

Pioneer Nuns  
of  
British Columbia

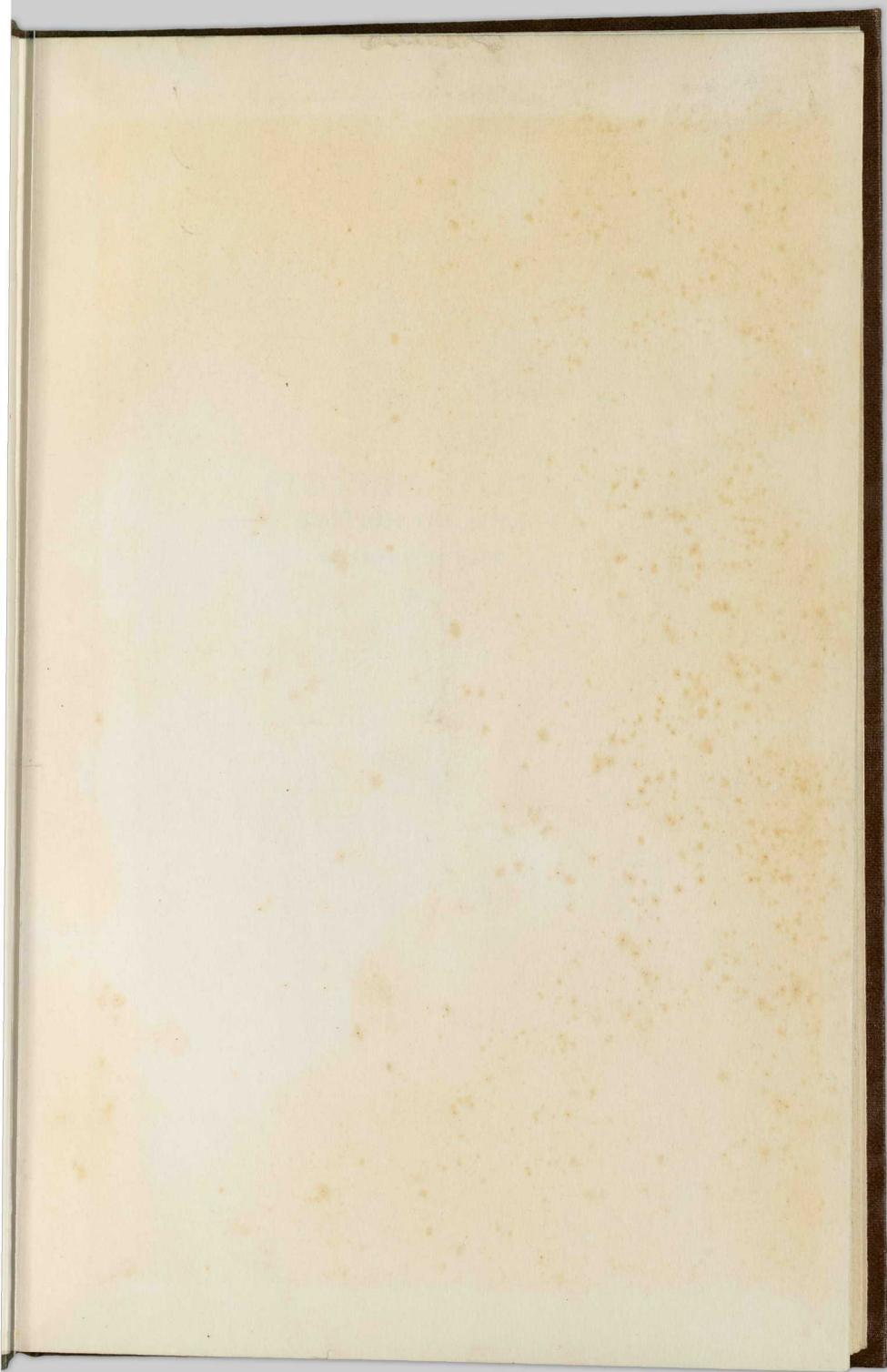
Sister Mary Theodore  
S.S.A.

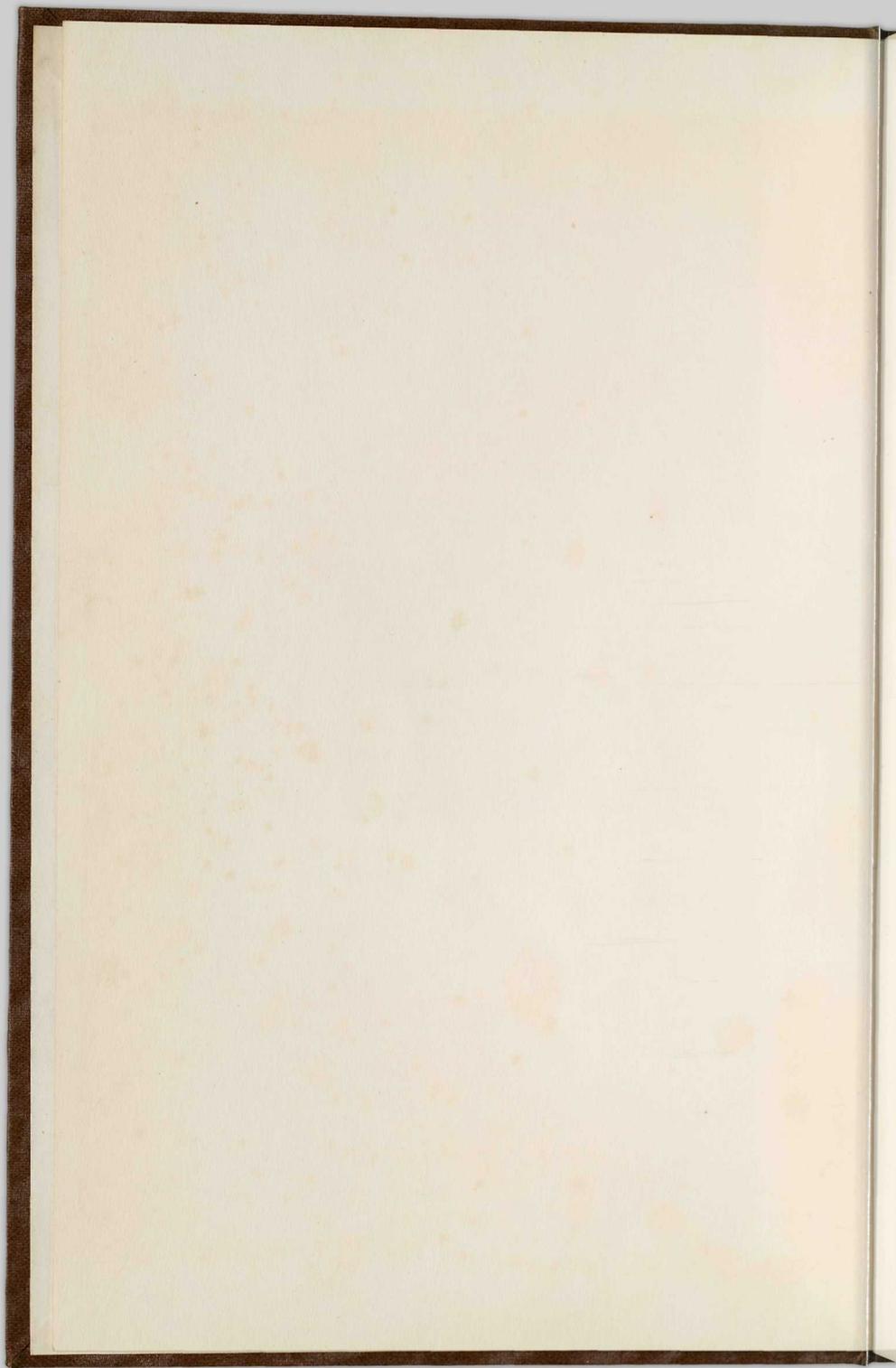
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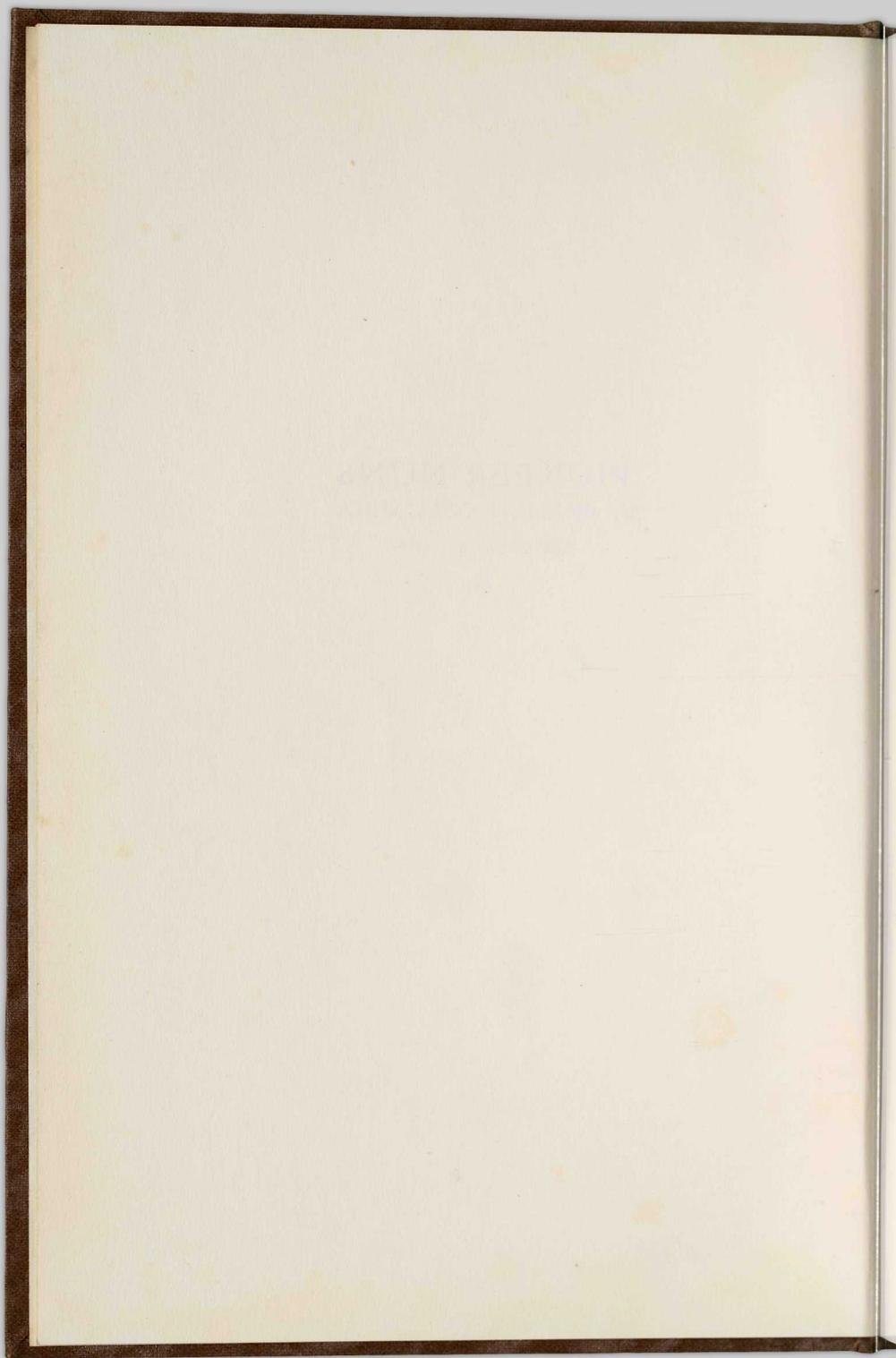




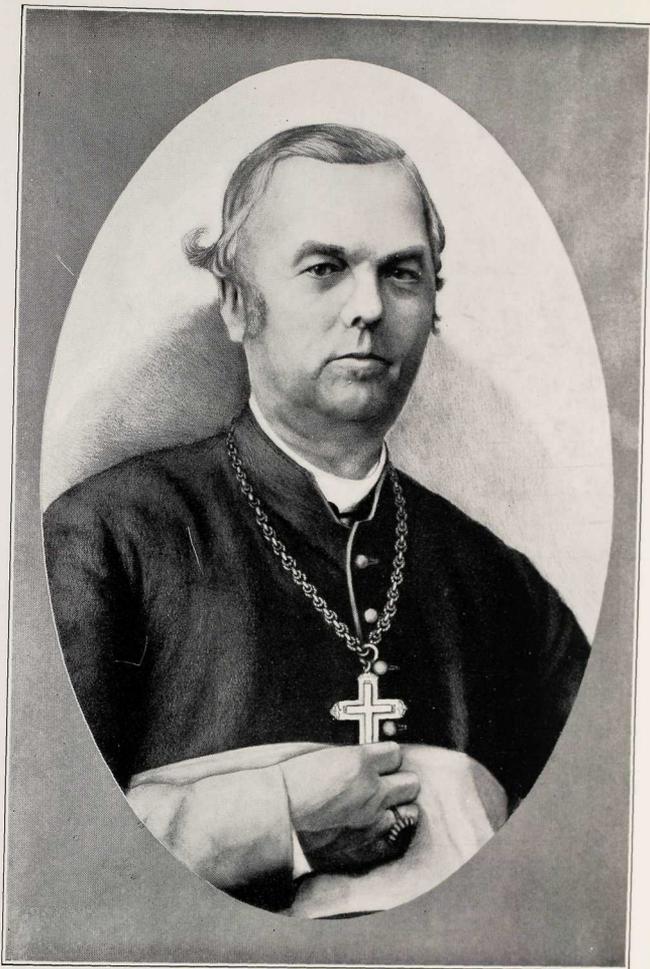
PIONEER NUNS  
*of* BRITISH COLUMBIA

SISTERS *of* ST. ANN









**RIGHT REVEREND MODESTE DEMERS**

First Bishop of British Columbia and Alaska, at whose solicitation the Sisters of St. Ann came from East to West to co-operate in the cause of Christianity in his vast diocese.

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PIONEER NUNS  
*of* BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

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*Sisters of St. Ann*

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*By* SISTER MARY THEODORE, S.A.A.

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

1931

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**Imprimatur**  
April, 1931

✠ G. MURRAY, C.S.R., D. D.

*Bishop of Victoria, B. C.*

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The Bishop of Victoria Introduces  
The Sisters of St. Ann to  
his Diocesans

OPENING *of* THE SCHOOL

*by the Sisters of St. Ann, also called Sisters of  
Charity, in Victoria, V. I., December 2nd, 1858*

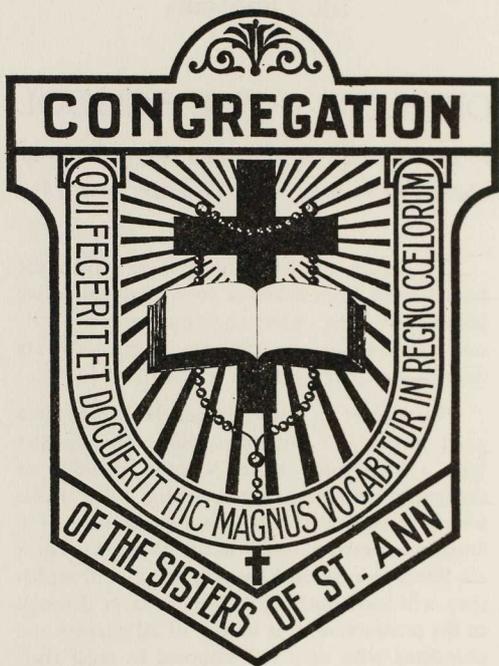
“The spirit of devotedness with which the Sisters have undertaken a long and expensive journey, and the object they had in view—the establishment of the present institution—are their best recommendation to the Community.

“To impart to young ladies the benefit of a good moral and domestic education, together with a knowledge of the various branches of elementary training, accompanied with those which constitute the higher departments of a finished education—such is the object to which the Sisters are devoted by profession, and which they will leave nothing undone to carry through to the satisfaction, it is hoped, of all parents and guardians who may feel disposed to trust their children to their care and guardianship.

“BISHOP DEMERS.”

Extract from the first B. C. prospectus of the Sisters of St. Ann.

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## SISTER MARY OF THE CONCEPTION

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### CHAPTER I.

### *Sister Mary of the Conception*

1858 - 1915

THE holy garb of a nun, emblematic of the corporal works of mercy, was first seen on Vancouver Island in 1858. Since then it has been filling its symbolism far and wide, in the schools, orphanages and hospitals of British Columbia and Alaska.

The blessings associated with this livery of consecration to the service of God and humanity are strongly brought out in the long life of Sister Mary of the Conception, one of the four Sisters of St. Ann who came to Victoria seventy odd years ago.

When on November 15, 1915, she returned her soul to its Maker, it was adorned with the merits of ninety years, and signed with the aureole of two Golden Jubilees. The first of these jubilees was that of her religious profession; the second, a few months later, was that of her apostolate in pioneer British Columbia. Fifty years a nun! Fifty years a missionary!

This life of total surrender to God and neighbor came into being of Irish parents in Rawdon, Province of Quebec. In the Old Country they had been manufacturers of poplin, once so fashionable. Unfair proceedings to those of the faith, to which the Courts connived, brought them financial ruin. They left their motherland to begin life anew. In the days of their prosperity they had been in touch with Canada; when adversity came they turned to that goodly country.

Rawdon at that time was a hornets' nest of bigotry. It had been settled by a colony of anti-Catholics from Ireland, who had bound themselves by oath never to let their boundary be darkened by Papists. But because God derides the devices of those who bear ill-will to His Church, Catholics penetrated into that section, secured grants, and became permanent settlers. The original colonists soon dwindled down to one family.

However, before this came to pass there were examples of ferocious hatred towards said Papists. Mr. Lane, Sister Mary of the Conception's father, experienced this malevolence. The people of Rawdon depended on the village of St. Jacques, twelve miles south, for many commodities. These they packed on their backs when the roads were too bad for the horses. We are speaking of the roads and paths of the wooded Laurentides a century and a half

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ago; that same region is today tourist-roaded. Joy automobiles from all parts of Canada and the U.S.A. now skim over it in holiday exhilaration.

One Winter day in that long ago, Mr. Lane was returning home from one of these purchasing trips in the above-mentioned friendly village of expatriated Acadians, when he was overtaken by a blizzard. The few houses along the way were miles apart. He felt himself perishing from cold and exhaustion. He saw a light in the distance, but he knew that the man from whose house it shone was a rank bigot. This man had made it known all around, and with unmistakable fierceness, that he would shoot any Papist who dared trespass on his land.

Nothing but the grip of death could have nerved Mr. Lane to ask from such a one the favor of a few hours' shelter from the northern storm; the barn would do. Life was dear, especially to the father of a family, so Mr. Lane knocked at the door. It was opened. The wayfarer began to explain his predicament. This should have been unnecessary in the face of the cold blast which shot through the door. Not so. As soon as the occupant recognized Mr. Lane, he shouted "Off with you. How dared you come to my door? Don't you know yet that I said I would kill the likes of you if I saw any of you on my ground? Go away, and don't sneak in any outhouse of mine. I warn you I'll shoot you if you try it." With this threat he slammed the door.

As Mr. Lane turned into the storm he saw death ahead in the elements, and crueler death near at hand, in front of closed doors. He compared his foes. He could not battle with the blizzard-king; he might circumvent the man-fiend. He took his chances and followed the line of least resistance. He went to the stable. Going to the horse's stall he stretched himself in the manger and hid himself as best he could under the hay. The horse looked on perfectly still. The half-dead man trusted that the inhospitable owner would not venture out in that wild weather merely to make sure that a Papist was around or not. He was soon disillusioned. The proprietor did venture out. He came to the stable and began to search it. By the shadows thrown by the lantern, which was sometimes raised high and then lowered, Mr. Lane saw that the searcher carried a gun. He could also hear him tramp the hay; now and again he prodded it with a pitchfork.

After a while the steps came to the stall. Everything now depended on the horse. Both men knew this. Would it give sign

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of the unusual? Would it be restless? Would it whinny? The animal was too kind to betray one under his guard. When his master held the lantern aloft at the entrance to the stall, the dear, merciful beast turned its head and quietly looked at him. The man, satisfied that no refugee was in hiding, went back to the house.

With the first hint of daylight Mr. Lane, revived by warmth and such rest as he had had, hurried from the place. Recovering his pack, which he had dropped on the roadside, he resumed his tramp and reached home safely. The family always considered it providential that Mr. Lane's snowtracks to and from the stable had not been noticed by the wickedly intent man who had so closely followed him there. Either the drifts had quickly covered them, or the pursuer had missed them by arm's length.

Mr. Lane being the one Catholic man of education in the district, was adviser and scribe for the community. His fireside was the resort of those who wanted legal advice, as well as of those who could not do their social and business correspondence. He taught his children, and willingly admitted into their class others who wished to avail themselves of his informal teaching.

### Girlhood

Brought up in these complex elements of pioneer hardihood, between bigotry on the one side and Christian charity on the other, at an intellectual though rude hearth, Sister Mary of the Conception imbibed the sap which made her strong in body, controlled in action and robust in religion. One of the boasts of her declining years, and for it we are blissfully thankful, was that when she was a strapping girl in her teens her ambition was to rival the field hands in wielding the scythe dexterously as they and in mowing as many acres of grain as the most expert. That was, of course, before electric power had been applied to farming. Field labor was done by hand, and, as in Scriptural times, shared by the women.

The healthy constitution which evolved from this sort of practical physical culture Sister was to give unstintedly to God's service. As a nun, her zest in surpassing others in toil became a desirable asset when given to the several poor missions of the West, where God had laid out His work for her.

The sorest privation of her girlhood was the lack of Church opportunities. Her piety craved for daily Mass, and she had not that of Sunday obligation. Even when Rawdon became a constituted parish, with a resident pastor, she could not attend church

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regularly because of the distance and impassable roads. The genuinely pious girl supplied her soul's desire by hearing Holy Mass in spirit. Every day, after her morning prayer and before beginning any household duties, she knelt in her room, prayer-book in hand, and facing the direction of the church, followed the prayers and parts of the holy sacrifice. Was it a reward for this beautiful practice that during the three last years of her life, when age prevented her from moving freely, she had the opportunity, and the mentality, to assist at the divine sacrifice and receive Holy Communion every morning from the Victoria convent infirmary, which opens on the chapel.

Sister Mary of the Conception was given the opportunity of attending the convent of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in St. Jacques. The religious vocation which she had fostered in her heart while in her frontier home now asserted itself. Towards the end of the school term she wrote to her parents to inform them of her desire to enter the Sacred Heart Order. Their answer, delivered in person, was astonishing. Mr. Lane arrived post-haste at the convent and summarily withdrew his daughter. On the way home he enjoined on her not to mention entering the convent. This was surely a rash and harsh proceeding on the part of so sincerely Catholic a family. It was prompted by selfish love. They feared that if their daughter became a member of so world spread an order she might be sent to distant countries, and they would never see her again. They were to be nicely caught in God's own time.

### **Sister Mary of the Conception Enters St. Ann's**

In course of time the Sacred Heart convent passed to the Sisters of St. Ann. Miss Lane visited them as often as circumstances permitted. Always she desired with desire to consecrate herself to God by conventual rule. The order, the habit, the constitutions mattered not; the vows in religion were everything. Five years she waited obediently, patiently. After that long waiting her dutiful lips again asked the consent of her parents on her holy purpose. This time it was given without reserve.

St. Ann's Institute was then only seven years founded. Miss Lane had been a postulant ten months when one of the most momentous events in the institution happened.

Bishop Demers of Vancouver Island, who was in Montreal imploring religious workers for his diocese, submitted an application to the Reverend Mother General, residing at St. Jacques. He

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asked for four sisters to teach the native and half-breed children of his Pacific Coast missions. The fervent little community eagerly accepted the task. Work of that sort, in a far away pioneer country, required women of exceptional calibre. Sister Mary of the Conception possessed it. There was fitness of proportion between her physical and her mental endowments, between her logic and her common-sense virtues; between her keen mind and her grave judgment; between her sympathy and her strength. Nature and grace had meted their measure to the full capacity of her tall symmetrical frame. All eyes were turned on her as one suited for the enterprise. She was willing enough, but when questioned by her companions she said, with her usual caution, "I am only a probationer; I do not know if I shall be permanently accepted in the Institute; were I bound by the holy vows I so long to take I would gladly go to the ends of the earth." Just at that time, as if to add to her perplexity, she had a slight attack of sickness. The saintly Bishop Demers reassured her, saying, "Do not be uneasy either for your health or for your perseverance. I assume the responsibility of both." The Sister confided implicitly in this promise, which to her faith had the value of a prophecy.

On December 5, 1857, she took the holy habit. Two months later, that is on February 12, 1858, she pronounced her perpetual vows. So uncanonical a novitiate causes surprise. Canada was still a comparatively new country, and canon law not enforced as it now is; besides that fact, concessions are made in favor of foreign missions. British Columbia was then included in this class. Sister's rapid promotion to her vows was indorsed by Father Pare, parish priest of St. Jacques, who conducted her examination, and by Bishop Demers, who presided at the ceremony of her vows, both of whom were ecclesiastics of widely known wisdom and holiness. Sister's parents, once so fearful that she might be exiled from home, now sanctioned her going wheresoever obedience called. Mr. Lane's former drastic order was atoned for when he said, "My daughter, you have chosen the better part."

### Visitation of the Sick in Victoria

After two months' voyage from New York, via Panama and San Francisco, the four Sisters of St. Ann appointed to the new work arrived in Victoria, June 5, 1858. This was Saturday. On Monday the Sisters had the classroom quite fitted out—some rough boards set on packing boxes along the room fifteen by ten. Some slates, a few readers, and all was ready for the foundation of

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Catholic education in British Columbia. At first the number of pupils corresponded to the size of the room; but it grew. So did the number of Sister Mary of the Conception's occupations. She was named to visit the sick, attend the dying and lay out the dead. There were no hospitals, nor trained nurses, nor mortuary parlors at that time. The school recess and the dismissal periods were often devoted to these works of mercy. In serious cases the nights were given to vigils at the bedside of the sick. The annual appointments of the small community show the name of Sister Mary of the Conception for six consecutive years followed by the charge, "Teaching and visitation of the sick at domicile."

