary Frances, who accomplished such marvelous work in the orphan asylums; Mother Jerome who governed the Community with such consummate prudence and ability for so many terms, and Mother Regina, who besides serving the Sisterhood most admirably as Superior, for two terms, administered the New York Protectory with marked ability for many years. But all served God generously.

The novitiate of the New York Community was regularly opened at 35 East Broadway, a house in which a girl's school was conducted by Sister Williamanna, and her assistant Sisters. The following year, 1847, a site for a mother-house and academy, was bought, some miles beyond the city, on a wooded eminence, rising steeply from a defile, known as McGowan's Pass. On it are still to be seen the remains of a fortification, which was constructed during the Revolutionary War, and served

as the advanced post of the American army, when it evacuated New York City, and fell back to King's Bridge, after the disastrous battle of Long Island. Old General Israel Putnam commanded the post at McGowan's Pass, and in the house which the Sisters bought, General Washington, no doubt, often conferred with him, and from the high grounds about it, surveyed through his glass, the British troops that lay encamped across the island, from the East River to the Hudson, about a mile and a half below.

On the thirtieth of April, 1847, Mother Elizabeth bade farewell to her beloved orphans in Prince street, and entered upon her duties at the new mother-house which had received the beautiful and appropriate name of Mount Saint Vincent. It was however, rude and uninviting in its outward aspect and surroundings, and cramped and inconvenient in its interior, so that the new Community, in the poverty of its first years, endured within it, in some degree, the hardships that Mother Seton's little band had known in their early days.

Mother Elizabeth governed her daughters in the true spirit of Mother Seton, with firmness, tenderness, and humility, and exemplified in her own life, the virtues of a true Sister of Charity. From this house, in the year 1849, four Sisters departed to found a mission in Halifax. It thrived, and in 1856, Archbishop Walsh obtained the consent of its Superiors to erect it into a separate Community. The Sisters perpetuated the name of their first

religious home in that of their new mother-house, so that to-day, there rises on the Nova Scotian shore, a second Mount Saint Vincent, worthy of its prototype in beauty, and also a centre of spiritual usefulness.

The New York Community-house was enlarged, and in September, 1847, an Academy was opened for boarding-pupils, and forty were at once received. For upwards of ten years this house remained the home of the Community, and then the city took the place as part of its new Central Park, and the Sisters were compelled to seek another home.

Mother Jerome Ely, who governed the Community at the time, and her advisers, bought for the new Mount Saint Vincent, the estate of the late Edwin Forrest, the noted tragedian, situated about ten miles to the northward, in Westchester County, on the shore of the Hudson. The actor had named the place 'Fonthill,' after the vast domain and famous palace of the author of 'Vathek'; and had built on it a Norman castle, which was only completed when difficulties arose between himself and his wife, which resulted in their separation. The castle still remains, a thing of beauty, especially in Summer, when its gray-stone walls and battlements are thrown into strong relief by the mass of green foliage about it, and affords a picturesque home for the chaplain, and accommodation for the ecclesiastical visitors who tarry over night at the "Mount" as the Sisters' home is familiarly called.

On a sort of natural terrace, above, and to the

north of this castle, a great building of red brick, three hundred feet in length, and sixty feet in depth, was erected for the housing of both Community and Academy ; and in 1859, just fifty years after Mother Seton began her foundation at Emmitsburg, the Sisters removed thither. The most precious possessions which they transferred to the new mother-house, were some relics of their holy foundress which they had been fortunate enough to obtain. Among these were, along with several letters and manuscripts, one of her caps, a girdle, of linsey-woolsey, a white muslin frock which she made for one of her children, and a small strong-box, or money chest, covered with leather, and heavily studded with brass nails, and bearing the initials, E. A. S. To these have since been added the crucifix which her husband gave her after her marriage, and which he had brought from Spain. It is a beautiful example of the wood-carving for which Spain was once so noted ; evidently executed during the period when that art had attained its highest excellence. The crown of these possessions, however, is a fraction of a bone of Mother Seton, which was obtained through the kindness of the Emmitsburg Community, at the time of the removal of her remains from their original resting-place to the tomb which now contains them.