This latter occupation often required courage, tact and discretion. By temperament Sister was calm, fearless and resourceful. Her first sick call in Victoria furnished an occasion for the exercise of these traits. The successful issue of this visitation of the sick was an encouragement to continue the saving work.

### The First Sick Call

The school children had been asked to tell the Sisters of any sick case they might hear about. One day a pupil brought the message that Mrs. Forbes, a Catholic, was seriously ill. At once Sister Mary of the Conception and another sister went over to the designated house. It was on Collinson Street. It is noteworthy that the residence of this first patient of the Sisters of St. Ann occupied the spot where the nucleus of St. Joseph's Hospital was built in 1875.

The Sisters, on entering the neat little house, found the patient in a dying condition. On seeing the Sisters, the woman, who bore every mark of good breeding, burst into tears. When she was able to control herself she said: "Sisters, these are tears of joy at seeing you. I am one of those wilful girls who married against the advice of my parents. Now I am dying, and my husband will not let me see a priest. Years ago he had a misunderstanding with one and has not spoken to any of them since, nor will he allow one to come near the house."

Sister Mary of the Conception spoke up: "If that is the only trouble and you really want to make your peace with God, we shall arrange that you see a priest."

"But how?" said the frightened woman. "My husband—I do not answer for him should he see a priest in the house."

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"Leave that to me," said the intrepid Sister. "If you wish to receive the sacraments I will say so to the first priest I meet."

"Oh, yes, I do. But if my husband should know of it."

"Never mind. I am not afraid of your husband."

The bishop's house was only a few yards away. Sister Mary of the Conception went over and found Father Vary in the yard reciting his breviary. She explained her errand. "Very well," said the priest. "Prepare the woman. I will be there in a little while." After he had heard the patient's confession, he told the Sisters to have everything ready for her to receive Holy Communion next morning.

Very early on the following day the Sisters went to the sick woman's house, bringing candles, crucifix, vestry linen, etc., and a white covering for the bed. Noiselessly they prepared everything for the Divine Guest about to come into the place. During that time the master of the house was abed in an adjoining room, which was separated by a wooden partition. The poor wife's fears were on the alert. Again and again she whispered, "What will happen if my husband comes in while the priest is here?"

Sister settled the question. "There need be no concealment," she said decidedly. "I will tell Mr. Forbes what we are doing."

She knocked at his door. We can imagine the man's surprise when he saw the nun. He had no time to express his amazement, for going straight to the point, Sister said: "Sir, your wife is very sick; she wants to see the priest. I wish to inform you that he is coming in a few minutes to give her Holy Communion."

"I know nothing about priests, and I'll have nothing to do with them," he said gruffly.

"You need not. I have made all the arrangements for one to be here," replied the Sister unconcernedly.

"I don't want priests, but my wife can do as she pleases about it."

"Thank you, that is all I want; do not disturb yourself. We shall attend to all that is necessary." The Sisters continued their duties and the man went back into his room.

The priest came and communicated the happy patient. While the Sisters knelt absorbed in the rites, they felt a presence. Looking up they saw Mr. Forbes come in and kneel down; his eyes were wet. The priest hater had changed. When the ceremony was over he thanked the Sisters most respectfully for their kindness to his

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wife. At succeeding visits made during the three following days of the woman's ebbing life he welcomed them cordially, and after they had enshrouded her he presented them with fifty dollars. Ever after he lived on the best terms with the clergy. To him was given the contract for making the first pews in the cathedral, dedicated November, 1858.

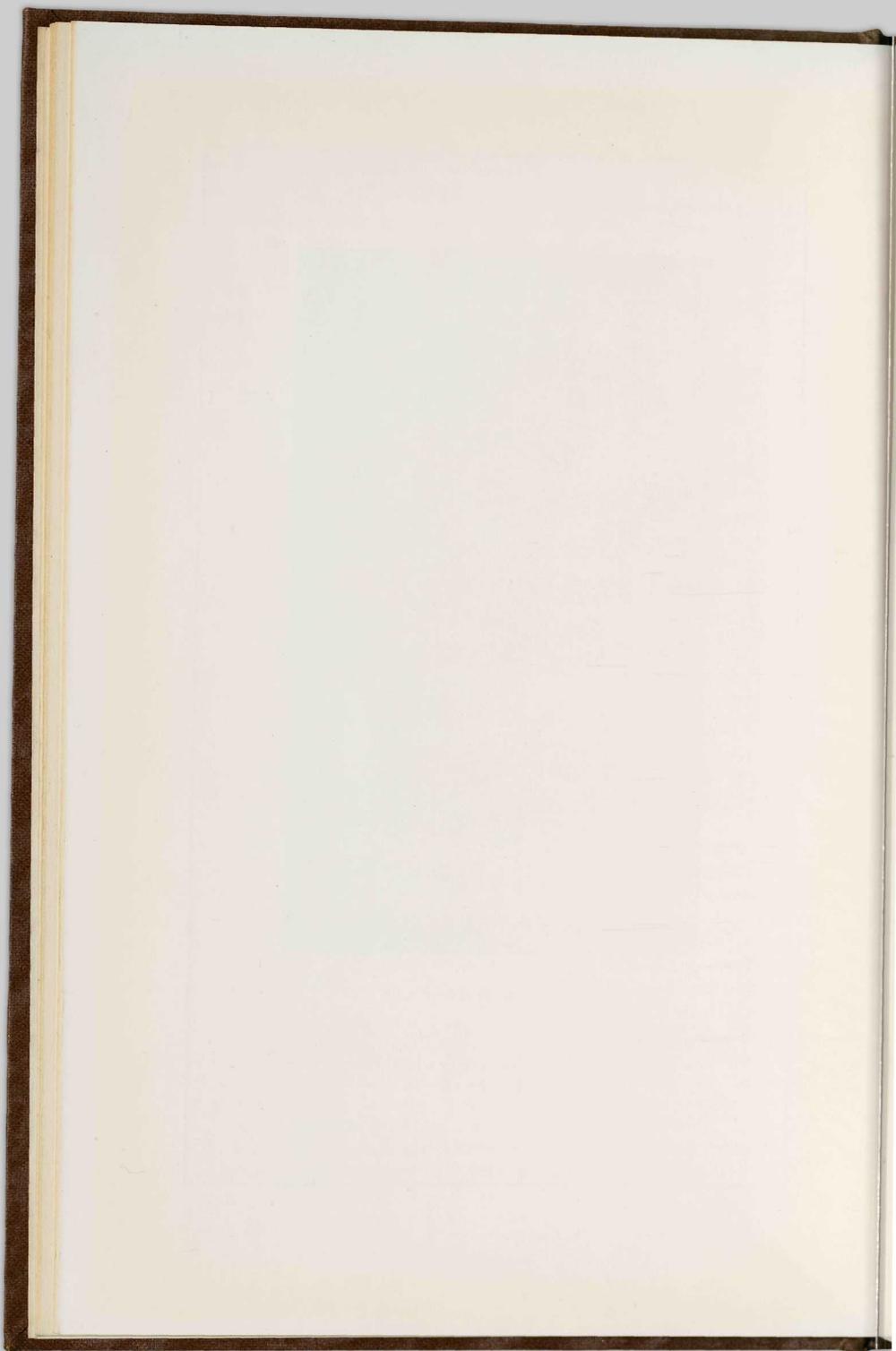
In the exercise of their charity the Sisters often took their lives in their own hands, but that did not daunt them. They were told that a fallen-away Catholic, who was in a dying condition, had begged to see a priest, but those about her refused this request. They had declared that no priest nor nun would enter the house. To make good their word they put men on guard to prevent the approach of the ministers of God. But while the sentinels kept a lookout at the front entrance, which was a rough-class boarding house, Sister Mary of the Conception, led by a good woman, wended her way through back lanes and slid into the house at a rear entrance. A Christian friend had manoeuvred so as to look after the patient during the first half of the night. The coast was clear. Sister prepared the repentant woman for death, and after an hour or so, having done all that could be done, left without the guards being any the wiser for her presence. The Sisters were very happy for having contributed to this person's reconciliation with God. True, she had not had the priestly ministrations, but she had been helped to make acts of faith, hope and contrition. The Sisters were not a little amused to learn that the relatives and friends of the deceased congratulated themselves on having "scared off those Catholic Sisters."

It was in consequence of their visitation of the sick that the Carroll Estate was willed to the Sisters. A very troublesome legacy it proved. Some months after their arrival in Victoria the Sisters were asked to go and lay out Mrs. Carroll, who had died during the night. They had everything to do, from buying whatever was necessary at the Hudson Bay fort to hanging the crepe on the door. Their sympathetic and reverent arrangements touched Mr. Carroll. Not many years after he was himself at death's door. Like many fortune seekers of those days, he had not bothered about religion, but when he faced eternity he allowed the Good Shepherd to bring him back to the fold. During his long illness he liked to have the Sisters near him. It was in one of the night watches that he said to Sister Mary of the Conception, who was on duty, "Sister, I have decided to make my will in favor of the orphans." She was dismayed. Her prudence and foresight signalled trouble.



**EMBROIDERED MESH ALE**

One of fifteen made by Sister Mary of the Conception. This was the relaxation she indulged in after uprooting stumps, digging, hoeing and raking with the Indian girls of the Mission schools.



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"You should not do that," she said. "It would not be fair to your young wife."

He replied, "She will be well provided for; my settlement on her lifts her far above the condition of servant, in which she was when I married her. The bulk of my money will go in atonement for the errors of my life." He did as he had said; and events followed as the shrewd Sister had instinctively felt they would. His wife, and especially her kith, instigated a lawsuit which lasted twenty years and swallowed all but a fraction of the once handsome fortune.

It is fascinating to read, if not to experience, how many a slip there is between the cup and the lip. When Mr. Carroll was carrying on this conversation with the Sister on duty he said: "I have under my pillow sixteen thousand dollars in gold; they are for the orphans; take them; but no, it is better to put them in the bank. They are yours anyway." The Sister could not help thinking "A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush." Of course she said nothing. Her application of the old saying was verified a few days afterwards when the clerk entrusted to take the gold to the bank took French leave, and so did the precious bag.

### Sister Narrowly Escapes Jail

There are many stories illustrative of Sister Mary of the Conception's resourcefulness in her visitation of the sick. The following is a good example, and incidentally casts doubt on the adage that virtue brings its own reward.

In the summer of 1867 she came from St. Mary's Indian Mission on the Fraser for a well-earned vacation in Victoria. Greetings over, Mother Mary Providence said to her, "Mrs. M's baby is dying, and the poor woman is distracted with grief. Will you go and see her? Your visit would be a comfort and you may be able to do something for the child. Then you might go and see Mr. and Mrs. Chavaux. They are both very sick."

When Sister Mary of the Conception, accompanied by one of the larger orphans, entered the house, she found the anguished mother gazing in dry-eyed misery on a wheezing, skeleton baby.

"Poor little one," said the kind nun pityingly, "it is very sick."

"Sister, dear," interposed the haggard mother, "he is dying of dysentery. The doctor said if it could be checked my child had a good chance, but I have had three doctors and none of them have done baby any good, and it's dying. O, my child!"

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"I remember something my mother used to give the children when they were teething; suppose we try it. Send a bone of fresh pork up to the convent and I shall prepare a mixture; you will give half a teaspoonful to the baby every now and then."

Hope gave energy to the faint woman, and in a short time the Sister received the bone. Immediately she put it in the embers to calcine it, then she ground it to powder. Next, she made a syrup with the powder, milk and sugar. A messenger was sent with the cordial to the anxious mother. The baby swallowed a few drops, and at intervals some more. Its whistling breath softened perceptibly, and in an hour it fell asleep. The saving doses were repeated, with the result that in the forenoon, when Doctors Davie and Helmcken called, they were surprised to see the little one resting.

"Your baby is better," they said.

Almost insane with the revulsion of feeling, the woman forgot civility and attentive medical service, and exclaimed, "Yes, it is better, but no thanks to either of you. If the good Sister had not given me her own prescription my child would be dead now."

"What!" shouted Doctor Davie. "Sister gave you medicine. What business had she doctoring? By Jove, if she cannot produce her doctor's certificate, she will sleep in jail tonight."

"Come, cool off," coaxed Doctor Helmcken, always a friend, through thick and thin, to the Sisters.

"Yes, she will," declared the wrathful doctor. "I'll see her in jail this very night, unless she shows her licence."

Meanwhile, Sister Mary of the Conception, passing from one good work to another, was spending the night at the bedside of Mr. and Mrs. Chavaux, who, inseparable in life, were now dying in neighboring rooms, each ignorant of the other's condition.

"Why does not my wife come to see me? She never before stayed away so long," wailed the dying husband. After soothing him for a while, the Sister would pass into the adjoining chamber, where she was met with the piteous inquiry, "Sister, what does it mean? I am dying, and my husband, who was never absent any length of time, has not been here for days."

It was a very busy night. Besides caring for the bodily and mental relief of the patients, there was a soul for Sister to wrestle from the meshes of a secret society. This being satisfactorily accomplished, the priest was sent for, and the sacraments were

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administered to the retrieved soul. About midnight it went to the presence of its neglected but merciful God.

His wife, with eyes fixed on the door, kept asking for the husband whose devotion to her had made his falling away from the Church so hard to bear. Towards morning she went to perpetuate with him in a better land the beautiful union begun twenty years before when she had become his bride.

Sister, helped by kindly hands, laid out the two corpses. The forenoon was well nigh over before this was done and the house suitably arranged. Sister was putting the finishing touches in the parlor when Doctor Helmcken dropped in, as if casually. After some remarks in keeping with the occasion, he asked: "You saw Mrs. Martin's baby yesterday?" Sister answered affirmatively and without misgiving.

"It is much better. It appears you gave it some medicine. What was it?"

"Not medicine, doctor, but a cordial made from a calcined bone, milk and sugar, such as my mother used to give the children at home."

"That is it," said the doctor reflectively, as if speaking to himself; "the lime in the bone acted all right. Nothing to find fault with there."

Doctor took his leave without alluding to prison bars. Towards sunset, Sister being relieved from duty in the house of mourning, returned to the convent. Mother Mary Providence accosted her smilingly: "Well, Sister, what is this we hear? You are going to sleep in jail tonight."

"Am I, indeed," pleasantly rejoined the hard-worked nun. "What have I done now?"

"You restored a baby to life, though you had no doctor's certificate entitling you to professional practice. The doctors are going to have you arrested."

"If I am, and I go to jail, you come too, because I was under your orders in visiting the sick." Then they both laughed as two good-souled Irish nuns can. All the same, there had been excitement in medical circles that day, and the work of pacification had not been smooth. However, no more was said about the Sister going to jail. The baby thrived and the mother never ceased to laud the skill of the Sisters.

**Cured by Faith**

This hardy nun, who decade after decade went about in British Columbia doing the Master's work, was, shortly after her arrival in Victoria, threatened with the amputation of a leg. Doctor Tolmie, who was consulted, has an entry to this effect in his interesting diary of that time. Sister said nothing when she heard the decision, but she resolved to try the efficacy of the sign of the cross and holy water before the surgeons came with their anodyne and instruments. Her faith and devout use of these two sacramentals were rewarded—she was cured over night. Next day she resumed her busy life, and never afterwards experienced the least weakness or discomfort in that limb.

It was while she was confined by this disability that the poor little convent came near being burned. The patient had been left alone with a child of about five, while the household had gone to church. This little girl, Elizabeth Eddy, now Mrs. Williams, was the first boarder to register with the Sisters of St. Ann in Victoria. Let us hear the account of this incident as she has often told it. "It was Sunday, and I stayed at home to answer Sister Mary Conception's calls, for she was laid up in bed with a swollen leg. There was a fire, and as I sat by the grate I lit a splinter and put it in a crack of the papered partition, which separated the dining room and chapel. To this day I cannot explain why I did that. Sister smelled the smoke. How she got downstairs I do not know. She took a rug and smothered the flames, but a portion of the chapel was ruined. The only punishment I got was to sit and look at the burned wall and charred chapel."

This naughty deed was certainly not an indication of this child's future propensities, for she today (1931) is known as one of San Francisco's philanthropists. Among other charities, she recently founded a quarter of a million dollar home, with memorial chapel attached, for the aged poor. Though not of our faith, she has carried through her long life the practice of blessing herself with the sign of the cross morning and night, and always in French, because so she learned it from the Sisters.

Another Scriptural remedy which this wise nun recommended was the use of saliva. As she said, "It is one of the means employed by our Blessed Lord to effect cures, and surely what He did is worthy of imitation." The effect of this application was proved in a striking manner on a young child who attended St. Ann's School. This girl of ten or so was most comely, but she had a big wart on

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her forehead. It was a conspicuous blemish which one instinctively wished to remove. Sister advised her to circle it with saliva every morning before taking food. In a short time it disappeared almost unawares.

Sister had the knowledge, as well as the faith, of her religion. On occasion she could draw from a store-house of Bible references and Church history facts. Once when she was on a sick call, a clergyman chanced to come in on the same errand of mercy. Evidently this was his first meeting with a nun. He began with more zeal than tact to show her the errors of her belief. Her Celtic blood was stirred and with quick fire she answered the offensive. Finally, when the clergyman offered to pray over her, saying, "I will pray that you may receive the light." Think it rude if you will, the spirited nun replied: "Say that prayer for yourself and you will not die out of the true Church."

The incident was so amusing that it was told to Bishop Demers. He presented Sister with a Bible—still preciously kept—saying, with a smile, "This will help you prepare for controversies."

### With the Indians

After filling the double function of teacher and nurse for six years in Victoria, Sister Mary of the Conception went, with one companion, to fill those of Indian missionary and farmer at a mission school some forty-five miles from Victoria, opened by the Sisters of St. Ann for the natives in the district of Cowichan.

Here was work enough to satisfy a pioneer Sister's energy. The convent prepared for the Sisters was built in the forest primeval. It consisted of log walls—you may see them yet—a roof and a floor. Whatever else that had to be done was left to the industry, the economy, the ingenuity of the Sisters. It was stimulating! Once somebody remarked to the veteran Sister, "Could you not have applied to the Propagation of the Faith for support?" The vivacious reply of the aged nun brought smiles. "What, would you have had us parish charges at the beginning of our mission!"

Both Sisters used their head and hands. They cleared the land, seeded it and stocked it. They not only knew the use of farm implements, but how to use them as well. The good start given to the Cowichan farm has been enduring. The virgin soil, sanctified by the labor of virgin heart and purpose, has yielded blessed results. The fields spread out, broadened, lengthened, prolific.

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The Indian girls flocked to the school to the number of forty-two. They were contented, at least as long as their constancy held out, which was six months. Only one girl ran away, and that was because the Sister threatened to cut her long hair if she made no effort to thin out its dense, and heretofore undisturbed, population. Like a hurricane the girl rushed to the camp with the false verdict that the Sisters were cutting off the hair from all the girls. Long hair was a woman's pride then, even a squaw's; but, THEN it was the style. A number of Indians ran to the convent as fast as they could, and that is pretty fast. Without ceremony they made their way to the place where the Sister was quietly fine-combing the long tresses of their daughters. Sister Mary of the Conception was not the one to quail before Indians. What they said did not affect her in the least; she did not understand the language, but she did understand that in their fierce attitude, with fists levelled at her face, they were not saying Christian things. Having done nothing more dire, the Indians went away.

This good nun was not easily intimidated. One day the wife of an Indian, who had worked on the farm, came breathlessly to the Sisters. "Come quickly," she begged, "my husband is in a fight and he will surely kill some one, then the policeman will catch him and take him to jail."

Without deliberating, thinking only of preventing evil, Sister Mary of the Conception hurried off with the woman to the scene of the Indian brawl, nearly a mile away. Knives were doing their slashing right and left. The Indians, who had begun to amuse themselves by feats of prowess and drink, had finished by quarrelling. Fighting in earnest was the natural sequence. Coming up quickly, the tall nun caught the uplifted arm of the frenzied Indian, and said, "Come away." The fighter felt her power; he went ahead of her, as she directed, to his lodge; she told the wife to put him to bed and hide his boots.

Even at this late day one listens aghast to this story, for Indians, more than other pugilistics, are like possessed beings when drunk. "Was it not most imprudent of you to expose yourself to such danger?" asked a listener. "I did not think of that till I was back at the convent; but God was with me. I returned, as I had left, without harm."

After all, discretion is the better part of valor. The Sisters did not incautiously go to the camps, but satisfied themselves with doing within their limits what they could for these people emerging from the savage state.

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### Shipwrecked

From Cowichan, Sister Mary of the Conception was called to inaugurate the convent at New Westminster. Before the E. & N. Railway was built, the trip from Victoria to Island settlements was made by water. On June 19, 1865, Sister Mary of the Conception and a companion boarded the steamer "Fideliter" at Maple Bay, en route for her new post, via Victoria. Towards evening the boat was nearing port when she collided with the heavy "Alexander." The "Fideliter" was hopelessly damaged and in twenty minutes was engulfed in the strait. In the hurry and excitement of getting into the lifeboats, one of the passengers unconsciously dropped her three-months-old baby. The two Sisters were on their knees praying and waiting till everybody had rushed by. They saw the child and picked it up. The nuns and the captain were the last to leave the now deck-submerged steamer. As they neared the shore they heard the cries of the poor, distracted mother, who had now realized that her child was missing. What was not her joy when Sister Mary of the Conception brought it to her, none the worse for its adventure.

The coming of the Sisters in New Westminster had been preceded by a propaganda of fear. The children had been told in Sunday School, and in and out of season, that the nuns, those women dressed in black, were dreadful beings; that there was no saying what would happen to children who ventured near their house. What more natural than that children should pry into the mysterious, the forbidden? At first they looked at the convent from a safe distance, and then at closer range. By and by they came near enough to see the Sisters, and hear them, too. And what they heard was, "Would you like some candy?" This sweet bait banished all fear. Attendance to the Sisters' classes was secured then, and for evermore.

### Genuine Mission Work

The occupations so far described as filling the days of Sister Mary of the Conception cannot be classified as those of a lady of leisure. They were the prelude to more arduous ones which she fulfilled during twenty consecutive years at St. Mary's Indian Mission on the Fraser.

This boarding, or rather "civilizing," school for Indian girls was opened in 1868. The pupils came in all their primitiveness. They were received with motherly love by the two Sisters. One

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was Irish, the other Canadian, but their views, their methods, their charity was identical, their treatment of their crude charges equally patient and gentle. Agreed, too, were they in golden silence over their hardships. Sister Mary of the Conception taught the rudiments of English and led operations in the laundry and hoeing in the fields. One and all became experts at stump pulling.

This, to be sure, was a major accomplishment; minor ones, such as cooking, sewing, knitting, etc., were under the direction of the other Sister, who was Superior as well. Led by kindly hand and patient step, in religious practices and domestic habits, the native girls of the Mission formed a peaceful, pleasant family household. Both nuns were the right ones in the right place. But what a fund of humility, of self-sacrifice, of tact and zeal they must have had!

The Sisters who, in Western idiom, "blazed the trail," might have been thought to have made a vow never to lose a minute. Sister Mary of the Conception gave that impression. During free time, her gnarled fingers deftly plied the mesh needle. In the many trips which she made between Victoria and the Mainland she invariably employed the passage at this favorite work. The officers on the steamer were interested in her produce. To this day some of the old-timers inquire about the Sisters who as far back as they remember used to do fine net work from the moment the boat started till it reached port. That was a long stretch, because the trip from Victoria to New Westminster, which was the opposite terminus before Vancouver was founded, occupied from ten to fifteen hours. Up the Fraser to St. Mary's, five or six more.

By turning all these extra moments to her mesh, Sister, in the course of her long life, was able to finish fifteen albs, besides several altar pieces. To appreciate these albs, when they have not been seen, one must know that they consist of a mesh foundation three yards long and three-quarters of a yard deep; in this is darned a pattern of roses alternating with lilies and a scalloped border of daisies. One such piece would stand out as the souvenir of a very long life. The large number made by our Sister shows how much can be accomplished in economized minutes. The sacristan had a grateful and delicate inspiration when, at the funeral obsequies of this venerable Sister, she saw to it that the Bishop, the deacon and the sub-deacon each wore one of these albs.

From 1899 to 1907, Sister Mary of the Conception was under a very young Superior. This condition of inferior only served to

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put her respect for authority in greater evidence. Each had the highest appreciation of the other. The young Superior says: "Our good Mother Mary of the Conception was seventy-three when I was put in charge of St. Mary's Mission. Possessed of a strong constitution, she was still able to do a big share of work. First, she taught the small Indian children. What patience and affection she had for these poor girls, so unused to the manner of living of the whites. Their progress in reading and numbers, though snail-pace, repaid her trouble. Teaching them their prayers and catechism was a task suited to her piety and zeal. Her pupils looked upon her in reverence and considered her in the light of a grandmother, because she had taught their mothers; the mothers were glad that their children were getting the tender care they themselves had received from her in their school days. By both generations she was called

### The Holy Nun

Her great love for work, spurred by her spirit of economy, necessary, no doubt, in early years, but not quite so much then, was so much a part of her that, even when comparative plenty had come to the Mission through a minimum government grant, this good mother cultivated a garden so that the Sisters and their Indian charges need not be rationed for vegetables.

The esteem she had for the Oblate Fathers, in whose diocese she spent most of her missionary career, was most profound. They reciprocated her veneration, looking upon her as a saint and attributing to her co-operation much of the success of their projects. The lay-brothers consulted her in their spiritual doubts and asked her advice in their manual perplexities; they always found her a beacon of direction.

The Oblate Fathers did not lightly consider her remarkable for holiness; they judged her by her works—by the testimony of their eyes—by the opinion in which she was held by the Indians and the white settlers in the district.