Mother Elizabeth never governed in the new mother-house, but in the quiet graveyard on the crest of its surrounding upland, she rests, among her daughters in Christ, her grave marked by a

beautiful, simple, cross of white marble, which bears, along with the dates of her birth and death, the touching record that it was "erected by one whom she had befriended in early youth."

The influence of Mother Seton, whose educational ideas and methods entitle her to a high place among the advocates and promoters of higher education for girls, was apparent in the school which soon became so noted for its excellence, that from the North and the South, the East and the West, pupils came to share its advantages with the New Yorkers, so that to-day, in every part of the United States, there are to be found sometime pupils of Mount St. Vincent, whose attainments testify to its character, while the affection with which they regard their Alma Mater shows the happiness they knew there.

The school grew so rapidly that in 1865, a large wing, projecting eastward one hundred feet beyond the main building, was added on the south, containing a spacious Study-hall, Music-hall, and dormitories. In 1884, a corresponding wing was added on the north, to give room for the overflowing novitiate, and the training-school, where the young daughters of Saint Vincent, at this writing, one hundred in number, are being carefully prepared for what Archbishop Carroll prophesied would be their chief work in this country—the imparting of a Christian education to the young. The building which shelters the novices, the hope of the Community, also affords a home for the superannuated Sisters, its pillars in the past.

Here, in St. Jerome's Hall, may be seen an ever-varying number of jubilarians, who, their half-century of labor past, are peacefully awaiting the summons of the Master, to turn homeward, bearing their sheaves with them.

The entire building, now four hundred and sixty-seven feet in length, is of the Byzantine style of architecture, and is surmounted in the centre by a tower one hundred and eighty feet in height, from which thrice a day, for half a century, a sweet-toned bell has sent far and near, through the stillness, the sound of the 'Angelus.'

Midway between these wings, the exquisitely beautiful Romanesque chapel projects one hundred and thirty-five feet from the main building parallel with them. The three may be literally said to be built on a rock, their foundations having had to be excavated from the hills that rise steeply behind the great pile. Well clothed with stately trees, and studded with beautiful shrines, these hills sweep upward to the broad level on which is situated the quiet graveyard, with the touching inscription over its entrance, "Have pity on me, at least ye My Friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me;" and its long rows of white crosses marking the resting-places of the Daughters of St. Vincent whose work is done; then on through dells, and groves, and orchards, to the stone wall that bounds the grounds. Through the southern part of this domain, a broad avenue, called the Via Angelorum, from the great statue of the angel that stands where it begins, at the

terrace on which the building fronts, runs eastward along these wooded grounds, to the gate. On its right, as it nears its end, is a lake, containing an islet connected by rustic bridges with the mainland. On this islet a cave, or grotto has been built, in imitation of that at Lourdes, which contains an exquisite statue of our Lady as she appeared to Bernadette. In front of the great buildings, the steep ground falls in a succession of terraces to the river. In Summer, the upper ones are bright with flowers, amid which a great fountain, surmounted by a statue of the Blessed Virgin, known as "Our Lady of the Fountain," plays and sparkles. The natural surroundings of the place are so beautiful, that when Summer verdure has clothed the trees and lawns, and Summer sunshine brightened the stately river, and softened the hills beyond, it is not easily surpassed in beauty. But Winter too, has its fairness, in this favored spot, when the immense edifice stands fully revealed in all its massiveness, amid the leafless trees, strongly contrasting, in its warmth of coloring, with the gray, mediæval Castle; when the serried pines rise, in sombre greenness, from the dazzling whiteness of the clean, untrodden, snow that enriches the ground it covers, and fill the keen, pure, air with their aromatic odor, all typical of the austere sweetness of the religious life; and the broad river, frozen save in its centre, lies in the sunlight, like a mass of dull opal cut by a band of sapphire, beyond which the Palisades rise, in all their nakedness, like rock-bound fortresses guarding the approach to it.



Through the portals of this great Community-house, has entered a long procession of ardent souls to dedicate themselves to God, and be formed in the spiritual life, and many hundreds have gone forth to labor on the mission. But once a year, at least, and when it is clothed in all its Mid-Summer loveliness, the entire Community, now over fourteen hundred in number, return to it for their annual spiritual Retreat; and while the memories of their novitiate are revived within their hearts, and their souls steeped anew in the spirit of fervor that abides within the mother-house, their tired senses are refreshed by its beauty and repose.

From the very first, the New York Community increased rapidly, and continually put forth new branches. In 1849, St. Vincent's Hospital, in New York city, was opened, under the direction of Sister Angela Hughes, and from a most humble beginning, expanded into the vast establishment that it is to-day. Homes for the Aged, and the Friendless, followed; numerous parish schools were opened, and academies established in New York and other cities. In the early seventies, under the direction of the late Sister Irene, who will be ever remembered for her marvelous work in the inception and conduct of this great undertaking, an Asylum for Foundlings was erected; a vast edifice, which, with its companion buildings, rises to-day in the heart of the great pitiless city, like a sanctuary of old, where the sinning and the sinned against may find refuge. With the memory of Sister Irene too, will ever be asso-

ciated that other great institution which so fittingly commemorates the name of the Order's holy foundress in her native city—the Seton Hospital, which, on the city's northern heights, a few miles below the mother-house, opens doors of mercy to the victims of the great white plague.

While the Mt. Saint Vincent Sisters of Charity have established houses in many neighboring dioceses, it is with the city of New York that they are chiefly identified. Coming to it, few and poor, when it was little more than a provincial town, they have grown with its growth, until now, when it has become an imperial city, they have a chain of houses throughout its vast expanse, from its extreme southern end, where, amid the roar and bustle of commerce, their school and dwelling rise under the shadow of St. Peter's Church, the cradle of Catholicism in New York, to its northernmost limit, where the great mother-house lifts high above the waters of the Hudson, the statue of the benign Saint whose name it bears. Thus, in the city where, a century ago, Elizabeth Seton dwelt friendless and deserted, and which she quitted, with her little children, with scarcely one to bid her God-speed, she is represented by hundreds of her black-robed daughters. Truly, the Lord hath avenged her!

In 1849, the Emmitsburg Community was affiliated to the Community of St. Vincent de Paul in France, and passed under the authority of the Superior-General of that Order. On the twenty-fifth of March, 1850, in accordance with the custom of

the French Community, they renewed their vows, and on the eighth of December following, assumed the habit of the French Sisterhood. It is at Mt. Saint Vincent, therefore, which she never beheld, that Mother Seton would have to seek, if she were to return to earth to-day, to find the Rule, the dress, and the customs she inaugurated in her religious foundation.

The closest bonds of charity unite the two Communities, however; both follow mainly, the same Rule; and use the same manuals of devotion. The Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul were obtained for the New York Community, from the Reverend Superior-General in Paris, by His Eminence, the late Cardinal McCloskey, in the year 1878.

There is but little trace of the humble beginnings of a century ago, at Emmitsburg to-day. A curious likeness in its approach by rail appears to that at Mt. Saint Vincent, one having to ascend, in both cases, from the station, to the level of the grounds. One sees at Emmitsburg, however, no broad river, on the west; but, beyond the bridge that crosses the ravine through which the railway runs, a great mountain, up which a broad avenue leads to the College and Seminary of Saint Mary, on its height.

From the station this same magnificent avenue sweeps eastward for several hundred feet to where a great mass of buildings rises like a city. These buildings having been erected from time to time, as the needs of the Community dictated, are detached,