### Heroic Deed

The rounds of toil and charity which Sister discharged from womanly motives and sanctified by sacred intentions, sometimes presented occasion for the exercise of the superhuman. The example she affords of what we here relate rivals the few found in the history of canonized saints. A somewhat similar instance is told of Queen Eleanor, wife of King Edward the First. She had

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accompanied him to the Crusades. One evening, when he was resting in his tent, a Saracen suddenly struck him with a poisoned arrow. Eleanor, at the risk of her own life, absorbed the poison and cured him. But she did it for her beloved husband. In Sister's case, it was done for a stranger.

The mother of a large family who lived in an out-of-the-way place in the Fraser Valley suffered from an abscessed swelling. There was nothing for her to do but to go a two days' trip to the nearest doctor, and that was New Westminster. Her only means of immediate transportation was a rowboat. The hospitality of St. Mary's Mission, a sort of half-way-house, was a haven for wayfarers of any description, creed or color. The sick woman reached there towards evening, after a tedious row during which the inflammation of the affected organ had made rapid progress. The compassionate Sisters did all they could to make the distressed sufferer comfortable, but this was not enough to arrest the alarming course of the disorder. The fevered, festering swelling, with flesh all discolored, was a sickly sight. What was to be done? The medical aid in New Westminster was still forty-five miles away. The two Sisters at the Mission were not trained nurses. There were no surgical instruments at hand. Under such circumstances only one Sister in ten would have known what to do. Only one in a hundred would have done it. Sister Mary of the Conception was that one. She put her mouth to the pus-inflamed protrusion and sucked the venom. Again and again she repeated the process of absorption and exhalation till the poor patient was relieved. Sister Mary Lumena, who knelt in a corner of the room, kept repeating to herself, as if it were a prayer, "What a saint! What a saint!" After a few days the woman was well enough to go home without further need of a doctor.

### Sayings

The conversations of this wise nun were seasoned with wholesome, though not obtrusive, advice. Some of her sayings are treasured. For instance: "I have seen a thousand occasions when it was better not to have said it." Another: "Let it die where it passed." To a Sister who was bidding her goodbye she gave this pithy counsel: "Sister, take thorns like roses." It was not lost on the hearer, who found matter for a year's meditation in it.

To the Novices she said: "When trials or vexations come to you, do not waste time worrying over them; just put them in your

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shoes and walk on them. I did that and it worked well. Forget the past and begin all over again."

One St. Stanislas Day, the patronal feast of the Novices, when they visited her in the infirmary, she said: "You see me here on my deathbed; I have been a professed Sister of St. Ann fifty-eight years, and as long working for the Order in British Columbia; never have I once regretted the one or the other." As the probationists were introduced to her, one from Victoria, another from Ireland, and so on, she smiled, and said: "Let us not say we are from here or there; let our nationality be 'We are Sisters of St. Ann.'"

Having seen the progress of the institutions of the Sisters of St. Ann from the poor lodgings in the 30 by 10 log convent to their modern buildings, the pride of the chief cities in the province, she knew from personal experience what most of us know from books, that God blesses humble beginnings. This was her Magnificat: "Who would have thought that four poor Sisters, of very ordinary standard, would have carried an undertaking to the results we now enjoy. God gave His blessing on our 'nothing.'"

It was this experience, no doubt, that suggested her saying to her young visitors: "You will be happy in religious life if you are obedient and not afraid of work."

It may be, too, that because she had never let trouble trouble her, that she was so peaceful and composed; at any rate, she inculcated the principle in quaint personification: "There are always little troubles coming and bugbears ahead; watch them get closer and closer and, when they are right before you, jump over them and go on. Do not worry."

Asked what she considered the surest means of being happy, she answered: "Self-renunciation; and the best opportunity for this is doing the will of the Superior and disregarding one's own. In this I found the greatest happiness all along my religious life."

Sister knew how to convey a lesson. One admires the tact, the gentleness, the efficacy of the following: A foreign clergyman had visited the Academy. His prolonged, monotonous talk had been anything but pleasant. Among the seniors there was a perfect actress of a girl. As some sort of compensation for the tedious visit she amused her companions with an exaggerated caricature of the visitor. Our prudent old nun could do nothing just then, but when the thoughtless young girl passed by, Sister said: "I would like to speak to you when you are free." When the girl came to the

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rendezvous the kind nun, after a few commonplace remarks, said: "Your audience laughed a great deal this morning over your taking off the priest who honored us with his presence. You are very young, and I want to impress upon you respect for the clergy. As long as you live, remember the priest is **The Apple of God's Eye**. Keep your shafts for others, though I see little fun and little charity in making the peculiarities of others the butt of ridicule." "She spoke gently, even sadly," says the now grown-up lady who was the subject of the rebuke. "I was humbled and ashamed, but I felt that 'the velvet scabbard held the sword of steel.'"

The Irish-born reverence of this good nun for the priesthood was matched by her love for the Order to which she had dedicated herself. Vocations delighted her. The younger generation of Sisters will never have a more genuine admirer than this pioneer Victoria Sister. In them she saw every good quality, every accomplishment. She summed their panegyric in this fond statement: "You might go the rounds of the convents in America and not find a body of such ladylike, intelligent, capable, willing young Sisters; such true religious, full of piety and the spirit of the Institute."

Old age is reminiscent. In the last years of her life this dear nun spoke about the bill-of-fare served in the Order when she joined it. Sugar, milk and butter were luxuries. The beverage called "tea" was hardly drinkable by an Irish woman. She was rueing these privations in a conversation with a nun who was only twenty, but wise in the wisdom of faith. "What does it signify to do without these accessories," reasoned the young nun, "and what does it matter that we spread our bread over with mashed pumpkins, carrots and beets in guise of butter, when we want to do something in God's service."

### Nearing the End

With pardonable pride the Superiors introduced distinguished visitors to the infirmary to see this venerable nun. All marvelled at the lucidity of her faculties, the philosophy of her remarks, the gladness of her welcome, her interest in everything—education, finances, the public good. Spontaneously she drew from her fund of local history, humor and piety. On December 10, 1912, she was honored by the visit of two archbishops and a bishop. Invariably throughout her life she had been considerate and polite, in Christ-like spirit, to great and small, young and old, Indian and negro. On this exceptional occasion, as on ordinary ones, her calm reverence

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and well-chosen words reflected dignity on her age. But the frame, once so strong, which enclosed this clear mind, was a dwarfed skeleton. In middle age she had injured her spine in saving a piano from falling off a stage. Her emaciation was a subject of pleasant jest. She would say, "Put a placard on my grave to inform worms not to waste time on me, for there isn't a mouthful for them to eat on my carcass."

In the summer gathering of 1907, the Sisters of St. Ann in Victoria drew out the best from their repertoire of music, song and verse to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of profession of this good nun, and that of her life-long companion, Sister Mary Lumena. In acknowledging the tribute, the humble jubilarian said: "For my part, I fear there is no merit in what I did for the Institute; I had so much happiness in doing it." The next year, June, 1908, marked the Golden Jubilee of the Victoria convent. The two Sisters sat side by side to receive the homage of the public for their well-spent lives in the welfare of the province.

These demonstrations over, the jubilarians returned like doves to the cote, to their preferred solitude, to await the call of the Bridegroom.

Having outlined Sister Mary of the Conception's active life, it is interesting to know how she spent the period of her superannuation. At the 4.45 o'clock rising bell, true to the convent habits of nearly sixty years, she intoned the prayer by which the community is awakened. Then followed her meditation. Her bed faced the chapel door. Propped on pillows, she could see the celebrant at the altar during Holy Mass and other services. When, on the last day of her life, the priest brought her daily Communion, as usual, the ardor, so long controlled, burst forth and she spoke out her acts of love and desire for the Spouse of her soul.

At 8.30 every morning the infirmarian helped her dress and, making her comfortable in the wheel-chair, rolled her into the chapel. That was the longed-for time. There, before the Most Blessed Sacrament, the dear old nun prayed without relaxation and without dozing, till dinner. She spent the noon recreation with the Sisters in the community room, seeing all, listening to all, and interested in all—in school progress, house entertainments, the war bulletins; selfishness found no entrance to her big heart. As the clock neared one, she became restless to go back to her post of adoration before the Tabernacle. There she stayed in the Divine Presence till five, with a short intermission at three, when she took

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a cup of tea. Being independent, she helped herself in every possible way; and being mortified, she studied to give no trouble and guarded against complaining.

During the evening she received the Sisters with pleasure, grateful for the part of recreation they were giving her. She was very fond of companionship and the hours seemed long to her when she was alone. If they were long, they were not lonely, because, as she said, "With my beads I cannot be lonesome." The nights were wakeful, but she used to employ them in saying her rosary, going over the fifteen decades as many as three and four times between her snatches of sleep.

In her desire to die she had thought death near at every change in her system, so had been anointed five times. A Sister who was very devoted to her had promised to let her know as soon as the death symptoms appeared. It was truly pitiful to hear the dear old soul inquire, two or three times a week, "Are not the signs here yet?" Not that she was impatient of earth, but that she was impatient to see God. Finally, the symptoms did come; gently they finished their task at four in the afternoon. Beautiful scene! The chapel door was open, the priest at her bedside, the Sisters surrounding her, praying.

The announcement was made to the Sisters in the various houses of the province in the following circular:

"Our loved Mother Mary of the Conception has gone from her rank of honor among us to one incomparably higher in God's Kingdom. She is a venerable pioneer in our Institute; the last of the four columns on which our Western convents have been erected. We all know how she longed and prayed to go to her eternal rest, but so conformed was her will to that of God that she checked this holy desire with childlike repentance, saying 'When God wills.'

"Three years ago she had a breakdown. It made her happy, for she thought the end had come, but it was only the first indication that the functions of her wonderful constitution were reduced. Since then, the hands which had done so much hard work were restricted to just enough action to feed herself and hold up her prayer-book; the feet which had walked so firmly in God's cause were now to totter feebly in the infirmary. The material constituents alone declined; the mind was as rays of light, the memory vivid, the intelligence keen, the affections warm and all-encircling. Her charming repartees elicited the remark, 'Catch her if you can.'"

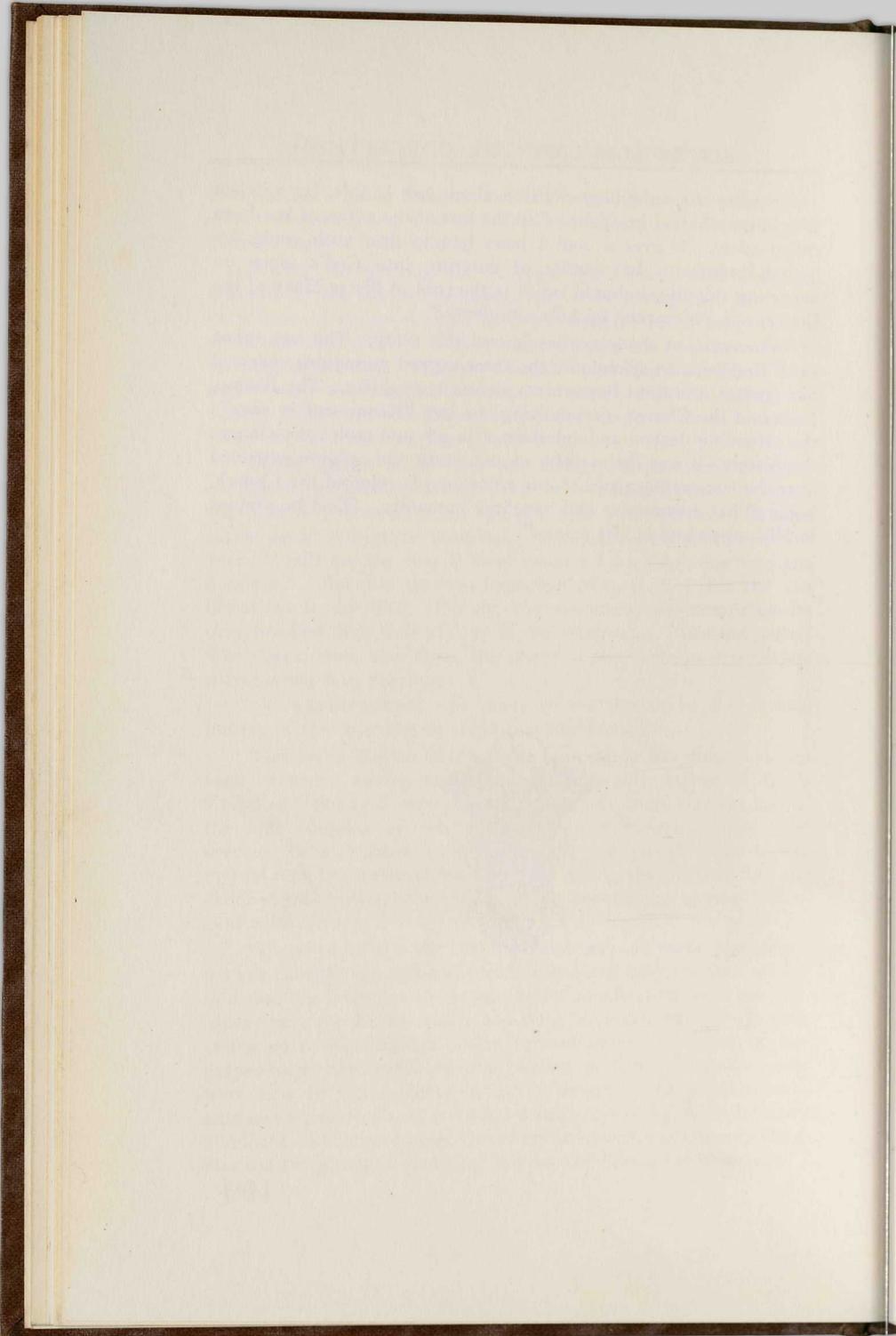
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Among the eulogiums written about her is this, by a priest who knew whereof he spoke: "So the last of the veterans has been called away. If ever a soul I have had to deal with could, by human judgment, be worthy of entering into God's glory on departing this life, I should say it is the soul of Sister Mary of the Conception, so marked by holy simplicity."

The scene at the grave prefigured this glory. The sun shone in all its Victorian splendour; the snow-capped mountains sparkled like crystal; the Ross Bay waters gleamed sapphires. The Bishop, Prince of the Church, pronouncing the last "Requiescat in pace"; the attending deacon and sub-deacon in alb and stole; the clergy; the Sisters—it was the majesty of sky, earth and religion extended over the last resting place of one whose deeds rejoiced the Church, honored her community and benefited humanity. "God be praised in His angels and in His saints."







**MOTHER MARY ANN**

Foundress of the Sisterhood of St. Ann, one of three  
widespread North American teaching orders  
which originated in Canada.



## SISTER MARY LUMENA

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### CHAPTER II.

### *Sister Mary Lumena*

1858 - 1912

TWO classes of womanhood share the honor of being on the Roll of Pioneer Women of Victoria. The brides of Englishmen, and of Scotsmen, who, true to their marriage vows, stood ready for service at the side of their husbands, on the ships which bore them, for better or worse, to primitive lands, there to find fanciful fortunes, or build rough-hewn homes in virgin forests. The other class is the Brides of Christ who, true to their religious vows, came westward at the call of their Divine Spouse, to be helpmates in the spread of His spiritual kingdom.

Sister Mary Lumena belonged to this class. For more than half a century she served her Lord's cause with ever-increasing love and peaceful devotion. No striking incident marks her long career, except the remarkable fact of her unvarying gentleness and happiness of soul in the education of girls. Her equanimity, gladness of spirit, and her merit as an educator, are all the more admirable as her lot was cast mostly among the aborigines of British Columbia.

The rules of pedagogy of the Sisters of St. Ann, each of whom has a copy, mentions four qualities to which, as religious educators, they should aspire—relative sanctity, firmness, devotedness and love. The chapters on each of these assets are like caskets of gems; every thought, every Scripture quotation, a pearl. That on Love is particularly beautiful; for instance, "The educator should picture the Divine Master commissioning St. Peter to feed His sheep and His lambs, but first ascertaining that the heart of the apostle is inflamed with the sacred fire of love." And again, "The first thing to do when a pupil presents herself, before knowing whether she is amenable or not, is to treat her with motherly love."

Sister Mary Lumena reached a high degree of these ideal educational qualities. She began with love. This is not natural, because love does not flow easily, nor spring with a bound, to the unknown, but when it does, the other conditions of the educator follow imperceptibly. It is natural to associate devotedness with love, but firmness, which is none the less a mark of the truest love in the rearing of children, is often at a discount. Sister Mary Lumena's result in fitting girls, taken from the lowest scale of

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humanity, for Christian domestic life, would have fallen short had she been wanting in firmness; but, rare gift, she was gently firm.

### Vocation

As the world follows with friendly curiosity the course of courtship which leads to the plighting of troth at God's altar, so Christians trace with edification the growth of a vocation, which is sealed by the vows of religion in the sanctuary of the House of God.

Sister Mary Lumena's call to religion, and subsequent pioneer work in British Columbia, precluded in simplicity the even tenor of her whole life. Fourth in a family of eleven, she was stirred to love for the conventual state at the age of ten, while listening to her mother's reminiscences of her school years with the Sisters of Notre Dame. These early seeds of vocation did not, however, germinate for a long time. The child attended the rural school; her father's circumstances did not afford more. The girl having reached her sixteenth year without seeing any probability of furthering her education sufficiently to apply for admission in a convent, gave herself up to the vanity of her teens. The vanity of ninety years ago consisted in ample, trailing, beflounced dresses, crinolines, hair below the waistline, ribbons, laces, dances, and, the theatre for the perverse—but, I venture to say, Miss Louise Virginia Brassard was not one of the latter.

One day a brother of hers, not yet of school age, seeing the village teacher pass by, said: "What an easy time teachers have; they wear nice clothes and go home early."

You would not expect so childish a remark to open the way to a religious vocation, would you? But it did. It led to a conversation on education in the course of which Mr. Brassard spoke of its advantages both in the material and supernatural order. "The chances for success are far greater for the educated than for the uneducated," he said, and, being a sincere Catholic, he enlarged on the greater glory rendered to God by properly directed learning. He remarked that since we are on earth "to know, love, and serve God," education helps considerably towards attaining these ends. Moreover, that while the number of unlettered saints is countless, thanks be to God, their influence, with few exceptions, has been limited, whereas that of the learned saints has been far reaching, especially through their writings. He went on to say that the teaching profession, rightly exercised, must be very meritorious in the sight of God, since the Scriptures mention the special kind of

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reward promised to "those who instruct others unto justice," saying they "shall shine like stars in the kingdom of heaven."

Blessed the fireside where conversations like this, blend earth and heaven. They bear fruit. On this occasion, Louise Virginia was the reaper. Her father's discourse sounded like a canticle, drawing her upwards. She felt herself glow with the desire of taking part in so exalted a profession. "Father," she said timidly, "I would like to be a teacher."

"If it would please you to try," he answered, "you may do so. I am now in a position to afford letting you continue your education." She was twenty.

A week or so later she entered the boarding school of the Sisters of St. Ann. It was the 29th of September, feast of St. Michael the Archangel. In those times it was a convent custom for the pupils to examine their conscience at the close of the forenoon session. This was the first exercise in her new life, at which Miss Brassard assisted. When she entered into it, she had no other object in mind than that of preparing to be a school teacher, but in those few minutes the Holy Ghost breathed upon her. When the short exercise was over she had decided to be a consecrated, religious teacher. Nurtured by the inspiring talks heard at a mother's knee, and the elevating conversations of a father in the home circle, a lily had bloomed for the adornment of the Catholic Church.

Stimulated by the hope of becoming a nun, Miss Brassard studied intensively, and having a keen, receptive intellect, she made rapid progress. She took the first veil at the age of twenty-two, and her vows at the end of the prescribed two years novitiate. Her name in religion, Sister Mary Lumena, which means "light," suited her well, for she not only shed the light of religion, and the light of one who possesses her soul in patience, but her clear vision of things economic, as well as spiritual, made her a wise counsellor and administrator. Later on, when she was in Mission City, B.C., she was called to Victoria twice a year to take part in the deliberations of the council concerned with the general interests of the Sisters of St. Ann.

### Volunteers of 1858

In 1858, a year after Sister Mary Lumena's profession, the momentous decision of opening a convent on Vancouver Island was put to the option of the Sisters as a body. With one voice they agreed upon its acceptance, and with one voice they asked to

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be sent there, to do what was considered the most self-sacrificing work in the Order.

In theory, and by vow, nuns are expected to go at the beck and call of legitimate authority, but in practice, especially when the situation demands exceptional hardships and a sort of exile, the subject is consulted, for the service of God should be willing. "The Lord loves the cheerful giver."

Going from homeland and the cradle of the Institute near the Atlantic Coast to a fur traders' post on the Pacific shore, was one of those cases in which the members of a community were left free. But, so great was the fervor of the Sisters for sacrifice, that the difficulty was not so much who to choose from so many volunteers but who to decline. Only four were needed to start the work. Sister Mary Lumena was the choice of the Administration, but she had a holy rival, a Sister who was inflamed with zeal to devote herself to what was interpreted as missionary work. Filled with the love of the cross, this saintly nun stormed heaven and earth to obtain the grace of being chosen to instruct the heathen. To prayer she added human agency. She employed companions to use their influence over Sister Mary Lumena to persuade her to conceal her willingness to go to the western field. One of these agents approached Sister Mary Lumena and asked, "Sister, are you praying to go to Vancouver Island?"

"No, Sister, but I wish very much to go."

"O, Sister, do you not know that holy desires are equal to prayers? Sister Mary Alphonsus wishes me to say to you that if you do not mention your desire of going to work among the natives, and let her go in your stead, she will do all she can to have you be one of the next band." So Sister Mary Lumena, placid, trustful, smiling, kept in the background, and Sister Mary Alphonsus, eager, intent, penitential, received the coveted nomination.

It does not matter much in the transactions of this big, round world whether Sister So and So says her prayers, teaches, nurses, rules or cooks in Halifax or Victoria, but this does matter in God's plan of the universe. Less things than that matter with Him; even the number of our hairs and the falling off of one of them. Therefore He intervenes manifestly when He wants a certain person in a certain place. He willed that Sister Mary Lumena should come to British Columbia, and this is how He brought it about, thwarting one who, though meaning well, tried to thwart Him. Sister Mary Alphonsus, who was already a capable

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infirmarian, went to prepare for her future work, at the Hotel Dieu, a Montreal hospital which rose in the Heroic Age of Canada. While there, making the most of her advantages to gain medical knowledge to be used for the glory of God and the relief of suffering humanity, the experienced Hotel Dieu nurses detected the symptom of disease in her which presaged a short life. They gave this sad information to the Mother General of the Sisters of St. Ann. There was nothing occult in such a diagnosis, but it brought about God's purpose. His Holy Will is done through such commonplace ways that it takes a very spiritual-minded Christian to see that He had anything at all to do with it.

Sister Mary Alphonsus, like an expectant martyr who sees her heavenly crown withdrawn, ceded to the inevitable, and returned to her infirmary duties at the Mother House. Although Sister Mary Lumena, through deference for her companion's zealous spirit, had not obtruded her own attraction for a life of toil and sacrifice, her dispositions were well known. She was filling her duties in one of the branch houses when she was called for an interview with those with whom it rested to name a substitute for the above.

"Is it true that you said if anything occurred to prevent one of the sisters from going to Vancouver Island, you would be quite ready to take her place?" she was asked.

"Yes, Reverend Mother, I did, and I am still quite ready," she answered gleefully.

"You are laughing, but I am in earnest," said the Reverend Mother.

"I know you are, Reverend Mother; but I am laughing because what I knew would happen is happening; I felt all along that I would go, so I am not surprised, but most pleased and happy."

The sequel to this beautiful vocation was all that might be expected of one whose path was so evidently traced by Divine Providence.

### **Anchored on Western Shores**

The two months' sea voyage came near being fatal to this good Sister, for she suffered without reprieve from its rolling, plunging, frolicking caprices. I suppose it is not generally known how long life can subsist on cold water, but Sister existed on that alone during the whole voyage, except when the party struck land on the Isthmus of Panama, and in San Francisco. Though Sister escaped burial at sea, she was nothing but a skeleton when she reached her

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destination. But land is a magic restorative for sea complaints. The day after the landing of the Sisters in Victoria was Sunday. Sister Mary Lumena, with vigor born of Christ-love, began at once to teach catechism to the few children and women whom curiosity had drawn to the nuns. She has the honor of being the first nun to teach Christian doctrine on this island. This was the beginning of the fifty-four years of labor given by this Bride of Christ to the uplifting of the offspring of trappers and *coureurs des bois*, and, most extensively to the Indian children of the Fraser valley, in the Mission school. She went there on November 5, 1868, from the Victoria convent which had now become the centre from which Sisters went to open boarding and mission schools on the Island and on the Mainland.

There is much meaning in the saying, "a vocation within a vocation." Sister Mary Lumena had proved a competent worker in the good cause in Victoria, but she excelled in the civilizing of children who came in all their original crudeness from the Indian camps. She poured on them the flood of a mother's tenderness. To the bright, she afforded every means of rising to the level of a practically equipped woman—a solid elementary education; skill in needle work, etc.; laundering, and care of church linen that they might be a help to the missionary; and playing the organ. In this domestic training their progress from learning the use of a chair, a table, kitchen utensils, and so on, and the formation of their characters, she gave her best as generously and nobly as if they had been high-born pupils. The following letters, exactly copied, proclaim her success.

"Very dear Sister:—Once more Christmas comes, and once again I come to offer you, dearest Sister Mary Lumena, my most sincere and best wishes for a merry, merry season. I wish I could come in person and tell you how often I think and speak of you. How very often, especially at Christmas time, my schooldays, yes, happy schooldays rise up before me, and how grateful I am to you and dear Sister Mary Conception for having filled them with happiness." Surely a creditable letter.

"Dearest Sister:—February 15 is fast approaching and I hasten to offer you my most loving wishes for a happy birthday and many, very many happy returns. How well I remember the happy times we used to have on that day. I to this day, often repeat the verse I liked so well on the air of "O doux Jesus benissez-la."

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Oh! bless her from all lips we hear,  
God bless our loved Superior!  
No idle words are these we say,  
With all sincerity we pray.  
Lord, hear the prayer that we repeat,  
While life shall last will we entreat  
God bless our loved Superior!

"Yes, may God bless you, dear Sister Mary Lumena, and give you His choice blessing is my sincere prayer."

Is it believable that the writer had, up to the age of ten, been a dweller in a squalid Indian lodge and, like her ancestors, had squatted on its bare ground around the camp fire, munching smoked fish? Believe it, it is true.

These are all written by different pupils, now married.

"Most dear Sister:—With pleasure I write to my never forgotten teacher who has been like a mother to me." After giving news of her family, she concludes, "Now, dear Sister, you will think I have bothered you with all the trifles I can think of, but I would just love to see your dear face again and talk you to death." 1902.

The labor had been long and, perhaps, wearisome, but what a reward lay in these sentiments!

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Sister Mary Lumena and Sister Mary of the Conception, 1907. "I received your most welcome and much appreciated letter and thank you a thousand times for your kind wishes. I was pleased to hear of the happy times you had when you celebrated your Golden Jubilee. Had I known about it I should certainly have had a hand in it, for I am sure there is NO ONE who owes you both more than I do. Of course, I could not have done very much, but at least I would have done a little to show my gratitude. As long as I live I shall not forget you, dear Sister Mary Lumena, nor dear Sister Mary of the Conception. I will enclose a trifle (ten dollars) as my jubilee present and you can get whatever you want. 'Better late than never.' Another woman and myself went among the Catholics and made up a purse of \$55.00 for our Pastor's Christmas present."

From a repentant pupil. "My dear Sister Mary Lumena:—I have not been to church for a good many years, but at heart I am a Catholic and dear Sister the good convent lessons always come back. I hope you have a wee corner in your heart to give your bad but grateful pupil of old."

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Even this letter of sad confession contains its element of reward for Christian training.

A number of letters addressed to Sister Mary Lumena are the outpourings of a broken-hearted Indian mother. She had learned the lesson of resignation to the Divine Will. In all her troubles she repeats, "It is the Will of God." Five children die. She finds consolation in her ejaculation, "It is the Will of God." Her son dies in jail. The full account of it, which she gives to one who, in Christ's name, had been a mother to her, would melt a heart of stone. "Dear Sister:—My son die in jail. This make me so unhappy for him but this thought come to me, 'It is the Will of God.' Pray, for this son of mine is buried out from the graveyard. The chief say he not fit to be buried inside. I thank the chief and I say, 'It is the Will of God,' let him be buried outside for he is a sinful child. I always remember what you say to me when I was with you. . . ."

Is it not glorious for a follower of "the Lamb who feedeth among the lilies," to have thus led a soul from heathenism to such heights of Christianity?

Not to multiply these touching letters, the transcriber will close with one written August 27, 1912. It acknowledges the death notice of the venerable Sister. "It is with deep sorrow that I received the sad news of the death of my dear Mother, Sister Mary Lumena. Sad, indeed, it is for me for I have lost a dear friend, a loving mother whose affection and sympathy have been most precious to me. I recall to memory fifteen happy years spent with her, and her only desire was to make us happy and contented. Although she was Sister Superior she did not wish us to look up to her as such, but as to our mother. She was never so happy as when we would group around her chair, which we always did when we saw her seated. Then, she would say with a smile, 'We are, indeed, a happy family.' I enclose five dollars for masses, or a High Requiem for her, as you think best. I will have mass said here and go to communion for her, when the priest comes on his rounds."

Who among us could improve on these letters, or wish for more beautiful feelings than those they so touchingly express?

### A Unique Wedding Trip

Quite recently the chronicler was in Mission City, the scene of that Utopian-like school. It is the land of beauty, the land of

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plenty. The buildings consist of a church, in which the white congregation is steadily increasing, at its right, a residential house for the native boys, under the direction of the Oblate Fathers; at its left, one for the native girls, under the direction of the Sisters of St. Ann. These are on an undulating hill. The Fraser River flows calmly past its base. On the opposite bank, Mount Baker rises in the ridge of mountains, a triple pyramid of sparkling white. Surely, this place escaped the curse which marred the new-born earth. The 375 acres of mission land yield fruit and vegetables to superfluity. Do you wonder at this when you remember that the stumps, which once lorded it there, were uprooted by the anointed hands of priests, and the dedicated labor of Brides of Christ? The produce there is not for sale, but for the use of the school, which averages one hundred and twenty.

The memory of the two good Sisters, who helped to make this spot flow with milk and honey and made life so happy for the mission girls, is still very fresh. One of the pupils of some fifty years ago came the other day to make her Easter Duty. She said, "I never knew any other mother but Sister Mary Lumena, and what a kind mother she was to me. There never was a more home-like, happy family than ours, with her and dear Sister Mary of the Conception. The girls nowadays would not think so. I see some of them on the playground there who are wearing black satin dresses and gold-colored sweaters. We wore lilac print for our best dresses which came down to our ankles; our blouses were of brown linsey, and our bonnets were of white cambric. This uniform was not pretty." (I should think not.) "All year we had fish and potatoes. Our tea was the herbs, which we picked in the woods. For a time this was sweetened with molasses. The Sisters had the same fare as we did, but sometimes they baked wheaten bread. Their New Year gift to us was a small loaf to every one. That was a great treat. At Christmas and New Year we had a dish of boiled rice; that, too, was sweetened with molasses. Every year things got better. I was married from the mission. Dear Sister Mary Lumena gave me three dresses, and sets of underwear, and many little things to start housekeeping. After the Mass and our breakfast at the convent my husband and I walked four miles down the railroad track and back for our wedding trip. We were very happy."

Sister Mary Lumena was like a harp whose many strings are always kept in perfect accord. To the very end of her octogenarian

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life she felt the joy of life. She enjoyed God's creation. Her world of love was her holy state, children and flowers. Every morning when the weather was favorable, she devoted a short time to a plot on the academy grounds, where she cultivated with pleasurable success pansies, carnations, roses, etc. . . . Outdoor life, indoor life, each with its manual or sedentary occupations, gave her equal enjoyment. Gardening, hoeing, sewing, reading, teaching, recreating, she did it all with a sense of pleasure, we may say, with a sort of harmless complacency. So methodical was she that she had time for the variety of tasks which she set on herself. She never sacrificed nor curtailed one at the expense of another. We are now speaking of the period between her seventy-fifth and eightieth years, when she was in what may be termed retired life. Every day, as if only that particular one counted, she began with the fresh goodwill of youth, her hours of prayer and machine sewing, her hours of recreation and lace-making. Every day she filled her lamp with the oil of absolute adherence to the Holy Rule of her Order. From heaviness of body, and inflamed limbs, her walk had become a shuffling; she was, nevertheless, the first in the chapel for morning meditation, at 5.25, and first to respond to the call of the bell which called to any department for an exercise. The long tarrying of the Master made her all the more vigilant in keeping her lamp trimmed.

Sister Mary Lumena's active mind and busy hands, her peaceful disposition, her agreeable readiness to oblige, joined to a tender participation in the welfare or reverses of her companions, made her an endearing personality. For a person of her years she was strangely guileless. Once, when a Sister asked her to pray in reparation for some great scandal, she was so shocked that such an evil could have happened that she wept, and although the perpetrator was a stranger to her, she was disturbed in her sleep for many nights.

Though her placid countenance and pleased presence diffused light in the community circle, the revered nun had her crosses; earth offers no truce to suffering, and the holier the saint, the heavier the cross. This dear Sister carried her heart burdens humbly, silently. It is no small recognition of this Sister's worth that Bishop Seghers of Victoria, and Martyr Apostle of Alaska, said of her qualities as nun and as manager of the native element, "Sister Mary Lumena lives her name, 'light.'"

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### The Little Virtues

Like all grand souls whom God has called to fill special missions in His honor, Sister Mary Lumena practised the little virtues. By "little virtues" is meant the humdrum actions of everyday life, performed in such a way as to make us tolerable to others, and afford our Angel Guardian something worth while entering in the Book of Life. This may not be a theologian's definition, but it answers the popular idea. Witnesses of this good nun's daily actions would agree that her Angel Guardian was kept pretty busy keeping the register of her meritorious deeds. She paid respectful homage to her superiors, and obeyed the implied as well as the expressed wish of authority. The following is an example. She was in her seventy-sixth year when the formula of prayers in use in the Order for half a century was revised. To give up customs of a life-time is not easy, and several Sisters, already advanced in age, said that they would hold to the old, familiar form in their private devotions. In this they were obeying the letter of the law, but this holier nun at once conformed to its spirit. She had the new book constantly beside her as she sewed, shot her lace bobbins, or chained prayer beads, and studied the prayers as a school-girl does her lessons.

Speaking of prayer beads—making them was one of the chief occupations of her life, if any occupation can be called chief in one who did a multitude of things with judgment and order. Brilliant must be the crown the Queen of Heaven bestowed upon her for the countless rosaries she strung together, with pliers and expert fingers, for the praise of this Immaculate Mother.

The same tools which she used in making beads—that crown of Mary—for others, she used in making instruments of penance for herself; chains with which she gave herself the discipline, and pointed wire bracelets to inflict pain on her virginal body. Even in her declining years she did not relax in the use of these penitential instruments.

Another example of this nun's spirit of mortification will show that we still have saints among us. Like all old people she took a light supper. In the last few years this consisted of a bowl of bread and milk. God permitted that through a misunderstanding in the kitchen, or a mistake of the Sister who waited on table, the quantity of milk served in her jug should suddenly be diminished by half. The first time the reduced portion was set before her an expression of surprise escaped her. "Is that all?" she said, "it is

not enough to wet the bread." Then, as if repenting of her unguarded remark, she made up the deficiency with water. This went on every night for several months before her death. Not another word was ever said about it; the Superior, the cook, the waitress were never the wiser for it, so this precious foundress, who by a word of complaint would have brought them in suffused apology before her, continued to the end to take a supper on bread and watery milk. The Sister who saw it should have reported, but did not. Who places this act of repression and abstinence on the part of this gentle old nun among "the little virtues"?

#### The Faithful Steward

Like a faithful steward this methodical nun kept her spiritual statements in order. In many Orders there is, beside the annual eight-day retreat, a monthly one. It consists in setting aside a day for stricter silence, making a review of one's standing with God, taking resolutions, and preparing for death. Among Sister Mary Lumena's papers were many little envelopes containing her monthly resolutions, and choice of a subject for particular examen. This latter exercise is made every day, at about noon, and implies considering one's progress or failure in the acquisition of a particular virtue. Unfolding these envelopes of this revered nun is almost as sacred as opening the tabernacle door. It is done with reverence for the edification of souls. In reading them one must bear in mind that holy people see themselves in an unfavorable light. If we took the verdict of their interior as they give it, and did not have the testimony of our own eyes to contradict it, we might believe them as imperfect as ourselves. In Sister Mary Lumena, amiable virtues appeared as her natural inheritance; and yet, this is how she saw herself:—

RESOLUTIONS—September, 1909. 1. Conform myself to the Holy Will of God. 2. Perseverance and punctuality in serving the Sisters who ask me for something. 3. Repress impatience as soon as I notice myself ruffled. 4. Observe myself at table, at recreation, in my dealings with my Sisters. 5. Not speak of myself. 6. Be silent over the work I do for the missions, for others. SUBJECT OF PARTICULAR EXAMEN—Not say a word of what makes me feel bad, and keeps me from sleeping. O God, make haste to come to my aid!

This is surely heeding one's way. Let us submit another such study.

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October, 1909. 1. Combat pride, vain-glory, my inclination to ease, to self-love. 2. Correct my faults of character—vivacity, impatience, ill-humor, want of charity, of meekness. 3. Overcome my negligence in little things; in my religious exercises. 4. Combat antipathy. (You dear old soul, you were all kindness, to all.) 5. Not complain of the cold. 6. Practise poverty, fidelity to our Holy Rules. 7. Renew my vows of poverty, chastity and obedience every day at the Elevation. I purpose to perform all my actions for the general good of the community. I am always afraid of falling into tepidity, and routine. As a caution against this, I am careful not to dispense myself of any of the pious exercises to which I have been long accustomed. "Draw me, O Lord, and I shall run in the odor of Thy ointments." PARTICULAR EXAMEN:—Apply my mind to pious thoughts while working.

The fact of keeping these monthly statements shows that this good Sister, by corresponding to the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation, had become a soldier of Christ who kept her weapons of spiritual defence always whetted.

The truly great are simple. Sister Mary Lumena was charmingly so.

She was so with those around her, and with the saints in heaven. With the directness of a child, she accompanied the resolutions of her retreats with a letter, addressed to Good St. Ann, or other heavenly patrons. "April 8, 1910. My good Mother St. Ann. I come to place myself under your protection, and ask you the grace to keep the fruit of my retreat; to be faithful to my resolution, and to become a good and fervent Sister of St. Ann." (You old dear, your Sisters in religion know that you have been that all your life.) "Obtain for me the spirit of humility, of mortification, of penance." (She was then seventy-eight and chastising herself with a wire-pointed armlet and a scourge of chains caught in a handle.) "Give me the desire to control myself in what displeases me; to renounce my judgment, and practise detachment from self. My dear Mother. I ask you these graces for my Sisters. I recommend those who are sick to you; relieve them in their sufferings; obtain the cure of those who can still work for God's glory in our Institute. Pray for our superiors, and all those who need our help. You are the Mother and Patroness of our Congregation, protect us from all dangers, misfortunes, accidents, fire, sickness and all that might be prejudicial to the sisterhood. I have the intention of offering you these petitions

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every day of my life. Present them to your Immaculate Daughter that she may present them to her Divine Son. Sister Mary Lumena."

Referring to penitential instruments, it may be explained that their use in active orders, like that of the Sisters of St. Ann, is optional. There are lay Catholics who apply these chastisements on themselves and wear hair shirts. There was long kept in St. Ann's Convent a heart-sickening discipline, a bundle of chains, each of which ended with star-shaped pointed wire. This instrument had been used by a devout sea captain. He died at St. Joseph's Hospital. Before passing away he asked the Superior to remove that article from his effects. In these latter times most disciplines are made of coarse twine, consisting of three, five or more strands, each strand has a number of "single wall knots." These knots are seen in the Franciscan girdle.

Since the privilege of entering into the privacy of Sister Mary Lumena's beautiful soul is granted us, let us continue discovering the means she took to sanctify herself. These are the resolutions she enclosed in above letter. "Suffer in silence the contradictions that come to me from this and that; offer them to Our Lord in union with His sufferings. 2. Repress myself, and conform my will to that of God. 3. Not complain nor murmur when I am displeased. 4. Not to talk of myself nor of my work." (We see how often the dear soul returns to the charge on that score.) "5. Read a chapter in the Following of Christ every day with the intention of practising what that chapter teaches. I make every effort to acquire the presence of God. SUBJECT OF PARTICULAR EXAMEN:— To acquire union with Our Lord, exert myself to think many times a day of the Communion I made in the morning, and keep myself in spirit in the house of Nazareth with the Holy Family. O, St. Ann, help me every day, since I invoke you every day as my Mother and my Advocate."

This correspondence with the blessed in heaven is so sweet, so familiar and profitable, that every good Christian will be thankful for yet another of these sample letters. Written February, 1912, it is her last, and like the song of the dying swan, her sweetest. "To Mary Immaculate. My good Mother. I, today, renew all the letters I have addressed you at every annual retreat. I offer you the resolutions and good purposes which I formed during this retreat, which will close tomorrow. I place them under your protection; help me to fulfil them every day of my life.

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Grant me the graces I ask of you, for myself, my relatives, my Sisters, those who ask my prayers. RESOLUTIONS:—1. Fidelity to little things; little points of the Rule. 2. Fidelity to make my spiritual exercises with fervor. 3. Fidelity to union with God, and the thought of His presence by hours of guard, ejaculations, spiritual communions. 4. Practise acts of humility that I may acquire humility. SUBJECTS with which to occupy myself after the Hour of Guard:—"O Jesus, draw me and I shall run in the odor of Thy ointments." (This was a favorite ejaculation; it recurs again and again in her monthly bulletin of retreats.) "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee." Go over in my mind the eight Beatitudes; the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost; the seven corporal works of mercy; the seven spiritual works of mercy; the seven capital sins; the four last ends.

As if reluctant to end her letter to Mother Mary, she goes on with what may be styled a rambling colloquy. She strews it with quotations, prayers, and the virtues to which she aspires. She says: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he suffer the loss of his soul?" "O Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Sacred Heart of Jesus with all His sufferings and His merits to obtain final perseverance, contrition for my sins, firm purpose of amendment; the love of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus; humility, forgetfulness of self, mortification, abnegation. May I never lose from sight the practice of my perfection. May I bear in mind the four following maxims:—Do the will of others; choose the last place; desire less rather than more; reconcile ourselves with those who have offended us. "If carrying your gift to the altar you remember you have ill-feelings towards another, leave there your offering, and go first and be reconciled to him." "O Jesus, make me feel the sweetness of Thy presence."

Her last monthly account has this entry: "I will prepare myself for death at every confession." She died eight days after. She was sensitive to cold, consequently she was much inconvenienced by the open doors and windows of the "Fresh Air" era. Repeatedly we read among her resolutions, "I will not complain of the cold." "I will bear the discomfort of the cold in silence." "I will resign myself to cold in union with the sufferings of Our Lord, to obtain the love of suffering, and resignation to God's Holy Will."

It is easy to picture God staying His avenging hand over a place in which He sees a soul of this stamp.

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This self-investigation, which the good old nun gives us, of her conduct, brings home to us that the octogenarian has to "fight the good fight," without relaxation, just as people in their prime do, or should do, if they would be crowned in the kingdom of the Blessed. Another lesson which strikes us is that the longer one has walked in the path of Christian perfection, the closer has that one kept to the fundamental lessons taught to every little Catholic child—the Beatitudes, the works of mercy; death, judgment, heaven, eternal punishment—thoughts which filled the mind of this saintly old nun to the end. It all seems so simple, so easy. Is it?

Sister Mary Lumena, though occupied during the best years of her life in civilizing Indian children, and providing food and clothing for them by the roughest sort of labor, did not neglect her intellectual improvement. Books were scarce, but she made it a point to read every day; she also devoted time to keeping a diary, and later on to memoirs. The first of her writings is the account of her two months' trip from Montreal to Vancouver. The introduction to this journal is so tender and touching that we, as well as her parents, for whom it was intended, are eager to read it.

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits He has bestowed on me," and continues to bestow on me daily?

"You know the words which Our Lord addressed to His followers. 'To those who for the love of me,' He says, 'have left father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends, and possessions, I will give a hundredfold in this life, and life everlasting (that is the happiness of heaven) in the next.'

"Having understood these words, how can one resist them? Can any sacrifice be too great? Does Our Lord ask too much? No, it is not too much; it is not enough for one who has understood the false maxims of the world, and who follows in the footsteps of Christ.

"For my part, my dear parents, what have I done? You know already. I have left the world. I have gone from a good father, a tender mother; brothers and sisters who are very dear to me, and by whom I am much loved. I have gone from the home in which I was born, to go and live with strangers whom I am adopting as my own kindred.

"This, my first sacrifice, is followed by another—that of going from my community, in which I had thought of remaining forever, to go to a distant land. Need I describe what my heart experiences



**MOTHER MARY OF THE PURIFICATION**

whose name should be held in benediction in the West. When it rested with her, as Superior-General of the Sisters of St. Ann, to accept or decline the pioneering of educational and charitable institutions in B. C., then little known, she decided in favor of the sacrifices involved in that distant field. This Sister, the first in her Order to sponsor missionary enterprise, died at the age of ninety-two, having been a nun seventy-two years and five months.



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in this separation? In this farewell to my community, to my dear sisters? But I will live its spirit, I will be united with each and all. With three companions I shall share in the reproduction of the Order in the west. My leavetaking with you, dear parents, renewed the sacrifice I made when I left home the first time, to take the veil. Then, I knew we would meet again, perhaps often. But this last farewell has no such hope. When I re-entered home after an absence of three years, I saw tears in every eye, and sorrow depicted on every face. Silence was broken by only a few stray words. Your last look, your parting words, expressed a lasting farewell. You know the heart of your child; you know what it suffered at that hour.

"Far or near, I am always your Virginia. You can always say, 'Virginia loves us, prays for us. She does not forget baby Anna.' But, enough. I must now tell you what took place on the eve of our departure from our Mother House. We began our farewells on April seventh. At four in the afternoon our dear pupils assembled in a large room to have a last talk with us. Instead, all were silent and sad. They promised the help of their innocent prayers, and gave us little souvenirs. Then we embraced them. They broke out in sobs. Their grief was so great, their tears so abundant that we could scarcely stand the painful scene. There was another sacred one to go through.

"You do not ignore that in religious communities, adieux are more solemn than elsewhere. You will like to hear how we made ours. At five o'clock all the Sisters gathered in the community room, in which there is a statue of our good Mother Saint Ann. The four missionaries knelt before this statue for the recitation of the Litany of the Saints, and the singing of the Magnificat. Supper followed. After the accustomed prayers in the chapel, we prolonged our visit to Our Lord, begging Him for strength to make our adieux generously. During this time, the Sisters took their places in the community room. When our turn came to go in, we went again to kneel before our Good Mother, Saint Ann. Her litany was said, and then in a clear voice we promised fealty to our Institute. After this, we rose and gave the kiss of peace to our loved companions, while Reverend Mother intoned the Magnificat. The singers tried to take it up, but so great was the general emotion that only one voice sustained the canticle to the end. This was Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, one of the four about to leave. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament followed.

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"The four missionaries knelt in the middle aisle in front of the altar, surrounded by the weeping Sisters and pupils. The Holy Ghost gave us strength to support these trying moments. After night prayers we retired for some hours, but you may easily think that many wide-open dreams passed before us during that last night of ours in the cradle of our birth to religious life.

"Next morning we were astir at three o'clock, making our last preparations, and seeing that nothing was forgotten. We heard Holy Mass, and received at the Communion Table the Companion of our journey. Nothing was wanting to us since we possessed Him who possesses all things.

"The hour of departure draws nearer and nearer. They tell us that all is ready—that the drivers are waiting for us, that it is time to enter the conveyances. We give an encircling look at the place, the faces so dear to us. We hear the word 'adieu.' We say it ourselves to our beloved community, to our Reverend Mother, our cherished Sisters and pupils. Adieu to all. And so, we passed out of the gate, and on to the road. We were on the first stage of our journey to Vancouver Island. Our Sisters followed us with tearful eyes and envious hearts. Our own hearts were heavy, but serene. More than ever we had confided them to Divine Providence."

It was on the trip from St. Jacques to Montreal that the loving Sister spent twelve hours at her home for her farewells to her dear ones. What depth of love in the following: "When you met me at the train, dear Papa, and helped me down, I cannot say what joy I felt on taking your hand."

The journal gives every detail of the journey and voyage. The travellers of those days were chiefly gold seekers. Sister has this observation: "From New York to our final destination we travelled on four steamships. On the first there were five hundred passengers; on the second, seven hundred; on the third, fifteen hundred; and on the fourth, five hundred. 'Where are you going?' was the question asked of one another. 'To the California gold mines.' 'To the Cariboo gold mines,' was the invariable answer.

"See how much the word 'Gold' is esteemed, but God, salvation—Ah!"

"Are you going to California?" they ask of us.

"No, we are going to Vancouver Island."

"Is there, then, gold on that Island?"

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"These gold-fevered people could not grasp our motives when we told them we were not seeking gold, but the betterment of the classes through education; we could not say 'religion,' for they care nothing about it."

### Picturesque Gatherings

In her annals of St. Mary's Mission, Sister Mary Lumena describes the annual reunions of the Fraser River tribes at the Mission. The Canadian Pacific Railway has since developed the locality into a town, called Mission City. Sister writes: "The Indians had two mass reunions a year, one at Easter, the other at the end of June. These reunions were ceremonious affairs. The arrivals were conducted on strictly etiquette lines. The Indians who lived nearest the Mission arrived first, and led in the honors extended to those who followed. The successive arrivals, as their canoes hailed in sight, announced themselves by chants and songs; they were responded to by gun salutes by those on shore.

"The debarkation was conducted with stately dignity. The chiefs, the captains and others in degree of importance, walked two by two, hat in hand, from their beached canoes, up the hill to the front of the church. Here they shook hands with those who had preceded them, then went into the church for a short prayer. As these formulae were gone through at the arrival of every flotilla, they occupied considerable time. When all had arrived the tents were erected. They formed quite a town, as there were always from fifteen hundred to two thousand natives present. It was a pretty sight at night to see the hill all around lighted up with the camp fires in front of each tent.

"The greatest demonstrations of welcome were those shown when the priest arrived with the last tribes, who came from the greatest distances, the mouth of the Fraser, and even from across the Gulf of Georgia. They were also the most numerous. They came in such numbers that their compact canoes looked like a floating island. The oars kept time with the singing; flags and banners waved. Fire salutes were shot at regular intervals, the ceremony of hand-shaking re-commenced. It lasted nearly an hour, for not one of the two thousand must be overlooked; this was hardly possible, for the crowd was ranged in files.

"The second reunion had for object the Procession of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The order of the procession was admirable. The captains and the watchmen, in uniform and with drawn

swords, walked among the ranks to keep order. The band played an important part in all these reunions.

"During these days of immense gatherings a captain was appointed to attend on the Sisters. His duty consisted in making a passage for them through the dense crowd, to and from the church, and from their seats in the gallery to the railing for Holy Communion. He continued his office till the last Indian group had left after the celebration, which lasted the greater part of a week, or, when the provisions of the visitors gave out. When he came in presence of the Sisters, he bowed profoundly, and having seen them in their places, he bowed again and, hat lifted, waited to reconduct them to the convent."

#### The Birds of Omen

The year before she died, Sister Mary Lumena had a great joy. Her only surviving brother came across the continent to see her. The Sisters entered into the holiday spirit of these two charming persons. They often followed the pair in careless procession, and winked delightedly behind their back when the gallant seventy-five-year-old brother gave his arm to his seventy-nine-year-old nun-sister. The dear gentleman appreciated the beauties of Victoria. Will you call the following a graceful acknowledgment from Mother Nature? One day he was taking a walk on Quebec Street when a large bluish-green bird flopped at his feet. He picked it up. It was not dead, nor was it wounded. Being a stranger here from Brooklyn, he did not know, if impeding pedestrians was a feature of bird life in British Columbia. He found a taxidermist, who told him that the bird which had so distinguished him was a cormorant, and neither that species nor any other cared to put themselves in the path of man. The occurrence gave the old gentleman great joy.