thus imparting to the place somewhat the appearance of a university. The first thing that catches the eye, is the Church, which, erected before the railroad necessitated the present approach, stands with its back to the avenue, facing an interior court. This beautiful building, which Mother Seton so longed to see, is in the Tuscan style of architecture, one hundred and twelve feet long, and ninety-one wide, with a lofty steeple, and with two wings at the rear end, one of which serves as a vestry-room, and the other as a place where persons connected with the institution, may hear Mass. The corner-stone was laid in 1839, and the Church was consecrated in 1841, under the title of St. Joseph. Some distance on the left of the Church, is the mother-house and novitiate, a great building of brick and stone, in the conventual style of the fourteenth century, with embattled parapets and steeply-pitched roof. It runs from east to west, with a lateral projection, at each end, towards the south, the eastern one of which is surmounted by a belfry, thirty feet high. The western projection runs from the main building to the Church. On the right of the Church, stands the main part of the Academy, known as the "Burlando Building," so called in memory of the Reverend Francis Burlando, C. M., who for twenty-five years, served the Community, first as chaplain, afterwards as director and local Superior of the United States Province, and who was regarded by the Community as a father. It was under his superintendence and direc-

tion that this building was erected, but he was not permitted to see it finished or occupied, being called to his reward on the sixteenth of February, 1873, a few months before its completion. It is in the form of an L, each part of the L being one hundred and fifty feet in length, and sixty-four in depth, and is connected with the older buildings of the Academy by broad, sunny, corridors. These, in their turn, are connected with the great Community house, so that a large courtyard, open only to the sunlight, is formed in the centre of the buildings, on which the Church faces. A cloister extends all around the first floor of the Community building, communicating with the church, and this gives to the place an old-world, picturesque, aspect, that is heightened by the quaint, seventeenth century dress of the Sisters, as they flit to and fro. Beyond the mother-house are more great buildings, a kitchen and refectory, and a Sisters' Infirmary, telling far more forcibly than words could do, of the wonderful growth of the Community.

When the mother-house was planned, it was found necessary in order to make room for it, to remove the "White House," as the building erected by Mother Seton is called, from its original site, to one northwest of the chapel, and there, cut off by a broad road from the buildings which shelter the busy, active life of the St. Joseph's of to-day, it now stands, silent, but not desolate, for there is every mark of loving care about it, and proof that it is regarded as a sanctuary of the holiest memories.

It is with a feeling of deep reverence that one crosses the threshold, and enters the bare, silent room, on the wall of which appears the following inscription :

*“ Here, near this door, by this fireplace, on a poor, lowly, couch, died our cherished and sainted Mother Seton, on the 4th of January, 1821. She died in poverty, but rich in faith, and good works. May we, her children, walk in her footsteps, and share one day in her happiness. Amen.”*

As the visitor stands and reads, the silence seems to pulsate with memories of the saintly life led within this humble dwelling, a place whose very walls would cry out, if man were silent, in its praise.

To the north of the great establishment, lies the cemetery, where hundreds of daughters of St. Vincent, death's harvest of a century, sleep the sleep of peace. On the first row are seen the familiar names of Harriet, Cecilia, Annina, and Rebecca Seton, but Mother Seton does not rest, as she had hoped, by Annina's side. Her remains are interred in a gothic tomb of white marble, that rises in the midst of the silent city. On the front of this, which faces the south, is the following inscription : *“ To the memory of E. A. Seton, Foundress.* On the west side, are the words : *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints ;* on the east side, *The just shall live in everlasting remembrance ;* and on the north, *The just shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.* This mortuary chapel is also the resting-place of Archbishop

Bayley, of Baltimore, who wished to be buried near his sainted aunt. At the base of his tomb is a marble slab, designating the grave of the Reverend Francis Burlando.

Some distance south of the institution lies the "stone house." On the wall of its main room, over the tiny recess which held the altar, is an inscription recording the fact that on the tenth day of August, 1809, the feast of Saint Lawrence, Martyr, the first Mass was celebrated there by Reverend William Louis du Bourg, afterwards Bishop of Louisiana, who died Archbishop of Besançon, France, December twelfth, 1833. This house, which witnessed the beginning of the Community life, is also kept as a sanctuary by the Sisters. In the Community house, is a little room devoted to mementos of Mother Seton, and of the early days of the Community. The chief of these relics are a bone of her who will probably be the first canonized saint of our country, and a lock of her hair. Here also are preserved her wedding ring, her quill pen, her candlestick, and her rosary, a large black one, similar to those which all the Sisters of Charity wear. Some pen and ink sketches by Bishop Bruté, one of which represents Mother Seton between death and heaven, and a lock of the Bishop's, of Annina Seton's, and of Becky Seton's hair, add to the interest of the little collection. There is also a portrait of Mother Seton, in her last days, when the ravages of disease were visible in her face. Rude and imperfect as this is, the Sisters