In August of the next summer, Sister Mary Lumena was nodding over the pages of the "Orphans' Friend," the diocesan paper, in the warmth of the sun-flooded Victoria community room. The doors and windows were open to admit to best advantage the fragrant air. A few Sisters sat about, considerably quiet, as ever and again they smiled on the peaceful dozer. Suddenly a little bird came flying in through the door and winged itself directly to the sleeper in the straight-backed chair. Why not to the other idlers looking on? The bird made some circles over her, and then perched itself on the picture frame of the Mother Foundress of the Sisters of St. Ann, under which Sister Mary Lumena was sitting; it then

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flew away through the nearest window, without any attempt to loiter for the sake of the others in the room. The exclamations of the Sisters roused the sweet sleeper in time to see the little visitor disappear. The Sisters playfully shook their finger at her, saying, "O Sister Mary Lumena, you know what it means when a bird shows this kind of partiality." No more was thought about it. No religious attaches importance to the superstitious belief that such bird visitations are a fore-runner of death; but it is a coincidence that a week later Sister Mary Lumena was summoned by the Death messenger, and she went with him through the portals of eternity.

### Unto Death

Many vocations to the religious life are decided by the thought that those consecrated to God by vows die a holy death. This was, indeed, the case with faithful Sister Mary Lumena. She spent the last day of her life like any other—rose at 4.45, prayed, sewed, read, recreated as usual. A little before supper she felt indisposed while running the sewing machine. She went to rest a while. It was the beginning of her eternal rest. Soon a cold perspiration came over her, and the tell-tale rattle sounded its knell. The doctor came at nine, and to the consternation of all, said a heart valve had ruptured and the patient would scarcely survive till morning. The dear Sister received the announcement with a smile, a most triumphant smile. She whispered to the Sister in attendance, "I have always prayed not to linger in my last illness; God has answered my prayer; I shall be dead in a few hours." She had made the First Friday novena to obtain the grace of the use of her faculties to the end, also, to be preserved from temptation in her mortal illness, and not to give trouble. She had asked, too, to die on Saturday—the Blessed Virgin's day. These requests were granted to the letter. She gave some directions about her unfinished work—veils on the sewing machine; some bobbin-lace on the cushion; she remembered her rose-bush, always cultivated with love and care. She selected some holy cards from her prayer book that they might be put in her coffin—the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception, St. Ann. She prayed quietly almost all night; the beads slipped through her fingers as if she had been in the chapel. Her struggle for breath did not interfere with her praying. She surely gave no trouble, for not once did she ask to have her position changed, nor for so much as a drink of water. The cold perspiration in which she was soaked, her dripping hair,

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a nagging cough, a ruptured valve, all tended to make her condition irritating and uncomfortable, but not the slightest sign of impatience escaped her. Peaceful in life, she was so unto death. This tender Spouse of Christ and model Sister of St. Ann breathed forth her soul shortly after having received Holy Communion on the morning of the feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle. She was in the eightieth year of her age, the fifty-fifth of her profession, and the fifty-fourth of her missionary work in British Columbia. These years enclose two of her Golden Jubilees, one as nun, the other as missionary.

### A Tinge of Human Nature

Both these memorable occasions were celebrated with Sister Mary of the Conception, whose career from the initial years in Victoria, and the score in the Indian mission school, was so closely knit with hers. Two characters seldom worked together more harmoniously. One was Irish, the other Canadian, but they were grooved in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the period of their superannuation, they spent much time in the Victoria community room, for religion provides comfort for its sick and aged. The two were never idle; besides practical occupations, each, as a pastime, made lace. And here is where they showed a tinge of the human in them. Is it not a solace in our own peccadillos to know that the saints of God had differences? One day one of those darling old nuns said to the other, "I cannot see what beauty you find in that lace you are making." The other was quite peeved. She answered, "It is as nice as that which you make, and serviceable for the chapel, which yours is not." And, turning to some Sisters, asked their opinion about said lace. Both dears were so gentle and subdued over the discussion, but so evidently pained, that the onlookers could only smile at this exhibition of the wee remnant of the human in them, and tactfully divided praise on each one's lace.

Among many beautiful expressions, Sister Mary Lumena has left us these thanks uttered at her jubilee: "Reverend Mother and Sisters, golden words are required to thank you fittingly for so much kindness and demonstration in our regard; everything is plated with pure gold. Your great charity has known how to cover our shortcomings, and place in evidence the little we have done. We find ourselves in debt, and we have but a few days to give you; perhaps these days may fill up the gap of years. If years are left to us, we give them to you. Reverend Mother, we are ready to go

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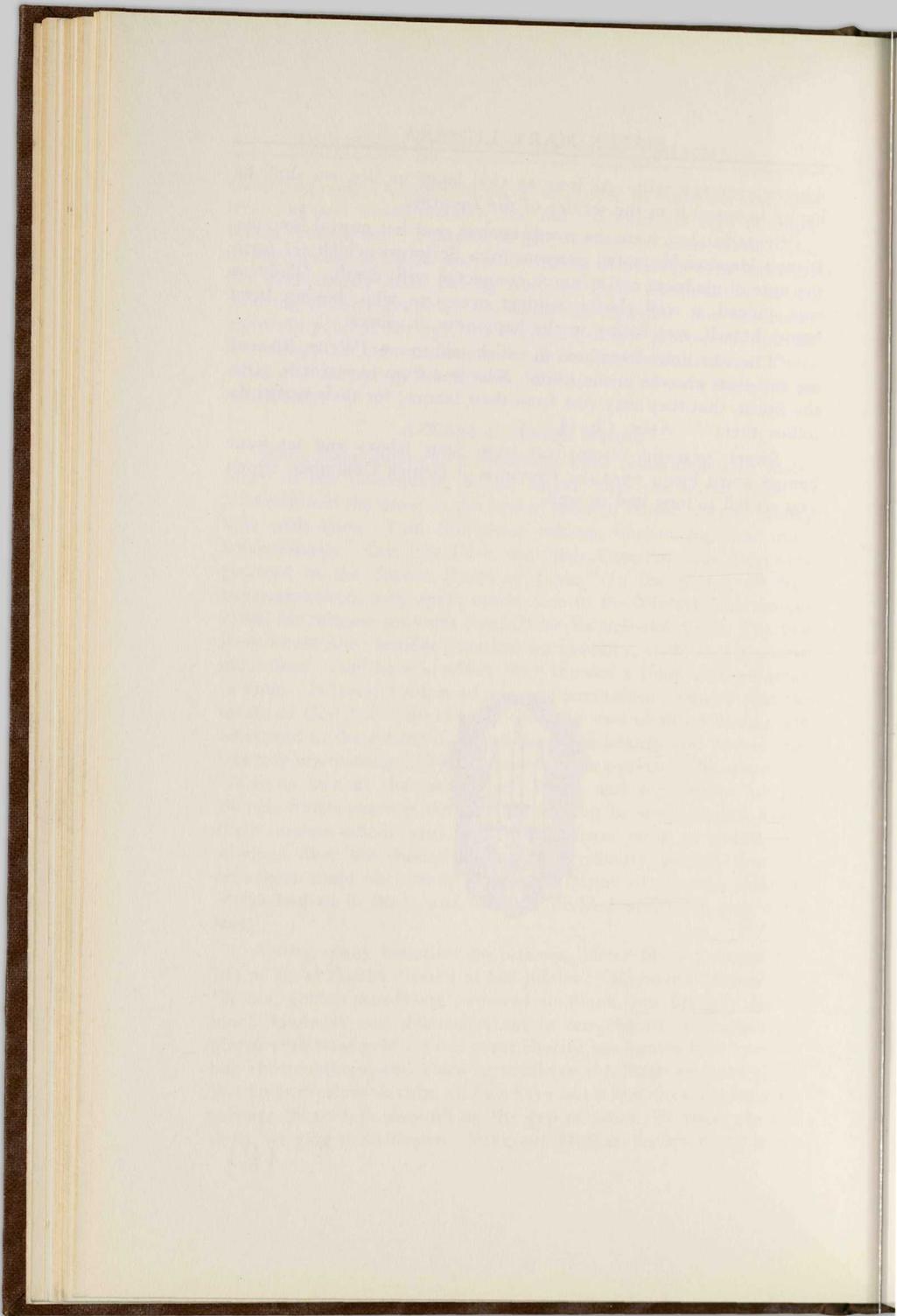
wheresoever you will. As long as God lends us life, we shall be happy to spend it in the service of the Institute."

Beautiful, too, were the words spoken over her mortal remains. Bishop Macdonald quoted extracts from Scripture which set forth the note of gladness and triumph connected with death. Gladness was, indeed, a well chosen subject over one who, having been happy herself, was happy in the happiness of others.

"I heard a voice from heaven which said to me: 'Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Now and from henceforth, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works do follow them.'" Apoc. Ch. 14.

Sweet, peaceful Sister, rest from your labors and let your benign spirit hover over the Province of British Columbia, which you served so long and so well.





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CHAPTER III.

*Sister Mary Bonsecours*

1859 - 1915

"MOTHER," said a girl of fourteen, "I do so want to wear a frilled cap like the Sisters. May I go and be one of them?"

"My child, wearing the frilled cap does not make the nun. That is a childish and unworthy motive for entering so holy a vocation."

"But, Mother, I'll learn how to be good and holy when I get there, and I do so love the cap with the nice frill around it."

The good woman sighed and thought how hopelessly frivolous her daughter was.

"My dear, if you imagine that any one so heedless as you has any chance of becoming a nun, you had better prepare by settling down to study and work, and not idle your time as you do."

The girl was not discouraged. Day after day she coaxed to be allowed to enter the convent as a postulant. There was no miracle of transformation in the light-hearted girl's conduct, so the mother treated the matter as a child's whim. As the girl persisted, the good woman, to put an end to these importunities, went to call on the Reverend Mother of the Sisters of St. Ann.

"I am rather confused at troubling you for a fancy of my daughter's," she explained, "but she gives no peace with her entreaties to have me ask you to receive her as a possible member of your Order. I am sure she has not the remotest idea of what becoming a religious means, because she is very young, even for a girl of fourteen, and she is oftener at play than at work."

This was not a very flattering introduction. However, it had no effect on the girl. She looked brightly in the face of the saintly Mother Foundress, where all was a charming invitation to confidence and "welcome home" in the kindly heart of this woman of God. Answering her expectant smile and reading with her soul-penetrating eyes the girl's latent power, she asked, "What is your wish, my child?"

"To wear a frilled cap and dress like you," was the frank, straightforward reply.

Her reverent, widowed mother felt she would sink through the floor with mortification at this naive admission, but the wise Reverend Mother General smiled approvingly. Her spiritualized

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vision enabled her to recognize God's dealings with hearts and the covered workings of grace. In the clear, animated expression of the childish applicant she saw that this attraction for a sombre garb and a veiled head, rather than for gay, be-ribboned attire so natural to the young, was the germinating seed of a vocation pushed irresistibly forward in the garden of convent life. She accepted her unhesitatingly in her religious community. Nor did she make a mistake. The fourteen-year-old developed a character of strongest fibre. For sixty-six years she rendered the Institute the most strenuous kind of service.

In spite of many examples like this, which every Order has given, from St. Gertrude of the Benedictines, and the Franciscan Poor Clares, St. Clare and her sister Agnes of Assisi, to the present day, the objection is still raised, "A girl who takes the veil in her early teens does not know the world, nor what she is doing." Ignorance of the world is certainly not a disadvantage for one who chooses to lead a life opposed to its maxims. As for the other objection, very few people know absolutely what they are doing when they enter any of the avenues of life. An indefinable impulse, sometimes necessity, leads them to learn a certain trade, or embrace this or that career or profession. Experience follows. Facts more or less fortunate unfold themselves. The young girl who becomes a nun knows that she wants to consecrate herself to God. That knowledge is enough. If it were true that she did not know what she was doing, how could time show her so faithful, so contented in the state of renunciation which the veil stands for? Read her features after ten, twenty, forty years; they are the history of a peace and joy which makes the world marvel.

### Early Laborers in the Vineyard

And is there not a plea for early vocations in the parable of the Master of the Vineyard? He went out in the MORNING to hire laborers. He was there again before the THIRD hour (9 a.m.) and various other times till nearly sunset. We may surely think that He found more laborers ready to be employed at the beginning of the day than near its close, at the eleventh hour. Are we not a little envious of Christ's partiality for St. John, the youngest of His apostles, whom tradition says was sixteen when he attached himself to his Master?

In consequence of this intimation, which is strengthened by heavenly enticement, many souls sense the religious vocation

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almost with the dawn of reason. The "Little Flower" was nine when she felt her vocation so forcibly that not a doubt remained in her mind. Suiting action to conviction, she went straight to the Mother Superior of the Carmelites and confided her secret, as if asking to reserve a place for her in the monastery during the intervening time of her coming of age to be admitted. She was told aspirants must be sixteen. Teresa, in her ardor to begin the austere immolation of that ancient Order, won against its rules. She overcame the prudent opposition of her nearest and dearest; she enlisted our Holy Father, Leo XIII.; she pleaded with church dignitaries, and by prayer and determination she succeeded in entering Carmel at fifteen. And what a nun she was!

Tracing the vocation of those called to the special service of God and His Church is most interesting. The study fills one with admiration for the divine action in very ordinary mortals. For instance, a five-year-old girl whom I have known all my life—since she is "myself"—was at High Mass with her father. In the church a wing extended out from the sanctuary. This was for the use of school children. From the nave only the front seats were seen. On this particular Sunday one of the Sisters came forward, evidently to check some misbehaved pupil. The five-year-old, who was more attentive to what was going on about her than to her prayers, saw the tall, black-robed figure. She was awed. "Papa," she whispered, what is that?" "A nun," he replied. "I want to be one," was the spontaneous decision. She never altered it. At ten she declared openly around the family table that she would not remain in the world. She did not understand the import of her words, but it was God's way with her. Be He ever praised for it!

It is a precious advantage to take up the yoke of Christ young, for then it is easy to adjust oneself to a new mode of living; there is also the great store of merit which accumulates during the long years of the observance of the vows and the holy rules; besides, it is a saying, founded on experience, that in religion the Angel Guardian carries the cross for its youthful wards.

Such was the case for our generous, gay-hearted fourteen-year-old applicant, who was known in religion as Sister Mary Bonsecours. After her profession of the three vows, which she made a month after her sixteenth birthday, she was engaged in the duties of her calling in the Province of Quebec till 1859, when she was named for the British Columbia convents. What did she not do in the half century that followed? Is there any employment in

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which she did not take a leading responsibility—music teacher, disciplinarian, visitation of the sick, charge of the orphans, farmer, hospital assistant? In pioneer construction there is not much individual specializing; the willing are ready to pass from the desk to the tub, from the piano to the hoe. Sister Mary Bonsecours did all this with alacrity and unvarying good nature, guided by the pure intention of serving her Divine Master and helping the bodies and the souls of the rising generation of these Pacific shores.

Pupils of hers are still living. They will tell us what a true disciplinarian she was, a lover of order, and rather stern. Her father was German, her mother Irish, and she Canadian bred; she cared little for the language of her parents, but combined the qualities of the three nationalities. It was a fine amalgamation for the work at hand. It increased the capital which she came prepared to invest in this pioneer region—and this was the sterling heart of a nun, energy for labor, love and service for the colonists, the aborigines, the colored; the bank, from which she constantly drew, was that of PRAYER.

The ability or inability of subjects in a certain line is not always apparent to superiors. A religious may represent her case, but like a good soldier, does not protest against her allotted appointments. Sister Mary Bonsecours was sent to Victoria to teach music. It soon became evident to others, as it always had been to herself, that she lacked talent and competency for this branch. Often, in after years, she would look at her toil-developed hands and laugh good-humoredly at the recollection of having been the first music teacher in the Victoria Convent. Nor did this otherwise brainy Sister care for intellectual pursuits. For all that, she was a strict disciplinarian, and under conscientious supervision no pupil dared lose a minute of the study period. As Superior of the orphanage in Cowichan (now Duncan), she promoted the education of her charges by every possible means.

### Lay Baptisms

In the early years one of Sister Mary Bonsecours' appointments was the visitation of the sick in their homes. There were no trained nurses then. This dear Sister had the compassion and the resourcefulness of her office. More than that, it afforded her the opportunity of giving lay baptism to many infants. The more one delves in the lives of apostolic persons, the more one discovers that although they all work on general Christian lines, each has acumen for some

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particular phase in the grand plan of saving souls. That of this zealous Sister was baptizing such as the priest could not reach. And God was pleased to put many such cases in her way. It was not always easy to accomplish her soul-saving mission. As a rule the parents of the sick infants were averse or afraid of the regenerating waters. Sister had an element of ruse in her character which she turned to good purpose. She would take the sick baby from its jealous mother and walk around caressing it and singing softly. Watching a favorable moment when her back was turned from the mother's bed, she would slip her hand in her pocket for the bottle of holy water which she always carried, and quickly pour some of it on the wee head as she said the redeeming words. Not infrequently the ceremony ended with a loud cry. The "old nick" hardly ever departs from his stronghold without a commotion. The Sister, having accomplished her saving deed, would return the child to its proper place, remarking, "It already knows that there is no one like mother," which tactful words, well known as they are, gave new delight to the mother.

On one occasion Sister almost betrayed her sacramental deed. This time she had taken the baby out of the room, no easy thing to do with the eyes of an anxious mother constantly fixed on her ailing child and suspicious of a nun's magic. In her haste to do quickly what she had to do, she poured too much water and spilled some on the infant's garments. It was impossible to retain the baby till the clothes were dry, for it cried with a vim which expressed a surprising amount of reserve force in an extremely small compass. The alarmed mother called out, "What is the matter, Sister?" and when she saw the wet dress she exclaimed, "What has happened?" The Sister explained, "Baby's head was so hot and feverish that I thought to relieve it by applying a wet cloth." This was absolutely true as far as the body was concerned, but how much more beneficial for the soul had been the few drops of water on the little head which was soon to join the band of Holy Innocents in heaven.

It was not only in homes that God favored this Sister's opportunities for baptizing the dying. Once, in Nanaimo, while the congregation was waiting for the priest to come from Wellington, where he had said the first Sunday Mass and was tramping back for his second, a family of Indians from Sechelt brought their baby to have it baptized. The Sisters met them in the porch and made friendly advances. The poor squaw was expressive of deep

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sorrow, which in no one but a native can be so pathetic, so mournful in tone, look and bearing. Showing her child explained. It was dying. Sister's practised eye told her that.

"Your papoose is very sick," she said in Chinook, which she spoke like a native.

"Al, al, nahwitka (yes)," assented the poor mother, dolefully.

"Has it been christened?"

"No. I brought it here for that, but the priest is not here and we must go back right away while the tide is good."

"I think your papoose will go to the Good God very soon, so I will baptize it."

The young Indian mother, who was an instructed Christian, agreed. Sister took the holy water bottle from her pocket and right there in the porch she performed the simple rite which rescues a little soul from the gates of Limbo and procures it a passport for Paradise. She did it so naturally that the young Sisters looking on expressed surprise and said admiringly, "It is such a privilege to confer lay baptism and you did it so calmly; is it the first time?"

"Oh, my no, I have done it often enough to do it easily."

### The Heart Call

From 1858 to 1876 the Sisters of St. Ann conducted an orphanage side by side with their Victoria girls' boarding school. The word "orphanage" connotes orphans, but the class of children which went under this appealing name was not such in the real sense of the word; they were worse off. They were castaways, cast away by their own parents. These selfish parents—the beautiful word is used here reluctantly—often made use of strategy to rid themselves of the care and responsibility of their offspring and at the same time assure their comfortable bringing up. The father, usually, would bring his young child to the convent and pay for a month, sometimes for a longer period, and then consider his obligations filled for ten, fifteen years. Many, not all, of these children were half-breeds, that is, the offspring of a white man and an Indian woman.

As the school and the Sisters' numbers increased, the convent became congested and the orphans were transferred to Cowichan. About 1863, the Sisters had bought 200 acres of Crown Lands, and later as much more. A clearing was made and a log building put up for an Indian mission school, which the Sisters undertook to support on their income of zeal for God's glory and hard toil for

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material existence. The Indian pupils scorned education, in which, besides the three "R's," was included the use of tables, chairs, knives, forks, sleeping and toilet paraphernalia. After all, natives are not the only ones who do not take kindly to being "schooled." The Sisters worked on cheerily with the few idlers who darkened the mission school doors, and farmed hopefully. Much land was cleared and the stock multiplied. Unknowingly this preparation was for the benefit of the free wards of the Victoria convent. They had been the special charge of Sister Mary Bonsecours for some sixteen years. What a heart she had for them! But it was directed by firmness and practical sense. Children, those unerring readers of character, praised her more than they realized when they said she never showed distrust nor searched for wrongdoing; that their misdemeanors were not discussed with others; that she bestowed most care on the deformed and scrofulous—of which there was a goodly number. Another trait which every school girl would appreciate was that she did not make them feel that they "must" mend their own clothes; she decoyed them into it and, better still, often did it herself. The word "strict" is not liked, and threatens to be banished from home and school. Used with the justice and tenderness of this excellent trainer, among her motley band, it "spared the rod" and was repaid in open and confiding intercourse.

### Favoritism Without Jealousy

Sister's motherliness for her charges could stand the closest analysis; so just as a mother has most thought and love for her weakling, so had this "nun of the loving heart" for the most wretched of the waifs entrusted to her care. Like our Lord, Who longed to gather humans as the hen does her chickens under her wings, this motherly nun took them in her protecting arms. One of the most afflicted among them was a child handed over to the charity of the Sisters when it was fifteen months old. Her Indian mother, a Flathead, had followed the fashion of her tribe on her infant, and pressed the soft skull to flatten it. She succeeded admirably. Standards of beauty differ; among Victorians a flat head is not a mark of beauty. As the child grew, her spine assumed a curved shape and she became dwarflike. Among other ailments her ears discharged most offensively, and neither time nor remedies availed. Her intelligence, as may be supposed, was on a par with her physical condition. To see that dear, loving nun's mother-care of that child, wrap her in a nice woollen shawl—they still have it at St. Ann's—carry her about and rock her soothingly, even when,

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it was four, five years old, was a sight for saints and angels. This child reached womanhood, in fact she may be living yet; she was a few years ago.

"Married?"

"To be sure she is!"

It was fortunate in those times to be unfortunate if near the Sisters of St. Ann.

Sister Mary Bonsecours was friendly with the Indians and visited them in their camps when they were sick. Always she made her approach known from a distance when she went there, either to hire men, to buy fish or go near there for walks with the children. She never ventured in the direction of the tribe in the dancing season. One learns from the true missionary that zeal is prudent. Indians were not very prude in those days. There were camps of certain tribes near which the Sisters never went. It would have been unsafe, but Sister knew nearly every native, from grandfather to grandchild. This acquaintance was enlightening.

### The Deserted Child

One day, above the shouts of the children on the Cowichan Orphanage playground, a faint crying was heard. Instantly the keen, wood-trained ears stood at attention and, tracing the sound to the front gate, stampeded there. They beheld the grimy, squawish face of a little child imprisoned under the gate. The appearance of a comet could not have been more extraordinary than that of an innocent like that finding its way to a building a mile or more aloof from any habitation. The orphans, in their beautiful simplicity, said that the angels had guided it there, but the sage old nun knew a different kind of guide. Picking the little one up in her adoptive arms, she soon identified her and instinctively knew that heartless parents had set it on the path which led to the convent and left her there to crawl or toddle to the only house in sight. The newcomer soon became the idol of the establishment. She thrived on adulation and proper care, but after a year or so she fell into a decline—the fatal consumption of the natives. Now, you and I would say, "What a blessing! That forsaken child with no future in store is going to Paradise."

Hush! Do not let the motherful nun hear us. She is grieved to the depths of her fathomless heart wells as she realizes that the fresh eggs, the cream, the toast, the chicken broth are not improving the castaway's health. And you would hardly believe



SISTER MARY  
OF THE SACRED HEART

FIRST SUPERIOR OF ST. ANN'S CONVENT  
VICTORIA B.C. 1858



SISTER MARY LUMENA



SISTER MARY  
OF THE CONCEPTION ~



SISTER MARY BONSECOURS



## SISTER MARY BONSECOURS

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what a whimsical epicure that ragamuffin from a fishy camp was! She would turn away crossly from everyday dishes. As if the life of the deserted child were the most precious to adoring relatives, Sister Mary Bonsecours gave her the best and did for her what court attendants would for a princess. One of the Sisters—"myself," of course—remarked, "That child will be spoiled beyond redemption when she gets well; she will not want to eat what the other children have, and that is a hundred times better than the dried fish she had before she came here."

The motherly nun gave an answer worthy of her golden charity. "Let us make her well first, and then think of correction." She did not get well. Gently, softly she went to her place with the Holy Innocents. In the secret of their hearts the Sisters said, "Thank God"—so do you, I am sure—but the Sister who had taken to herself these words of our dying Saviour, "Behold the mother, behold the son!" was grief stricken. Dear, good Sister, how tenderly she loved, cuddled and rocked those outcasts.

This incident took place in Cowichan (Duncan), where Sister Mary Bonsecours, in 1876, had accompanied her beloved charges from Victoria to their new condition on the farm. Their city life was over. It had not been very exciting. Picnics to Beacon Hill beach; once a year a visit to the bazaar hall, held for their benefit, an occasional goute when, after a big wedding or ball, the parties remembered the orphans and sent them a hamper of left-overs. Beautiful inspiration!

The Cowichan farm had charms for the orphans transferred from Victoria. It also had work for big and little. Sister Mary Bonsecours multiplied herself to supervise it all, to share it all. There was the sowing, the hoeing, the weeding; there was the bringing in of the harvest of fruit and vegetables; the picking of timothy seed, and the tramping of hay. This was too jolly to be called work. There was the daily milking of from twenty-five to thirty cows, and churning of butter in the old-fashioned hand churn. All this devolved on the girls. So did the fetching of the cows from pasture. This was the most anxious time of the day for the mother-hearted superior. In the morning the cattle were set on the path to the wooded mountain property of the convent, for pasturage. There they might roam over three hundred acres of delicatessen. They went more willingly than they returned. About five in the summer, earlier in the short days, four reliable girls went to fetch them. To facilitate the search in the dense foliage,

## PIONEER NUNS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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each cow had a bell. Every child in the orphanage, from the oldest to the youngest, knew its particular sound. As the cows in the distant woods were found and fell in line for the homeward march, the stays-at-home followed its order by the different tinkles. "That is Beauty"; "That is Pinky"; "Oh, Sweetheart is not found yet." How interesting was that simple life in the heart of nature.

As much as possible, especially when the weather was bad, Sister Mary Bonsecours went with them. Quite a grand occupation for a Sister Superior! From the moment the girls left for the pasture till they, and the cows, were safely back, the motherful nun was in an agony of suspense. They might get lost. The crude Indian performing his fasts to obtain inspiration for his wild dance song might be met in that mountain forest. Often his weird attempts at song were heard from the orphanage. There were panthers there, too. One had been killed there, not far from the house, and it sent a chill of terror, even when it lay dead on the convent kitchen floor. There were wolves, too, human wolves, and these were the most to be dreaded.

The prudent Superior made it a point to be at the milking. Like another Saint Bridget, she had her milking stool and pail and shared the function with the older girls. The men did the tougher work.

It may be thought that the occupations of this active Sister were confined to the out-door demands of the farm. Not so. Vanguard missionaries are complex—so much so that it almost requires an act of faith, on the part of moderns, to believe how much they can multiply themselves.

Sister took a major part in the indoor labor. She was self-appointed laundress; the washing was done at a spring. She often substituted the cook. She took her turn presiding at the children's meals and recesses. She conducted the sewing period three hours every afternoon. New material was unknown. The charity clothes had to be refitted, patched and adjusted. Every piece was submitted to her planning and inspection. What a school for patience! Bedding, underwear, towels, serviettes, etc., were made from flour sacks. Four sacks to a sheet; four handkerchiefs to a sack. Those were economical days! Busy days!

This good Sister was as big-hearted in stripping herself of personal belongings as she was saving of the goods of the Order. Once the supply of serge, which then came from Belgium, failed to arrive. A novice was to take the habit and there was no material

## SISTER MARY BONSECOURS

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from which to make it. The Sisters thought it was too bad that the novice should be vested with a made-over old one, for one's first holy habit in religion is more precious than a bridal dress. Every Sister of St. Ann is allowed two habits—the average duration of their wear is ten years, though some have known eighteen years' steady wear. Having a new St. Ann's habit is almost an event in the individual nun's life. About the time of the novice's investiture, Sister Mary Bonsecours had a new habit. At once she insisted that the novice should have it—a valued inheritance, indeed, to the fervent novice.

If to Sister Mary Bonsecours could be applied the motto of knighthood, "Sans peur, et sans reproche," in her exceptional duties as farm making and Superior of an institution whose only income was personal hand labor, it could be equally said of her that she was the ideal nun everywhere, and in all things.

### The Faithful Steward

The first requisite of a religious is the spirit of prayer. Turning to God in thought, deed and need is the most spontaneous action of her existence. Being the true nun that she was, Sister Mary Bonsecours was a woman of prayer. A nun's first prayer in the morning is meditation. It is usually made in the chapel, in the presence of the most Blessed Sacrament, in quiet, away from all distracting occupations. It can hardly be the case in pioneer places where a few unsalaried nuns without government or diocesan help take upon themselves, for Christ's sake, to house, clothe, feed and educate those thrown on their good will—which in this orphanage meant some thirty-five or forty, mostly all outcast children. Such charity entails labor and economical management. In the morning, Sister Mary Bonsecours, when not engaged in the milking, would make her meditation outside the stable in fair weather, inside in foul, sitting on a three-legged stool or standing, while she supervised all that was going on around—more attentive all the while to souls than to matter.

As though she had been responsible to God personally, as His own steward, for the property of the poor, the faithful nun made herself answerable for the upkeep of the farm, the care of the stock, the preservation of the implements. All this she did in a spirit of faith, in a sense of justice to Him by Whom she would be called upon to render an account of her stewardship.

Pitiful it was to see this alert, hard-working Sister when the farm sustained losses. Sometimes a rich milker would sink in the

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swamp, or be caught in the tide. The Indian dogs were the worst danger. Driven from the camps by hunger, they would stealthily search for sheep and strangle them. If in the dead of night Sister heard their barking, she instantly rose and went with the most experienced girls to ascertain the cause. One morning when the household was astir, it quickly realized that the farmyard and fields were ominously quiet. Not the faintest bleat to break the silence. With sad forebodings the Sister Superior went to find out what was wrong. The sheep were missing. All forenoon she searched, with keen-eyed, acute-eared girls. At last she came upon them in a thicket, at the base of the mountain. They lay stretched in death. Twenty-three yearlings! It was too much. The tired, tired Sister sat down and cried. It meant so much less meat for the orphans, and a double portion of turnips. Turnips were the stand-by's.

Our Lord, Who in His mortal life showed love for both His rational and irrational creatures, seems to stress kindness and protection to animals in His example of the ox falling into a pit, and its owner calling his neighbors to help in its rescue. Sister Mary Bonsecours had many opportunities of proving her solicitude for the animals which God has created for our use and benefit. One instance, in particular, is worth recording.

A heifer had been shipped from Victoria to the Cowichan farm via Maple Bay. There was no Island railway then, no Malahat highway; the only means of transportation was by the water route. Who remembers "The Cariboo Fly," which did anything but fly, but did friendly service between Victoria and Comox in the Summer, and in the Winter was supplanted by the sturdy "Maud," which got you there slowly and surely. The "Maud" was on the run this particular time. When she left her berth at the far end of the harbour, at 7 a.m., the sky portended snow. Soon the atmosphere was blinded by large flakes, which, though being soft and silent, were none the less inimical; they so impeded the steamer's progress that instead of reaching Maple Bay at eleven, it was fortunate to arrive there at four and put up for the night.

The man from the farm had come to the wharf with the ox cart to meet Sister Mary Bonsecours and companion, who had been to Victoria on business. It was some time before the heifer, released from her pen in the boat, and weakened by her long fast, was secured by a rope to the cart and the conventward drive through the woods begun. And how the snow did fall!

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If steaming through the straits had been slow, plodding through the snow was slower. The staid, dignified oxen sank disgracefully in two feet of snow; the wheels of the cart, accustomed to roll in newly-mown meadows, became more and more clogged with every attempted revolution. The laden branches, ruffled by the big vehicle, showered quantities of uncivil snow on the two Sisters who sat on the hay-covered flooring of the cart. It was not exactly a joy-ride.

The exhausted heifer fared worse. She had gone but a few yards when she began to totter. Sister coaxed it onward. The willing beast tried, but before long it fell prone on the wayside. Sister Mary Bonsecours, much against the protests of her companion, got out of the cart and, stooping in the deep snow, by soothing words and gentle patting, encouraged the poor beast to rise. She succeeded and then reseated herself in the conveyance; she held the heifer's rope and continued in singsong, crooning fashion, to entice the fainting animal on. It had not the strength to do so. After a few vain attempts it fell hopelessly, half-dead with the struggle. At such a climax you would naturally expect that the devoted Sister would also give up further effort. No such thing. Full of pity and concern, she told the driver to stop and let her out, explaining while she did so that animals feel human sympathy and that the heifer would follow if she walked on with it. This was too much for her New York bred companion, who, I regret to say, had added to the misery of the situation by her nervous dread of a night in the woods and her grumpy remarks on cows in general and on this trying heifer in particular. She obstructed the passage of her Superior and, restraining her, said: "You shall not leave this cart; if an animal cannot weather the storm, still less can you. Its loss will not mean much, but exposing yourself to sickness will. I feel responsible for your safety; you must not get out."

"Are you so indifferent to suffering animals and have you so little interest in the protection of the goods of the orphans? Let me pass," insisted the self-sacrificing Superior. Then, if the thick falling snow had not shut off the stars, they might have seen one in the garb of a Sister of St. Ann, all but buried in snow, expending the resources of a compassionate heart trying to rouse an unconscious animal from its lethargy. Her efforts were fruitless. Reluctantly the disappointed nun turns from the dark form stretched in the snow and resumes her seat in the hay-strewn cart.

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One hope is left. Francois, the lone bachelor, has a cabin some miles up the road. He may be at home. Sometimes, yes, some rare times, he is. Sister peers in the distance to see if, one chance in a hundred, a light beams from the cabin. Providence is propitious. Francois takes the case in hand and it is a fully-revived heifer that he leads to the convent farm next morning. The temper of the New York Sister was also improved by a good night's rest. To this day she thinks with admiration and reverence of Sister Mary Bonsecours' wonderful kindness and disregard for self on that night, so exceptionally stormy for Vancouver Island. Of the pioneer Sisters it may be said, "Gold and silver they had none," but courage, industry and goodness they had, heaped measure overflowing.

### The Eagle and the Salmon

"Ask and you shall receive" is nowhere so well exemplified as in institutions of charity. Perhaps the reason for this is that real need prays with greater purity of intention; or, again, because Christ, who has taught "Blessed are the poor in spirit," takes upon Himself to prove this after His own benign way. Be that as it may, it was an understood fact at the orphanage that the prayers of the children, backed by their innocence and further backed by their absolute dependence, were very efficacious. Consequently their prayers were in great demand. The children filled the precept, "Pray always," but under the leadership of that spiritual-practical woman, Sister Mary Bonsecours, prayer and labor went hand in hand. God was pleased to give many evident answers to their requests—sometimes they wanted rain, and it rained; sometimes they wanted it to stay away, and it did. Such favors came direct from heaven—but SHOES, that was different; they had to come from a visible agent. If I were a millionaire philanthropist I would endow free shoe stores for every orphanage in the land. The Cowichan orphans did not mind going barefoot or going stockingless in broken shoes, but they did need new shoes sometimes and they got them by praying. How these and other necessities were providentially delivered is most interesting, but none so strikingly so as the salmon for a bishop's dinner. It is a twice told tale, but perhaps not to you.

Sister Mary Bonsecours and her corps of girls were out in the field about noon, when one called out, "See, Bishop Lootens is going to the house." The announcement was not altogether opportune. It was dinner time, and what was in the larder was not

fit for a bishop whom ill-health had obliged to resign his diocese betimes. Something besides pea soup, salt beef and turnips—the habitual bill-of-fare in that institution—had to be found, and that quickly. The appeal sounded through the field, "Pray, girls, that we may get something fresh for the Bishop. The workers did not kneel down nor did they stop tossing the hay, but they prayed, and their prayers were all right, for in a jiffy they saw an eagle come flying from the river towards his nest in the mountain. He held his meal in his talons. He did not know that "There's many a slip between the cup and the lip," but he was to experience it there and then. The girls had distinguished what he carried and, full of excitement, they began to clap and shout; the eagle was so frightened that he dropped his prey. He might have dropped it in some place difficult of access on the slope of the rocky, wooded mountain, but he had followed the path of prayer and, responsive to supernatural guidance, he dropped it in the right spot, almost in the centre of the group of workers. The girls picked it up. It was a beautiful salmon. Tears of gratitude filled the eyes of the good nun.

This fact, which dates back to 1876, had a sequel in 1917. Bishop Macdonald, man of faith and prayer that he is, was much impressed with this remarkable instance of answer to prayer. He liked to relate it. He was going to the consecration of Bishop Crimont, in Seattle. On the steamer were other prelates and two Sisters of St. Ann who had done missionary service in British Columbia and Alaska. The religious party sat at the same table, and Bishop Macdonald, a most entertaining host always, told the story of the eagle and the salmon. Turning to the Sisters he asked, "You have been in the province a long time; did you ever hear about this almost miraculously supplied salmon?" Smiling, the elder Sister answered, "I cooked that salmon."

#### The Orphan's Wedding Dowry

The Cowichan orphanage was so much out of the world and the girls in it so oblivious of any other life that the wonder is proposals of marriage could find them out. But, "Craven knight never won fair lady." One day a quiet young man came to the orphanage saying, "Mr. — says I may meet his daughter and, if on acquaintance she is willing, I may marry her." Be it known unto you that said father had not given any sign during ten or more years since he had entrusted his daughter to the charity of the Sisters. He had surely given them "carte blanche."

Well, credentials proving satisfactory and the courtship likewise, the wedding followed. What part did Sister Mary Bonsecours take in the event? First, she spent some weeks in sorting from out the cases of second and third-hand clothing, donated by those who gave thought to the poor, garments to be refitted and made in a substantial trousseau. Second, she had the girls make a feather bed, pillows and patch-work quilts for the little home. Third, she treated the bridal pair to a wedding breakfast.

"That was generous!"

We should say so. But that is not all. From the live-stock she presented the couple with a young cow and two pigs. With this good start, the blessing of the Church and the best wishes of the orphanage, the newly-weds "lived happy ever afterwards!"

#### The Humble Roman Lady

Fitting the wards of the orphanage for an honorable place in society was not easy, rather, it was discouraging. The "stream does not rise higher than its source." This is the law of nature. The offspring of parents who shirk their most sacred duty have not a heritage of virtue. The grown girls were eager to see, hear, enjoy, and, alas, succumb to all that a deceptive world offers. Sister Mary Bonsecours, understanding the dangers to which their unprotected lives would expose them, retained them under the shelter of the Sisters' care as long as possible. Like Saint Ignatius, who considered the prevention of even one mortal sin worth every pain and effort, the zealous nun would say, "Our labor is not lost if we check ever so little evil; the longer we keep the girls with us, the more remote are their pitfalls, the greater our chances of giving a solid, Christian foundation." She often upbraided herself, saying, "It is my fault if so many of our proteges are a disappointment. If I were better, they would not be so weak." The more ungrateful and difficult her task, the more charity did she throw into it. She sowed that others might reap.

A thorough nun, as though born in the mold, she grew daily in the perfection of her holy calling, which means that she advanced in humility, the base of all perfection. Her life in both its spiritual and active aspect, was extremely meritorious, but she did not see it. She was sixty when she said to a Sister much her junior, with a sincerity that was painful to hear, "I feel I can never pay the debt I owe to the Order for having received me, who had no talents nor dowry to give. Every day I try to compensate by employing every moment to fullest capacity."

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The remark was dictated by humility pure and simple. Enough has been said to show that her ability was uncommon. As for dowry, she was a large one in herself. However, dowries are not now the decisive factor in a girl's settlement in a convent, or in matrimony, that they were formerly, say, in the age of Santa Claus (St. Nicholas). He was then made famous for all times by secretly depositing marriage portions on the window of three destitute girls who, because they had no dowries to offer suitors, were destined to remain single. The kind bishop's gift saved them from spinster-ship. Times have changed. Penniless maids marry and penniless vocations enter religious orders. Here, the wealth or poverty of the subject is not known, unless the individual chooses to mention it.

In 1886 the ever ready, ever willing Sister went to Juneau with two Sisters to open the first Sisters' hospital in Alaska. It was pioneer times all over again. Miserable lodgings, hard work, economy of the strictest sort. Though past middle age, the good nun set to her new duties as blithely as in her early years. The sick miners felt the comfort of her maternal touch and voice. The good-natured excuses she had had for the delinquencies of the orphans, she had for these northern adventurers. Far from resting on her oars, she did anything that came her way—rubbed on the wash-board, brought in fire-wood in rain or snow or shine; swept wards, scrubbed floors and so on. You will see it all in the Book of Life on the Last Day.

Age came on, and in her case it brought erysipelas, which developed into eczema. Her humility and her ardor for work kept pace. The only grace she prayed for was to be useful. "I hope to be well enough," she said, "to be able to prepare the vegetables and help in the kitchen and laundry; I could make the lye and the soap." It was not possible to ask for more lowly, more obscure work.

And what do you think was the effect on her bearing of her rustic life in Cowichan, her years spent in the neighborhood of Indian camps—three distinct tribes; her constant dealings with girls who, for the most part, had not lived in a civilized house till they were brought to the Sisters; her care of the broken-down prospector in rough Alaska? The answer comes from those who saw her move about, refreshingly whole-hearted in her activities for God and humanity, her energy itself stamped with easy dignity, the spirit of her youthful vocation breathing in every act. These, as well as her Victoria charges, called her "The Roman Lady."

PIONEER NUNS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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**"The Master is Here and Calleth for Thee"**

This sweet message from the Master came to Sister Mary Bonsecours in 1915 when she was in her eightieth year. Coming into His gracious presence, she could open her treasures before Him and offer the merits acquired in sixty-six years and five months, by performing the Corporal Works of mercy, by modelling herself on the Eight Beatitudes and by observing the Holy Rules of the Sisters of St. Ann. In exchange, the gracious Lord and Master, who had drawn her to the practice of the evangelical counsels through a childish fancy for a frilled cap, acknowledged her unswerving fidelity by placing the Crown of Life on her brow.



## SISTER MARY CLEMENT

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### CHAPTER IV.

### *Sister Mary Clement*

1866 - 1915

MANY who fell under the gentle influence of this Sister in her long career of education in districts of British Columbia, as far apart as Vancouver Island and Cariboo, will be pleased to see her memory prolonged through these pages.

From childhood her heart turned toward conventual life, as the bee does to the hive. A singularly amusing incident led her to the Order of the Sisters of St. Ann. The lives of the saints afford similar ridiculous occurrences, made use of by God to gain His own wise end and lead souls where He would have them for His greater glory and the surer salvation of their souls.

To some such harmless, laughable misadventure the Church owes the vocation of a gallant cavalier, who, falling from his caparisoned horse into the mud, understood, in a flash, the vanity of earthly parade. Renouncing it, he entered a monastery, where he lived and died a saint. Another example is that of an English courtier, Mr. Prounde, who, while dancing fantastically for the entertainment of the court, lost his balance in a pirouette, and fell prone to the floor. Before he could recover from his dizziness he heard Queen Bess say with a laugh, "Look at clumsy Sir Ox." Before the echo of these rude words had died out, there rang through his ears these others, "So passeth the glory of this world." He rose a changed man, and for the sake of that "glory which passeth not" he endured forty years of imprisonment.

Very curious is the mishap, a most humiliating one, indeed, which converted a society damsel into a saintly Visitation nun. On her way to Holy Mass, attended by an admiring escort, the cavalcade was met by a drove of swine. In the hurry-scurry the belle was cut off from the party, and her horse entangled in the disreputable melee. But, oh horrors! the animal, in his efforts to free himself, threw off the rider and she fell astride a porker. Either she had to hold on or be trampled to death. She held on. When she was rescued, she was certainly a confused young lady, but she was also a converted one. Just then she was not in a humor to laugh, but later on, when robed in holy garments, she heartily enjoyed telling about the undignified mount which had brought about her vocation.

## PIONEER NUNS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The event which directed Sister Mary Clement to the Sisters of St. Ann has nothing disastrous, but it is as insignificant and ludicrous as any of the above.

After the death of her mother, Sister lived with an uncle, whose children she taught. Her pleasant disposition and high standard of English and French, to which was added the gift of song, made her an ideal governess. So much was she loved by every member of the household that when she spoke of entering the convent to become a nun, a score of objections was raised. The first step in a vocation is the severing of heart ties.

The governess had fixed her choice on the Order of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, at St. Lawrence, Montreal. Her uncle, who, from fatherly motives, had withheld his consent, finally yielded to her pertinacity. Downheartedly, he announced that he would drive her to the convent to make the acquaintance of the Sister Superior, and arrange the terms of admission to the Order.

The jubilant candidate could not restrain her joy. As they drove to the convent she talked incessantly, and as the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart, every other sentence was about the Sisters of the Holy Cross. She was on the highway to Paradise. The drive seemed long, but like all things earthly it came to an end and she alighted at the gate of her dream-home. Without waiting for her uncle, who busied himself with the horse and buggy, the eager aspirant went into the grounds and up the curved walk towards the porch. In a moment or so, her uncle joined her. But . . . what had happened? The radiant niece of a few seconds ago turned to him, a figure of dejection.

"Uncle, let us go back. I want to go home."

The good man was mystified at this sudden revulsion of feeling. "What has come over you? What does this mean? I brought you here at your own request, to satisfy your wish of interviewing the Superior, and now that we have come so far, and are at the door, you ask to turn back without so much as going into the parlor. Since we are here, you had better make your call and explain why you came. In this way you may spare yourself future regrets."

She submitted passively. In answer to their door-ring they were admitted into the parlor. To the inviting overtures of the Superior, the dispirited applicant opposed a taciturn demeanor. Instead of the enthusiastic offering of herself to the Order, which the loving uncle had schooled himself to bear, the girl said next

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to nothing. He was obliged to extricate himself from the embarrassing situation as best he could. This was quite different from what had been planned. During the drive the gentleman had asked his niece what his part of the programme would be in the forthcoming interview. The governess had replied with assurance, "You need not worry about that. I am so delighted to be near the fulfilment of my desires that I will be able to talk for myself."

The visit was decidedly short and flat.

Once outside the grounds, the nonplussed uncle said, "Will you explain what this means. For months you have been coaxing me to let you join the Sisters of the Holy Cross, and now when I made it possible for you to do so, you change your mind, in an instant, and that without apparent cause, and place me in this awkward predicament.

"I am very sorry, Uncle, but I did not think it would turn out so."

More than this she would not say. Good gentleman, did he ever know? We do. The delicacy which sealed her lips with him is not necessary with us. Please do not laugh. Remember that what is amusement for us now was keen disappointment to her then.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross, like the holy women in the Gospel who attended to the needs of Our Blessed Lord and His disciples, did the washing for the nearby college staff and students. As the governess came to a turn in the pathway leading to the porch, she saw the male apparel on the clothes-line. The sight killed her vocation for the place. The crestfallen maiden went home and resumed her duties with the cousins so glad to have her back. But, "he laughs best who laughs last." Exactly ten years after the tableau of the clothes-line on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, the governess was a missionary Sister in Williams Lake, in British Columbia. The headquarters of the Oblate Fathers for that distant region was there. The Fathers conducted a residential school for native and half-breed boys. The washing for this motley establishment was done by the Sisters; among them, sousing coarse garments in soapsuds, was the fastidious ex-governess!

If this vocation was lost to a particular Order, it was not lost to the Church. Shortly after the disappointment at St. Lawrence Convent, the governess' uncle invited her to take a drive to

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Lachine, some miles from Montreal. The point of interest was the Mother House of the Sisters of St. Ann. The vocation which had been dampened, but not deadened, revived at her first acquaintance with the members of this institution. There and then she offered it her allegiance. It proved a loyal one of fifty years.

After her profession, which she made at the age of twenty-two, she was one of six Sisters named for Vancouver Island. That was in 1866. At that time the voyage, via the Isthmus of Panama, occupied two months. There was not much to break the monotony of steamship life, but the Sisters were entertained by a lady, also bound for Victoria, who should have kept beauty parlors. She fastened her critical—or was it admiring?—taste on the nuns. She abstracted their best points piecemeal and then produced an imaginary beauty. "If that Sister with the beautiful complexion only had the lovely eyes of that other one and the sweet mouth of such a one, and the tapered fingers of that tall one," etc. It was a surprise to the Sisters that there was any beauty at all among them, and rather comforting to know that what was lacking in one was made up by the other.

Sister Mary Clement was a good sailor. She enjoyed the gorgeous sunsets. Like a faithful camera, her clear mind printed the panorama on her memory; to the last days of her life she liked to depict it.

Her apostolate for souls began during the voyage. The officers and crew were most deferential to the nuns. Sister Mary Clement, who had the advantage over her companions, of fluent English, could speak their appreciation. Her affability won confidences from the sailors. One of them was particularly communicative. He confessed that he had neglected the sacraments for many years, because he had not the strength to break off some bad habits, so common among young people. Sister exhorted him to begin by making his peace with God, and then to try to avoid the occasion of his falls. Such advice is often given and received in good part, but, alas for the weakness of human nature, is not always acted upon. But Sister's protegee responded to her words, and to grace. To keep out of the way of his former failings, he accepted the minimum pay of hospital help and deprived himself of legitimate pastimes. After fourteen years, Sister heard of his pious death, from a Sister of Mercy, in San Francisco, who said that the sailor had lived and died grateful to the Sister who, aboard ship, had helped him back to God.

## SISTER MARY CLEMENT

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During the long voyage Sister Mary Clement's appetite was super-normal. The captain and officers smiled; the waiters good-naturedly served her generous helpings at meals and between times. The amount of food she consumed neither nourished nor distressed her. After landing in Victoria it was the same. The wise Mother Superior knew that such extraordinary consumption of food at table and constant craving for it afterwards, indicated serious disorder in the system. The convent doctor was called in to pronounce himself. It was none too soon. "A little more of this," he said, "and it would have been too late. This is a case of sea-famishness, which sometimes ends fatally." Under his treatment, Sister was restored to her pre-voyage condition, and in a fortnight began her life-work in convent and boarding schools.

As teacher, or superior, she was a kind, solicitous mother to every child; she never drew the line at caste. Indians, half-breeds, forsaken waifs, all were the objects of her truly maternal love. On stormy nights, regardless of personal comfort, she went from bed to bed, to tuck the smaller children snug in their blankets.

She had the gift of teaching catechism, a gift all too rare even among those called to impart Christian doctrine. Faith, piety, sincerity—everything in her manner captivated the attention of her hearers, and impressed her religious lessons on their minds. Her teaching bore fruit; the piety of her own heart she passed to her pupils. Especially true is this of her intense love of the Most Blessed Sacrament, a devotion she inspired in those with whom she came in contact.

Gentle, trustful, confiding as a child, traits of which Our Blessed Lord has said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," Sister loved the things of God pre-eminently; she literally savored of them. The singing of hymns and canticles often moved her to tears, and so long as she had her fine soprano voice, she sang them herself with feeling and devotion. It may be truly said of her that "She fed among the lilies." The chapel, the word of God, the innocence of children, the simple lessons in text-books, the lovely qualities she saw in others—such were the thoughts on which she loved to dwell. Her mission in the parlor, though important and fruitful, never made her one of the world; like our Guardian Angels, she was in it to do good, but never to be touched by it.