value it as a priceless heirloom. The face recalls in its extreme emaciation, the face of Cardinal Manning, and like his, it is marked by deep asceticism and intellectual power, softened by Mother Seton's comparative youth, and feminine outlines; but while the Cardinal's eyes are cold and penetrating, the eyes of Mother Seton, beautiful and unchanged, are filled with such deep, spiritual love, and tenderness, that we understand how all hearts were irresistibly drawn to her.

Beyond the establishment at St. Joseph's, wide acres, shaded with mighty trees, stretch away in orchards, and meadows, and tilled lands, to where the blue mountains bound the horizon. Through them are scattered little oratories and shrines, many of them beautifully and richly decorated through the piety of former pupils, so that the traversing of this great domain may be made a pious little pilgrimage. As at Mt. Saint Vincent, however, few of the Community dwell in the mother-house; only as many of the Sisters of the Habit, as the professed Sisters are called, being retained there, as are needed for the conduct of the institution, usually, about one hundred and fifty. The remainder of the seventeen hundred and fifty members, are scattered among the missions that girdle the continent. The number of Seminary sisters or novices, is, of course, variable. At this writing, it is fifty-one.

So beautiful are the homes of both Communities, Mt. Saint Vincent, in its stately environment



on the shore of the great northern river; and Emmitsburg, in its picturesque domain among the southern mountains, that there is little to choose between them. It is well that in both Sisterhoods, the tender years of the novitiate are passed in these beautiful solitudes with their elevating influences on the soul, and amid the memories and traditions of the Saints of the Order who rest there. It is a fair picture that the Sisters bear with them when they go forth to labor on the mission, often amid wildernesses of brick and mortar that must make them long for a glimpse of their home, with its sunny, green, slopes, and pleasant paths leading to the shrines at which they loved to pray. In the case of the Mt. Saint Vincent Sisters, happily, this wish may be frequently gratified; but many of the Emmitsburg Sisters dwell at such a distance from their mother-house that they seldom, if ever, behold it; and this cannot be the least among the crosses of which a Sister of Charity's life is made up.

The work of Elizabeth Seton, begun in feebleness and poverty, and proved by many trials, has never ceased to grow, and bear the fruits of benediction. To the Communities of Emmitsburg and Mt. Saint Vincent, now numbering together, over three thousand members, must be added those of Cincinnati, numbering five hundred and fifty members; Greensburg, Pennsylvania, which sprang from Cincinnati, three hundred; and Madison, New Jersey, which

sprang from Mt. Saint Vincent, and now consists of eight hundred and sixty members. At this writing, therefore, there are almost five thousand Sisters of Charity representing her foundation, in the United States. Throughout the length and breadth of our vast country, these Daughters of St. Vincent minister to every form of human suffering; to the sick, the destitute, the aged, the insane, the imprisoned, the orphans, and the foundlings; or teach in the Christian schools by which the Church strives to keep burning the light of faith in a godless age. So wonderful has been the growth of the Order in all its branches, since its beginning, in 1809, that it is impossible to estimate what its increase will be during the second century of its existence. We know, however, that to Elizabeth Seton, dwelling in the visible presence of God, the material progress of her Order matters little; its prospering or its failing she is content to leave to the Infinite Wisdom that ordained its beginning; but we may feel sure, that it is her ceaseless prayer, as it is that of the many happy spiritual daughters who surround her, that its members may ever retain the humble, generous, mortified spirit of that chosen band who, one hundred years ago, toiled up the heights of Emmitsburg, and amid poverty, and privation, and sacrifice unspeakable, founded, in joy and gladness, the American Order of the Sisters of Charity.