She was a zealous promoter of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. From this source, and the Tabernacle, she drew the power which, linked with her refinement and warmth of manner, reached

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the heart's core, and led sinners to a sense of right living. A wide field was open to her zeal in the mission of Williams Lake, B. C. Here, far out of the glare of civilization, men of all nationalities lived with squaws and had large families, but objected to having their unions legally recognized. The persuasive exhortations of Sister Mary Clement effected a change in this state of affairs.

A particularly interesting case is that of a French nobleman. Long he resisted Sister's representations of the rights he owed to God, to his squaw, to his children, and to his soul. Finally, he yielded to the point of compromise. He said, "I will submit the woman to a trial and see if she is worthy of the legal tie." One evening, when in his home, he sat down in presence of his native partner, the mother of his children, and, with great show, began to write a letter. Naturally, she asked to whom he was writing. Rather crossly, the French nobleman answered, "I am going to get a wife from France; you can go where you please." The poor discarded creature took the cruel affront very meekly. Quietly, without a word of reproach, she continued her accustomed domestic work. The test had continued a month when, one evening, the man asked her what she intended to do when his future wife came. She replied softly that she would take her children and remove to another place. His man heart was touched by so peaceful an adjustment. He rewarded the squaw's forbearance by saying, "You are my wife forever; I never had any other in mind. The priest will bless our marriage."

Sympathetic, courteous and comely, Sister Mary Clement was everywhere known as "The Pleasant Sister." She kept her peaceful temperament under cultivation. The epigram of St. Francis of Sales, "More flies are caught with a spoonful of honey than with a barrel of vinegar," was one of her favorite rules.

The saints of God, besides the trials common to ordinary mortals, are subjected to particular sufferings, either in the natural or supernatural order. The "Little Flower," the charming young saint who has captivated the Catholic world, devotes a chapter of her autobiography to "The Night of her Soul." She suffered so smilingly that her companions wondered if she suffered at all; and all the while she was enduring three martyrdoms—one in the body, another in the heart, and a third in the spirit.

And so it was, though in a less degree, with Sister Mary Clement. During the last years of her life enfeebled health checked her active labors; the desire of a nun is to be strenuously employed

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to the very end of her existence. Not to be so is a species of heart martyrdom. But the keenest suffering, the heaviest cross for the servants of Christ, comes from the spiritual order . . . temptations against faith, excessive fear of the judgments of God. This dear Sister suffered all her life from this latter trial.

It must be one of those mysteries of the interior life that so gentle, so kind, so pious a person, one so uniformly delicate towards everybody, should see God, whom we daily invoke as "Our Father," loom up before her soul's vision as an inexorable Judge. In the observance of her holy vows, her convent rules, her striving after the perfection of her state, she was a nun of pure gold; because of that, she had to pass through the refining crucible. She not only passed through it, but remained in it during her whole life. The day before her death, when she received the Last Sacraments, then only was her fear changed into perfect trust and heavenly joy. The means which naturally should have lifted the cross from her timorous soul, such as her keen perceptions, sound judgment, and childlike submission to the doctrines of faith, had not succeeded. Years of meek, loving service to God seem to have increased rather than assuaged this heavy spiritual anguish; no doubt, because her virtue was sufficiently strong to bear the trial.

That Sister Mary Clement had little or no reprieve from this overpowering fear was shown in a pitiful incident. There had been a most pleasant reunion of Sisters to celebrate the forty-ninth anniversary of her arrival in British Columbia. Passing from one room to another, she suddenly stopped and said to the companion on whose arm she was leaning, "Sister, no words can say how miserable I am." Believing her sick, the Sister asked what she could do for her. "I do not need bodily care," she said, "but I am so afraid of the judgment of God. He is so just." Affecting a scolding tone, the Sister said, "And these are the thanks you give God for the good things we have just enjoyed from His fatherly bounty." The tried victim of God's justice answered humbly, "Such words do me good, but only for a while."

What contrast! A religious so mild she would "not quench the smoking flax nor crush the bruised reed," and yet her life lived in the constant presence of an angry judge! Dear God, you surely try the loyalty of your friends by contraries!

Notwithstanding this desolation of soul, Sister went through life with a smiling countenance, discharging her duties in a sunny manner. As Superior in Williams Lake, Kamloops and Quamichan,

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her rule was peaceful, tactful, and motherly. From these onerous charges she passed into retirement, but not to be idle. A skilful wielder of the needle, as well as of the pen, when she was forced to lay down one, she took up the other. Few pieces of altar linen are not embellished with her lace. Nay, more, only a week before her death she was busy knitting socks for the soldiers at the front. How profound was her sympathy and esteem for them! In her wish to be useful, no matter in what little way, she supervised the schoolroom corridor, an uncomfortable post for one with the chill of seventy-three years, and a chronic, bronchial cough.

A pretty, not to say sublime, scene took place at this lowly post of duty on the Friday preceding her death. The Bishop was visiting the classes. Sister Mary Clement, true to trust, was doing sentinel service. When the retinue, comprising Mother Provincial, the Sister Superior, and the Prefect of Studies passed by, they stopped that the Bishop might address some words to the vigilant keeper. She took advantage of the precious moment to ask His Lordship to bless her weak eyes. It proved more than a blessing on her sight. It was the blessing of the Church on her life-work, for there, amid the paraphernalia of school week-end, she knelt down, and the representative of God laid consecrated hands on her head, crowning, as it were, her forty-nine years of labor in the Catholic cause. It was a grand end to a beautiful vocation.

Four days afterwards, as the clock ushered in the feast of the Archangel Gabriel, humble Sister Mary Clement went with smiling peace to the embrace of her Divine Spouse, the Lamb of God, the sole object of her love, the One Master of her actions. In the heavenly mansion, set apart for her by the choice of God, may she remember the British Columbia friends she loved so well.



MOTHER MARY ANNE OF JESUS

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CHAPTER V.

*Mother Mary Anne of Jesus*

1875 - 1901

“ELIZABETH, I am old, I cannot live much longer; you are only sixteen, you have the promise of a long life before you. Will you not stay with me during my remaining years on earth? You know how you have brightened my life since your grandfather passed away. You cannot refuse me your companionship in my bereaved age. When the end comes, and I have the priest to anoint me, and your dear hand to close my eyes, I shall die happy, and you will still be fresh to enter religious life.”

“Grandma, dear, away with the thought of death; you are expecting heaven too soon. Any life insurance company would be glad to take out a policy on you. Surely, you do not want to stand between God and my religious vocation.”

“God forbid, my dear child, that I oppose so holy a calling; I am only asking you to wait a while. My days would be so empty and dreary without you. Since the age of five, when your parents let you come to stay with me to comfort me for your grandfather’s death, you have been my world. Your presence is sunshine, and your chatter my delight. You cannot understand the soothing effect of your attention on my infirmities. O, Elizabeth, my favorite grandchild, do you find it in your heart to leave me now, and make blank the short time left me?”

“Grandma, dear, that is the language of your heart; let your faith have its say. Suppose I were the choice of some Irish lord, imagine how likely that is—but for the sake of argument suppose his affections rested on a freckled Irish-Canadian colleen. You know you would not put him off, and now you would dilly-dally about letting me become the Bride of Jesus, the King of heaven and earth.”

“Dear girl, this holy explanation of your future is easy and beautiful to you because your baptismal vision has all the clearness of youth, but with the majority of us who have lived long, spiritual aspects are dim, and do not impress us with the force of earthly perspectives. It is true that I would see you contract a worldly alliance with joy, and yet, it might veil many reasons for sorrow. I will not incur such risks on your future since you think you are called to be a nun. I will not begrudge you to God. But at present

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I feel the loneliness of the months and years without you too keenly to be able to give you up to Him with a cheerful heart, which should be the condition of every gift to the Almighty; still, if I cannot do that, I will not stand in your way. The heart of Our Lady of Sorrows alone can know how much it costs me to let you go, just now when your school days are over, and I had looked forward to having more of your companionship."

"Dear Grandmother, if it were not hard for both of us God would not hold out the exceeding reward of a hundredfold in this life, and in the next, life everlasting. I am sure the hundredfold is not only for those who go from home for Christ's sake, but that it is shared by those who are left at home with the continual heartache of an ever-reminding vacant chair. We must often remind ourselves, Grandmother dear, of the old saying, which is as true as it ever was, and ever will be, 'No cross, no crown.' Never mind, darling, we do not have to bear the cross long, even if we live to be quite old, and we shall wear the crown forever, and be together forever."

"You dear, sunny girl, you always see the bright side of things, God bless you. I know you will bring sunshine in your convent home as you do here."

"Thank you, grandmother darling, for making the announcement of my decision to enter the convent so easy; and thank you again for your consent. I knew the thought of my going away would be a stab to your heart."

"Yes, Elizabeth, it is that; if one stab pierces so deep, how could our Blessed Mother have stood seven?"

This conversation took place in the enviable home of a well-to-do descendant of Irish settlers in Rawdon, Province of Quebec. That house was worthy of re-echoing a conversation which, like that above, was the acme of the Catholic spirit. Its beams, rafters, and walls had been hewn from the trees of the primitive Canadian forest, which during the constructive ages of the American continent had glorified their Creator in lordly stateliness. Shortly after the period of the Irish famine, a number of families emigrated from Ireland to the Dominion. Among them were the Rowans and Skellys. They located in the virgin northlands of the St. Lawrence, and became prominent people in the district. The colony appreciated learning, and, though few in numbers, it soon had its Catholic boarding school for boys under the Clerics of St. Viateur, and its convent for girls under the Sisters of St. Ann, so that there

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was little or no break between the education of the elders from the Old World and that of their children in the New.

Elizabeth Rowan, whose home was in sight of the convent, had received her education there, and with it, the vocation to the religious life. She had completed the course of studies of the times with great success, and now, in her sixteenth year, highly recommended by every Sister who knew her, was making the usual advances to enter the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Ann.

The parting from her parents, though painful, was not as much so as that from her grandmother, with whom she had spent eleven years. Sharper still was the pain of the farewell to her favorite sister. Speaking about it many years afterwards she said: "My sacrifice in becoming a religious was leaving my sister Margaret. Words cannot say how much we were to each other."

Bright in disposition, in intellect and in her offering of self to God, she was an ideal novice. Coming from a pious Catholic home, and fresh from the convent classes, her spiritual edifice was already on a solid base. On this she erected the virtues of religious life. As she proceeded in her holy enterprise of scaling the ladder of perfection, she gained impetus and soon became a pattern of all virtues. To this day her name in religion, Sister Mary Anne of Jesus, stands for that high praise.

After taking her vows, which she made at the age of eighteen, she taught in St. Paul's Parish, Oswego, New York. Even at that early period of her life, when as a rule young people enter upon a new phase of life with bright anticipations, she felt any responsibility placed upon her with almost agonizing force. The Oswego pupils worshipped the Sisters, so were responsive; moreover, the young teacher had perfect discipline, nevertheless every morning she had to make an act of heroic resignation and exert her will power before opening the school-room door. Once in presence of the class, she was all courage, enthusiasm, and success.

The oppressive sense of responsibility which marked her first employment in active life, continued through all the periods of the varied positions she occupied. Had she been a failure in any one line this would be explicable, but she was talented, loved and equal to any emergency. God fashions individual crosses for us as occasions of merit.

After teaching two years in the States, Sister Mary Anne of Jesus was one of eight Sisters of St. Ann named for the works of

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her Order in British Columbia. It was then a fortnight's journey, mostly by rail, via Chicago, Ogden, and San Francisco, by the Southern Pacific route, the only transcontinental line across North America. It was considered a great distance, and the departure from native land permanent.

The fond grandmother felt this second break even more keenly than the first; in this, there had been possibility of seeing her beloved Elizabeth, but now, with a continent between them, there could be no such hope. In a farewell visit she renewed all her pleadings.

"My child, you were far enough away in New York, but from there you could have reached my death-bed in three or four days. These last four years without you have been bearable because of that hope, but in Vancouver Island, the other end of the world to us, I can never expect to see you again."

The tenderness of love is harder to bear than the bitterness of reproach. The grandmother's legitimate claim found response in her granddaughter's aching heart, but she had put her hand to the plough and would not turn back. Tears of mourning mingled with the grandmother's appeal, for Sister Mary Anne of Jesus' parents had just lost a son. "Must we lose two children at once?" they said.

Reverend Mother General had not been indifferent to this representation. She explained to the bereaved family, "Under the circumstances I would not have named Sister for that distant Pacific Coast mission, but before God I am pressed to do so, for she is the fittest for the required work in her special line."

Casting her lot with Our Blessed Lord, who has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me," the generous nun left for the West, with a pierced but willing heart. Far from her was the request, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my dead," she knew He would brook no delay, for had He not said to one who offered to be His disciple, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead"?

The whole week on the train was quite fatiguing. As the travelling expenses of eight Sisters from Montreal to Vancouver Island were high, the Sisters, through motives of economy, came over on the cheap train, without sleepers. They caught whatever snatches of sleep they could, upright in their seats, with their "carpet bags" for head rest; they took cold meals from lunch baskets, provisioned at their departure. After eight such days,

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they boarded the northbound steamer in San Francisco, and were at once assailed by sea-sickness. They were not a prepossessing party when, at last, they were clasped in Mother Mary Providence's sympathetic embrace on the threshold of the Victoria convent. It was two weeks before they were sufficiently recuperated to undertake any duties. There and then, it was decided that economy, at such a cost, is mistaken economy. And since, the Sisters have availed themselves of the modern comforts of travel, for health is needed for their strenuous work.

They were all trained teachers, but in the pioneer Province of British Columbia this was not enough. The Sisters had to support a girls' orphanage, as well as lay the foundation for St. Joseph's Hospital, by the labor of their hands. Besides the coarser work, every Sister contributed her skill in preparing a sale of work towards those benefits.

### **Nous Sommes Eight**

When travelling, a trifling incident will sometimes afford lasting amusement. This is one that marked the trip. The conductor asked, "How many are you?"

With Canadian vivacity, the leader of the party answered, "Nous sommes eight." This blended French and English sentence entered the convent's comic vocabulary.

The eight were a pleasant band. They often related with hilarity the fiasco of their first Western examination. When they were duly rested, Mother Mary Providence thought the time come to inquire into their accomplishments. Beginning by the oldest, she asked, "Can you do fancy work?" "No, Mother Superior." "Can you embroider?" "No, Mother Superior." "Surely, you can do tapestry, and crochet?" "No, Mother Superior." Same question, same answer from the memorable "Eight." When finally they were asked, "Well, what can you do?" and the chorus replied, "Nothing," the examination ended with a credit of 100% laughter. But they were 100% women, and missionary nuns at that; soon they mastered the essentials of their programme.

Sister Mary Anne of Jesus, only twenty, had not cared for the needle; she had escaped much of her personal sewing by exchanging it for another's domestic work, to mutual satisfaction. In time she could dressmake, and trim hats quite deftly.

This uncongenial work is not the only thing in which she conquered distaste. In the Eastern convents, tea was the beverage

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at three meals, but in the Western ones, coffee at breakfast had been accepted by one and all. She might have asked for tea and it would gladly have been served her. She made up her mind to get used to coffee. At first, with effort, she drank one spoonful during the meal. By degrees, she was able to take two, and so on, till after some years coffee became a necessity to her. From these small, but by no means easy beginnings in self-conquest she rose to a great degree of mortification.

This may be judged by her motto—no mere words with her: "All the pleasure for others, the pain for myself."

Wherever she was engaged, in Oswego, Victoria and New Westminster, she won golden opinions from her superiors, her companions and her pupils. The result is easy to foresee. At the exceptional age of twenty-six she was appointed Mother Provincial of the establishments of the Sisters of St. Ann in British Columbia and Alaska. The nomination fell upon her like a thunderbolt. Her high reputation alone had prepared her for the onerous position. She had not passed through the ordinary stage of local superior; still less, she had never sat in council. While her appointment filled others with joy, it overcame her with terror.

There will probably never again be so tense a moment in the Victoria convent as on that occasion. For twenty-two years Mother Mary Providence, a woman of superior ability, had governed the St. Ann's institutions on the Pacific Coast. From California to Alaska her name stood for humanity. The Sisters had been told that her term of office, which, for pioneer reasons, had extended much beyond customary regulations, must have an interim of some years, at least. The Victoria Council had suggested Sister Mary Anne of Jesus as her successor. The final decision was to be made by the Major Council at the Mother House, Lachine, near Montreal.

It was now August, and the nomination might come any day.

Certain periods of life are defined by prominent bars. Infancy, for instance, remains the other side of childhood when a child learns to walk. The other demarcations are not so clear, but they exist. A time comes when the buoyancy of youth disappears behind the appearance of the responsibilities of life. This day had now come for Sister Mary Anne of Jesus. But before the bar was raised, the last day of her youthfulness expended itself joyfully.

## MOTHER MARY ANNE OF JESUS

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### The Biblical Twelve

St. Joseph's Hospital needed extra help for general house cleaning. Twelve Sisters from the convent offered themselves. Sister Mary Anne of Jesus, a gay leader and spry worker, was one of them. She was also quick to think. Twelve workers, why that stood for the twelve sons of Jacob. Soon you might have heard in St. Joseph's corridors, "Juda, please bring that bucket," "Zabulon, you are wanted here," "Benjamin, take it easy," and so on; but when one of the twelve slipped and dropped a pail of water, mirth reached its climax: "There is Joseph in the well," they said. That day, forty-nine years past, is remembered to this day; its pleasure, and its portentous ending.

Satisfied with all the work they had done, the twelve Sisters crossed the street back to the convent. On entering, they heard that the important letter had come. The directions were that the seal was to be broken in presence of the assembled community. All knew one of their number would be nominated. Not one thought it would be herself.

### The Nomination

After the evening prayer, the letter was brought forth, Mother Mary Providence broke the seal, opened the letter, read the introduction, and then, the proclamation: "Sister Mary Anne of Jesus is appointed Sister Vicar," a title which then stood for that of Provincial-Superior. There was a moment of awful stillness, then a terrified whisper sounded through the assembly room, as the nominee, grasping her neighbor's arm, gasped, "Did it say, Sister Mary Anne of Jesus?" "Yes, it is your name."

Only those present at that announcement can describe the emotion of one and all as they saw its effect on the nominee. It is no figure of speech to say that for many days she was in the throes of realization and resignation to the fact that she was indeed the one appointed to be head of the Sisters of St. Ann in British Columbia. She continued to occupy her place of subordinate as long as she could, and insisted that the ex-vicar remain in charge. This the ex-vicar did in a maternal understanding of her young successor's suffering.

Mother Mary Providence had too long been one of the outstanding persons on the Pacific Coast for Victorians to see her moved to a secondary position without protest. The Home Administration had foreseen this. It asked the co-operation of the one person who could calm indignation, and prevent unpleasant conse-

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quences. This was Archbishop Seghers, the well-beloved former Bishop of Victoria, now occupying the See of Oregon. He was asked to come and endorse by his presence the appointment of the young, unknown Sister Vicar, and incline the public to peaceful acquiescence. The world would call this a diplomatic move; religion calls it the work of Divine Providence.

As the Archbishop was the guest of the Sisters, they gave the clergy a dinner at the convent. It was now two weeks since the name of the new Sister Vicar had circulated, but no one had seen her, so strongly had she persisted in remaining unannounced and unseen. Even now she begged not to take her rightful place as representative of the community.

When the Sisters of St. Ann give a clerical repast, they do not partake of it, but sit around the room, listening to the conversation. The priests, who had expected that the new Sister Vicar would be introduced on this occasion were disappointed. In an undertone, but in festive mood, they asked one another, "Who is she?" "What is her name?" "Do you know her?" "Where is she?" "No doubt she is in a corner preparing a speech."

She was near by, and heard it all, and, for the first time in two weeks, she smiled. The Sisters were so thankful for the light talk which produced that smile.

The Archbishop's visit had the desired results. He reconciled the friends of the old Sister Vicar to the new Superior, and established the new order. However, it could hardly be called a new order, or regime, because the young Vicar had such reverence for her predecessor, and so deep a sense of her own limitations, that, while she stamped her administration with her individuality, she always retained her senior at the helm.

The Home Administration had doubted the feasibility of the ex-Vicar continuing in the Provincial Administration. In forwarding the new nomination it had appointed Sister Mary Providence Superior of the Nanaimo convent. The humility of the young Vicar took alarm at this privation of the support of one so wise; she appealed at once for a revocation of this arrangement. It was granted. Seldom has it been given an organization to see age-contrast work so beautifully together. It must be admitted that, in the natural order, if it was hard for a young, inexperienced Superior to receive the reins of government from one who had long held them with uncommon sagacity, it was none the less hard—we are

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all humans—for the matured Superior to see her constructive work entrusted to immaturity. But the two worked together till death, in perfect accord, and increasing affection for each other. On the one side there was the reverence, the confidence of youth for age, and on the other, deep-rooted admiration of age for competent youth. Their regard for each other was too spontaneous to cost them anything.

These sentiments of the ex-Vicar for the new incumbent were shared by all the Sisters. Nor did time lessen them; on the contrary, her twenty years in authority only heightened them.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus has now been dead thirty years, but her qualifications and virtues are still the subject of many pious conversations among those who knew her. Talking them all over, the Sisters say they do not know which of her virtues most to admire, so much was she a pattern of them all. The saying, "Common actions done uncommonly well," applies to this model nun and Superior.

Her exemplary life aroused in them a corresponding desire of striving after perfection. Her spirit of poverty and mortification rose to the heroic. With brightness and elasticity, but without ostentation, she denied herself constantly. Ignoring self, she multiplied her attentions to others. No words of ours can say how fully she lived up to the motto already quoted which she had chosen for herself: "All the pleasure for others, the pain for myself."

From the time of her first appointment to superiorship till her death, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus remained in positions of authority, alternating with Mother Mary Providence in the office of "Vicar" (which name was changed to that of "Provincial") and Superior of St. Joseph's Hospital. It is, therefore, the virtues which she practised as head of St. Ann's Sisterhood in British Columbia and Alaska which will be the subject of these pages.

### Mother Mary Anne of Jesus

The greatness of rulers consists in relieving suffering and keeping in mind the good of their subjects. This is exactly what Mother Mary Anne of Jesus did. The natural gifts which she brought to the task were: the kindest of hearts, quick penetration, vigilance, unflinching devotedness. Her supernatural gifts came from the clear light she had of the expectations of her holy vocation. Given energy, the will to do, and eternity for her goal, one realizes the benefits of her administration. Let us begin by

### Charity

the queen of virtues, prominent among the many which characterized this excellent nun, and which was the very soul of her being.

Charity is all to all. This good Mother's charity was spent first in her religious family. The word charity is here used in the sense of the act, "Love God above all things . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." It sprang from her so naturally that no dint of effort was associated with her when she was young with the young, companionable with those of her age, and lovingly deferential to seniors. Was she most to be admired in her ingenuity in providing amusements for beginners in religious life, and her solicitude for their health and comfort, or for the consideration with which she consulted her elders, and the alarm with which she heard of their ailing?

She was a miserable traveller, being sick on train, boat, and carriage, but at the first news that a Sister was sick in any of the houses under her jurisdiction, she would go at once, regardless of the season and personal inconvenience, to fetch her to the infirmary at headquarters.

The Sisters knew well she would fly to them when she heard they were sick. In 1898, Sister Mary Angele, the most esteemed Sister in the community, became fatally ill while on duty in the Cowichan (now Duncan) convent. The Sisters were devising how to word a telegram so as not to alarm their Mother Provincial. The patient overhearing them said, "Simply wire 'Sister Mary Angele is sick.'" No more was needed. The loving Superior went at once, but not alone. Valuing the life of the seventy-one-year-old nun above all things, she asked Doctor Jim Helmcken if he would go with her to ascertain the condition of the sick nun. Ever ready to give his professional services in brotherly kindness, he sacrificed that day's medical practice to the trip—only, however, to confirm the worst fears. The venerable nun, a pioneer missionary of 1858, died, according to the homely but expressive saying, "in the harness." Her remains were brought from the last scene of her labors to Victoria for interment in the convent cemetery.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus seemed to have a special love for tending the dying. One of her favorite prayers was: "O most merciful Jesus, lover of souls, I pray Thee, by the agony of Thy most sacred Heart, and the sorrows of Thy immaculate Mother, cleanse in Thine own blood the sinners of the whole world who are now in their agony; pity the dying."

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Night after night she would watch, with the concern of a mother for an only child, insensible to fatigue and insomnia, as the death hour of any of her Sisters drew near. Though the duties of Provincial over several institutions, and of local Superior of the Victoria Academy, were quite enough for one person, charity gave her surplus energy, and she filled the offices peculiar to a trained nurse. For hours she would stay at the couch of sickness in repulsive form, easing, cheering, praying, seemingly proof to intolerable conditions. Often she carried her forgetfulness of self to such an extent as to pain her Sisters, in that no remonstrance of theirs could induce her to spend less care on others and more on herself. She assumed as a divine right of her office to be at the bedside of the sick, whether nun or pupil, anticipating their slightest wish and helping to pass away the dull hours of pain.

In her services to the sick she was never actuated by a punctilious sense of duty, but rather urged on by true motherful anxiety.

Her charity was not limited to the sick. Everyone was protected in her presence, for she never suffered an unkind word to be said against anybody, still less any detrimental remark to be passed. It seems the rule for parents and teachers to harp on the weaknesses of children. Their faults, their defects, their thoughtlessness are habitual subjects of detraction, as if unnecessary exhibition of childish shortcomings is not a violation of the eighth commandment. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus understood the law better. She took it in the spirit of Christ, who said, "Suffer little ones to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." She was strict, even severe about silence on the faults of even the smallest child. She could correct, and did so with decision, but without useless betrayal of facts.

An offshoot of this feature of charity, and one that qualified her for the position of Superior, was her amiable discretion. Her subjects knew that the trust reposed in her was as sacred as that of the confessional. Confiding trouble or temptation to her was consigning it to the tomb.

No less admirable was her impartiality to all, for, regardless of time or external qualities, she was at the beck and call of young and old; a mother and adviser to all who approached her. Love wins love; hence, everyone in the convent, and in the school, feeling herself the object of this good Mother's interest and affection, sincerely reciprocated this maternal love. They repaid with reverent affection one who made their welfare her chief study. The

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homey atmosphere of the personnel was, indeed, a picture of the happiness and peace of the Holy Family at Nazareth.

The charity of this good Provincial embraced not only those under her immediate rule, namely, the Sisters, the pupils, the patients, but it extended feelingly to their parents and relatives. Their sorrows and troubles were duplicated in her heart and mind. She would write them letters full of sympathy, piety and consolation.

Was a Sister in sorrow, this tender Mother, like the Master who sorrowed with the Widow of Naim, and the Sisters of Lazarus, suffered it too. An affecting scene of her last illness was when she said to her nurse, lately bereft of her mother, "Sister, you do not know how much I shared your grief over the death of your mother. I cannot look at you nor think of you without my heart nearly bursting. Perhaps you found me unsympathetic, but when the news of your loss came, I went to the Blessed Virgin's altar and cried and prayed for an hour."

Telling her emotions was surely a sign of this Mother Provincial's approaching end, for she was severely reticent in all that concerned her feelings. It must be that the nearness of death loosens the heart-strings. We read that the Little Flower, on her death-bed, spoke of sufferings she had silently endured all along without anyone having suspected them.

Strange to say about one so loving and so beloved as Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, she was so cold in manner that at first one felt repelled. Those who read the depths of her love for one and all used to explain that this external coldness was permitted as a safeguard to their love of her, which, if it had not been held in check by this barrier, might have become too natural, instead of being beautifully elevating as it was. It also served as an occasion of merit to the good Mother Provincial, who suffered at being considered cold and impassive.

Owing, no doubt, to having spent her early years with her grandmother, she was tactful and cheery with the aged. Just as little children charmed that grand Provincial, Mother Mary Providence, old people attracted Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, and called forth all her ingeniousness to please them. Her gay, kindly jests made them forget the recital of their woes. In Santa Claus fashion she would procure them exactly what they liked. Prohibition or no prohibition, when vitality is low, a cordial—say genuine Port—is reviving. At the end of the nineteenth century, and even in the

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beginning of this, it was easy to buy it, and so add to the comfort of the old. This Sister, judge of human nature, would slyly put a bottle in the pockets of some old man, or in the birthday hamper of an old woman; again, when "the dear old folks" were out of sorts, she would give them a hot, yes, really "hot" punch. All these blood-warming drinks made her very dear to them; it also gave scope to her charity in humoring their weaknesses and their needs.

Like salt which renders food savory, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' charity seasoned her words and deeds. In the spring of 1896 she went to the Mother House, at Lachine, near Montreal, for the General Chapter, an event at which the elections of the Reverend Mother General, and her Council, take place. There she met Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, a Victoria pioneer Sister who had gone there a year before.

"You must come back with me," said Mother in her bright, sprightly way.

"It is not worth while," answered the humble, labor-bent nun, "I am too old to be of use."

"Sister, if I have to wheel you across the continent in a rolling chair, you shall come back. I am more pleased to bring you back as you are than if I were taking two young Sisters along."

These words were no idle compliment, nor pleasantry. They were the expression of her gratitude and reverence for the merits of the aged nun who had taken so great a part in the foundation of St. Ann's institutions in the West.

The condescension of the kind Mother Provincial went into details. The Sisters who are in most demand for business are called by a hand-bell. The Mother Provincial's bell rang many times a day, for, as has been said, she was local Superior as well. The cook, who had much to submit to her, was too considerate to ring the bell which would bring her Provincial-Superior down to her, so she would go up two flights of stairs to the office to transact her culinary business. The Provincial-Superior protested against this exertion, and insisted on coming down to the cook. Then a rivalry sprang up between condescension and considerateness. As the latter would not yield one iota of the politeness due to authority, the former employed a powerful incentive. She said to the cook, "Every time you ring my bell, I will give you the merit of obedience. Ring. If I am in the office, I shall come at once to the top of the stairs; if I do not appear, you will know I am not there and you will spare yourself a useless trip."

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Beautiful adjustment, in which one had the merit of humility and the other that of obedience.

### Humility

Humility went hand in hand with this Mother Provincial's charity. She was truly the handmaid of everyone. More than once the Sisters pleasantly remarked, in an excess of labor, or siege of sickness, "It is too bad we have only one servant," playfully alluding to her chief share in manual work. In times of general house-cleaning, this humble, active Mother-Superior used to dust walls, wash windows and scrub floors like an energetic lay nun. She did more menial cleaning than this, but so as not to be observed.

The hospital offered her many opportunities of rendering lowly service. With her predilection for old people, she did many secret things for them. She used to shine the boots of the old men; when they wondered who did it, she wondered with them, and asked all sorts of questions about it, as if she, too, was curious to find out who could be so wily.

If, as the saying is, "Murder will out," so will good deeds be brought to light. The shoe-shining was. This is how it came to the knowledge of the Sisters.

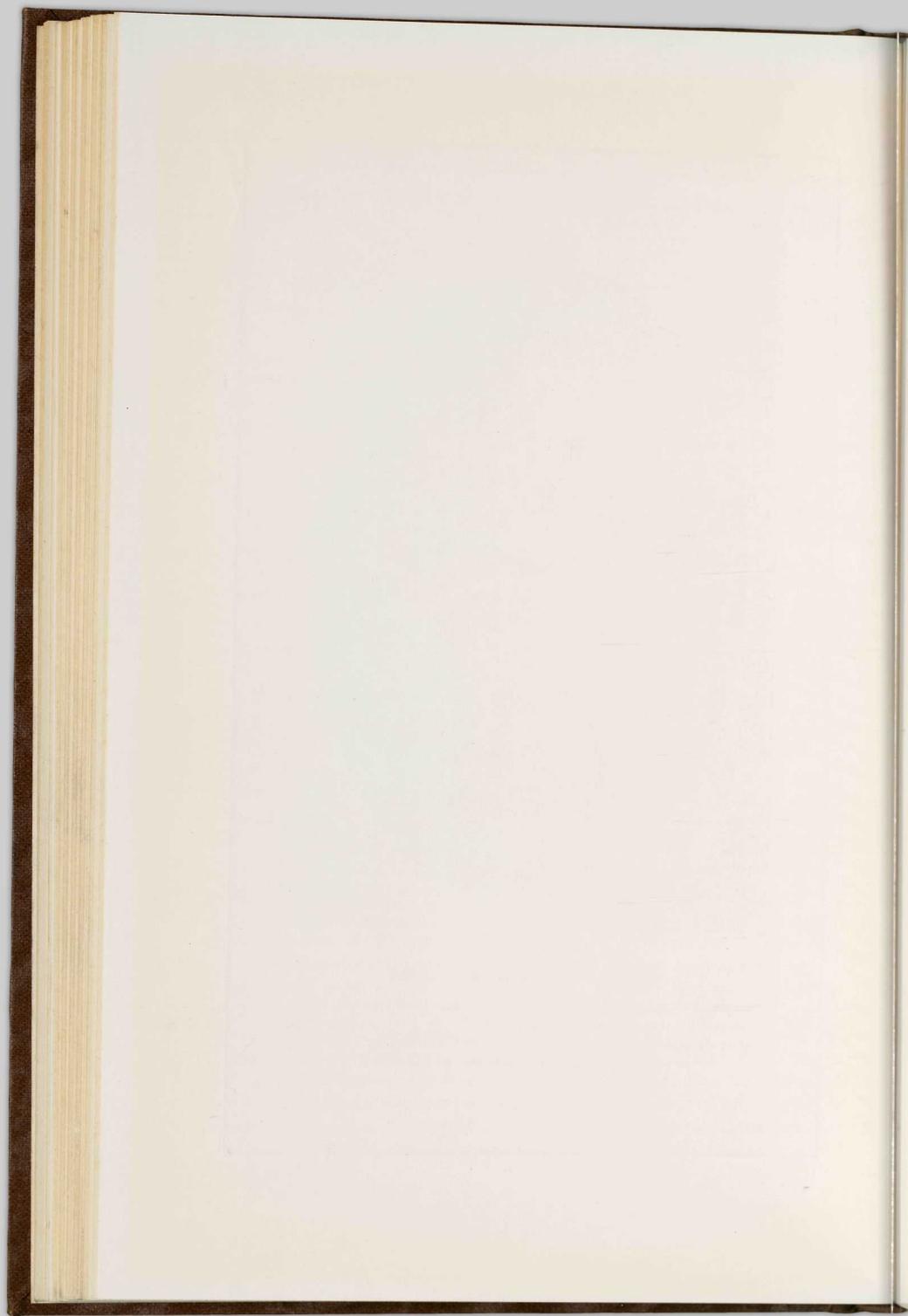
Among the old women who found a home at St. Joseph's was a Parisian ex-milliner. Though she lived to be nearly ninety she retained to the last the fastidiousness associated with Paris. Her language was choice, her manners exquisite. In time she became almost blind. Sometimes she could make her way to the chapel, but could not distinguish figures there. One day she thought herself alone. Standing before the altar, she took her dress up daintily on each side, and, curtsying gracefully, she said, "Sweet Jesus, you are very amiable." "Doux Jesus, vous etes tout aimable."

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus paid her every attention, among others, that of giving her the beverage for which the Parisian's overseas country is noted. The old lady's clothes were always kept spick and span, her shoes like mirrors. Nobody had ever stopped to think how all this happened. The day of revelation was near at hand. One Sunday morning the poor old lady was in great distress. She could not find her shoes, and it was near Mass time. She fumbled all about; she could not feel them anywhere. The Sister who helped her was not more successful. As they were needed, and they could not be found, it was a case to report to the Superior. When she heard about the missing shoes she appeared annoyed,



**SISTER MARY ANGELE, 1858-1898**

After having been Mother-General during a term marked with much happiness, she volunteered service in B. C., requesting that domestic labor be her portion, and stipulating that she never be appointed to positions of authority.



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and said, "I'll help you look for them." In no time she brought them, saying, "They were right around the corner of the corridor. It is a wonder you did not see them as you came along."

This was half giving herself away. The shoes had not got there by themselves. The Sisters began to quiz her.

"You did not have to look long for them."

"You found them near the place where the shoe-brush and blacking are kept."

"Your call-bell rang quite late last night. I noticed you came to bed after time. Now, we know. When your bell rang, you were polishing the shoes; you set them down, and then forgot about them."

"How cleverly you can piece a story together," said the smiling Superior, who never wanted her left hand to know what the right did.

The Sisters remarked to one another, "What numskulls we are not to have known all along that someone must have been shining the old people's shoes, and that 'someone' could be no other than Mother Mary Anne of Jesus."

The humble Mother Provincial yearned for a life of subjection in some obscure office. She had been in office nine years when the General Chapter of 1890 passed an act introducing co-adjutrix Sisters in the Order. Their duty was to relieve those engaged in teaching, of part of the domestic work.

Here was the opportunity, thought she, for passing from the governing corps to the occupation of cook, laundress, or general help, a class of people she sincerely envied. In all earnestness she wrote to the General Council soliciting admission among the Sisters absolutely devoted to manual labor. She had often spoken with simple and unfeigned delight of the happiness she would enjoy in that category. "What a relief," she would say, "to be freed from the cares of administration, from financial worries, and the responsibility of weighty decisions."

No doubt ever crossed her mind that her request would be refused. The Sisters knew that it would be vetoed without a moment's hesitation. One of them, about her own age, tried to dissuade her from making so useless a request. "Mother, you should know that the Council will not exchange your services as Provincial, or Superior, or teacher for those of housework."

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"Why not?" she asked. "I am strong, and I can work. I cannot see what reason they can allege against it. Hands for domestic work are as much needed as brains for intellectual pursuits, and are harder to find."

"Mother," continued her companion, "how can you persist in forcing your resignation when you know the satisfaction you give, and that the Sisters are doing as much to have you kept in office as you are to rid yourself of it?"

With never a thought of her own true worth which won them to her, she answered: "Yes, the Sisters are very good to me, but I can serve the community better at manual labor, and I shall be so light and happy when I have only my soul and household work to look after."

The Sisters heard these outpourings of her anticipated release from superiority with pain, for well they knew her demand would meet with refusal and cause her sore disappointment. And so it happened. A firmly worded negative reply crushed the longings of this exceptionally qualified ruler to descend to the lowliest occupations. But her humility and part in toil did not wane.

### Spirit of Poverty

Virtues are interlinked. When, in the Sermon on the Mount, Our Blessed Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," He linked the privation of material goods, free or imposed, with humility of mind. Every religious in making the vow of poverty assumes the voluntary privation of all that is not essential to the decorum of her state in conventual life. While every Order has its general rules for this observance, the individual may aspire to a more absolute poverty. The immediate followers of St. Francis of Assisi practised extreme poverty, but this lover of Lady Poverty outdid them all in its spirit and its application.

To understand the lengths to which some souls carry their spirit of poverty—which to the less perfect seems irrational—we must know that they take Christ for their model. Did He not turn from His eternal home, built of precious stones—sardonyx, sapphire, emeralds, pearls—to begin life in a stable, continue it with "no place to lay His head" and end it stripped on a cross? This example it is that excites religious to do without much which they might reasonably use.

Even in the world many pious persons are drawn to imitate Christ in this. Lady Georgiana Fullerton, who belonged to Eng-

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land's aristocracy, made the vow of poverty, and yet maintained the proprieties of her high rank.

The poverty that Mother Mary Anne of Jesus practised exceeded that of most religious in her surroundings. For example, the broom with which she herself swept her room was little more than a stalk. Her office contained a worm-eaten desk; two chairs, each re-seated with coarse twine; a crucifix, and two small wall pictures. Off this room was a curtained recess, just long enough for a bed.

That bed! Let me tell you about it. It was a camp-bed. This is how the Sisters came in possession of it. One day the Sister overseer found it, quite discarded, in the cellar of one of the rented houses belonging to the convent. It was covered with dust, and mouldy. As it was still strong enough for use, she had it brought to the shed. Her intention was to give it to a tramp. When the first case to her charitable purpose presented itself, the camp-bed was not to be found. Naturally, the conclusion was that it had been stolen—we are all so rash in our judgments, even nuns, if you please.

The disappearance of the old camp-bed had long been forgotten, when one day the Sister overseer happening to go into the narrow recess of the Mother Provincial's sleeping place, to see about some repairs, saw it there. To her horror she discovered that her Provincial Superior had taken it for her own use; that she slept on its canvas, which was covered with a sheet, but had no mattress. On hearing this, the Sisters were grieved. Their beloved Mother Provincial, who made them so comfortable, sought discomfort for herself. They were all for burning the old bed, but the mortified Provincial would not hear of it; she spoke of it as if it were a bed of roses. From that poor couch she was taken, several years afterwards, on a stretcher, to St. Joseph's Hospital, there to pass away adorned with the brilliants of Lady Poverty.

Her wardrobe was limited to two changes. Her habit was darned and patched, but so neatly as to escape detection. The new articles given her she invariably passed to others secretly, or with the injunction "not to tell anyone." Her usual method was to leave the new garments, given her by the providers, in the place of somebody's old ones, and so afford a surprise to the Sister, who, coming for her worn-out articles, found new ones. Again, she would note the wardrobe of a Sister who was leaving for one of the branch houses, and then, quite prepared for quick action, just at the

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moment of departure, as if only then noticing that something was amiss in the Sister's apparel, would call her aside, and say, "Quick now, take off that veil (or whatever article she wanted to replace) and put this on; they made it for me, but I do not need it." Of course, the Sister thus divested and invested would protest, but the Mother Provincial, in her engaging way, would say, "Hurry, they are waiting for you. Not a word about this." All the while she would be quickly exchanging the article; all the while, too, the recipient would be rebelling. This was a case where might was stronger than right.

These transactions were the only thing in which their Mother Provincial displeased the Sisters. They would say, "It is perfectly useless to give her anything new." To their repeated urgings of what was due her appearance as representative of the Institute, she would answer, "It behooves a religious to be poorly, but neatly, dressed." There was no fault to be found with her in this particular.

Vigilant in the observance of poverty in others, as she was strict in it for herself, yet she kept abreast of the times in equipping the apartments of the pupils. She loved the beautiful. Her purchases, which stood for taste and durability, met general approval.

The closing exercises, as well as the receptions tendered to the dignitaries of the Church, Governors-General, to representatives of the country, even to royalty itself, as in the case of the visit of Princess Louise, were stamped by her exquisite sense of the fitness of things.

As she had been accustomed to the comforts of a prosperous home, and the indulgence of a fond grandparent, her practice of poverty was the outcome of the virtue of religion. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

### Punctuality

In conventual life, besides the greater virtues summed in the vows, there are side ones of great merit. Among them we may place punctuality, promptness. What this stands for in the business world, it does in the convent system, with this difference, that here the motive is solely the glory of God, for in convents the bell stands for the voice of the divine will.

Punctuality, or prompt correspondence of religious to bell summons is so pleasing to God that it has sometimes been rewarded,

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even here on earth, by the appearance of our Blessed Lord in His humanity.

In stress of circumstances delay is justifiable, but, like all other virtues, great or minor, its practice requires effort and self-denial. The excellence of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' punctuality consisted in this, that though her busy programme easily justified any tardiness to common exercises, she exerted herself so as not to need this justification. It appeared marvellous to onlookers that one who supplied so many demands could be punctual at the exercises; as prompt to recreation, as to meditation. To this ardent nun every jot and tittle of the convent code meant the "pearl of great price." She started life with the fixed purpose of paying the cost, and procuring the pearl.

As Provincial her jurisdiction extended over seventeen dissimilar and widely-apart institutions. Two schools and two hospitals in Alaska; two Indian residential schools, one in Kamloops, the other on Kuper Island, British Columbia; an Indian boarding school in Mission City, on the Fraser; a government Indian day school on Songhees Reserve, Victoria; a girls' orphanage in Quamichan (now Duncan); a boys' protectorate, and a day school on corner of Vancouver and Pandora, Victoria; a kindergarten on corner of View and Blanshard, also in Victoria; boarding schools in Victoria, New Westminster, Kamloops, Vancouver, Nanaimo, and the well-known St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria. Her omnipresent vigilance over the concerns of these houses was not mere supervision; it was active and personal participation in all things great and small.

She lived home-life with the Sisters who were engaged here through her frequent, almost weekly letters, which kept them in touch with happenings of general interest.

What her activity set out to do, her ability accomplished. She constituted herself bookkeeper for the Victoria convent, where she resided, and centralized the accounts of the other sixteen establishments under her control. The opening of the Canadian Pacific Railway was an occasion for many dignitaries and notables to cross the Dominion, mostly for the purpose of studying colonization problems. Many of these personages were tendered receptions at the Academy. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus composed most of the addresses given. In the schools she was like an educational motor, directing the classes, and expending as much thought in planning

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means and ways for the progress of the primary grades as for the advanced.

Besides these business and intellectual activities, she gave so much time and care to the sick that the infirmarian came in second, after the example of a nurse who yields first right to a mother's solicitude for her ailing child.

These multiple and grave occupations the active Mother Provincial filled with characteristic brightness. Her motto, "All the pleasure for others, the pain for myself," which we love to repeat, was the warp and woof of her daily life. She understood that God in His fatherly goodness has distributed as many sources of enjoyment—perhaps more—than of suffering for us mortals. Entering in this plan, she strew the labor of the Sisters and the school work of the pupils with joyful surprises. She organized entertainments for them as though she had been a lady of leisure.

The point to be emphasized in giving this long, but incomplete, list of her duties, so many of which were self-imposed, is that with all this to divide her time and attention, one could seldom be ahead of her at the call of the bell for community exercises. The Sisters were so accustomed to see her at her place when the ball rang that when, exceptionally, any arrived before she did, they would ask, with surprise, "Why, where can Mother be?" In all, she was to each of them Mother and pattern.

Early rising is the slogan of every convent and monastery. For its being so universal a rule, and one which stretches from the first day a candidate joins an order to the end of the longest life spent there, it is one of the hardest habits to acquire. Once in a while, an extra half-hour's sleep is granted—a concession always greeted with applause. Though glad to give this permission, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus did not avail herself of it. Tired or sick, she rose at the regulation hour. She has been known to spend three consecutive nights at the bedside of the sick and yet be at the morning meditation, at 5.15. She would not have allowed another to strain human endurance to that point. When remonstrated with she would say, "I am none the worse for it, and you all have so much to do." This, as all the Sisters knew, was a cover for her charity and penitential spirit. Not one of them suffered from constant headaches as she did. Eventually these caused her death.

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### Detachment from Relatives

The first step towards conventual life is to leave home, and after that not to allow home ties, nor material interests connected with them, to interfere with the service of God.

The principle underlying this severance is the statement of Our Lord, "He who loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

All is not done towards filling this implied precept when the last farewell has been taken of all held most dear. Though the ache at leaving them seems acute enough to be the extreme of human detachment, it is only the preliminary stage.

Detachment of religious from kinsfolk sounds harsh, but it is not to be understood as the funeral of natural affection. Such an interpretation would be contrary to the fourth commandment. Substitute the motive to that of "All for God" and compare with the case of newly-weds who leave their father's roof, their whole being centred in each other, their thoughts set on the building of their own home, with only secondary concern for those they leave behind. The sincere candidates for religious life go forth to be all in all to Christ, and help His cause in the Catholic Church unhampered by natural claims. They follow the example set by Jesus, when at the age of twelve He said, almost reprovingly, to His dear Mother, and His good foster-father, St. Joseph, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

He had done so with unfathomable pain to both, though He loved them above all created beings—and how He could love them since He was God! Saints have borne this in mind, and on occasion have acted accordingly. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus did so in her way.

The saints have done many things which we heartily disapprove of, among them this detachment of relatives, but they are canonized, and we, where do we stand? St. Francis Xavier passed within sight of the family castle without stopping to say a last farewell, and yet he was going from Spain to evangelize the East Indies and Japan. Those whose idea of self-conquest does not reach this level wish he had acted otherwise, and they will wish the same in the instances here related of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus. But, let us beware of involving the heroism of those who aim at a high degree of perfection.

This good nun had been eight years in British Columbia, that Province so far from her native land, when her office of Provincial

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brought her to the Mother House for the Chapter and general elections.

The event furnished a visit to her relatives. They gathered in the old homestead in Rawdon. Time had dealt kindly with all. To the dear grandmother, whose favourite she still was, this was a crowning joy.

"My dear Elizabeth," she said to her aside, "thank God, I see you once more. It has been my heart's desire ever since you left for Vancouver Island. I have prayed morning and night, and said the rosary many times a day that my eyes might rest on you again. I have had fifty masses said for this intention."

"God has surely favoured you in this," answered her granddaughter. "Not many Sisters from the West can revisit their home; it is so far, and so expensive. In spite of all your prophecies of approaching death, when I left you eleven years ago to enter the novitiate, you are as well as you were then. Just think how many precious years of God's service I would have missed had I waited, as you wanted me to, till you had passed away. Are you not glad now, that we have the merit of our mutual sacrifice?"

The dear grandmother was not so easily put off.

"Is not that enough?" she asked. "Remain in this country that I may see you once in a while. You will not refuse me this now, will you?"

"Grandmother darling, let us complete the sacrifice," was the final answer.

Touching as was this renewal of the sacrifice of leave-taking between grandparent and granddaughter, more so was that between the two sisters, who had always been so particularly attached to each other—Mother Mary Anne of Jesus and her sister Maggie, now Mrs. Monahan. How happy was that one day spent together; but how swift its course. Like prey in eagle's talons did its joy speed by. Could it be possible that the carriage, the signal for departure, was already at the door? Do you know what it means for a united family, such as this was, to rise and give the missionary embrace to one of its members about to go to "fields afar"?

It is a sword of sorrow—sacred sorrow—meritorious sorrow.

When Mrs. Monahan held her dear sister in a last goodbye, she was so overcome with love and grief that she fainted, and remained in a long swoon. The alarmed relatives turned imploringly to Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, saying, "Surely, you will not

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go just yet; wait till Maggie recovers, that she may see and hear you on reviving."

"It is time to go," she said, and moved to the door.

The family stood in the way and entreated, "You cannot be so heartless; you shall not leave us like this. Who knows what the consequences may be when, partially restored, she realizes that you are gone for ever?"

"Come, Sister," she said to her companion. Without another word, nor backward look, both entered the carriage. They drove on for a long time in silence. When her deeply-affected companion, an ex-Superior General, could find voice, she said: "Mother, how could you leave them in that sad condition? You might have stayed at least a quarter of an hour, or till your sister was conscious."

"Sister, you know the time had come to go. The parting would have been as painful later, no matter how long it had been put off."

The ex-Superior General, the tenderest of women, did not think so. She could never speak of this parting scene without great emotion. In relating it she said: "I do not understand where Mother Provincial got the strength to do it. But, as we all know by this time, when duty and obedience are set before her, she would brave lions."

In 1887 the duties of her position necessitated another visit to the Mother House. Her time was limited. In arranging her schedule for accomplishing much in a short time, the Reverend Mother General told her to notify her relatives to meet for a day's rendezvous. There were new graves to pray over, but the survivors met at the appointed place, except one sister, who lived so far away that with the utmost speed of mail and conveyance, she could not possibly reach the place of reunion before nightfall. This was in pre-telephone and automobile days.

When told that her sister could not be there till night, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus said, "Then I cannot see her, for I must leave today."

There was a cry of protestation. "We know that Reverend Mother would let you stay till tomorrow if she knew that Sophie will arrive during the night. Think what it means for her to have left with her two children before sunrise, to have driven all day, and find on arriving that she has missed you by a few hours."

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She answered unwaveringly, "The time Reverend Mother has allowed has expired; I must go."

Her companion pleaded with the family. "You know very well that in such a case you may presume permission, and that Reverend Mother would want you to prolong your stay; it is just what you would expect a Sister under your jurisdiction to do in a like situation."

But this self-severe Provincial, to whom religious doctrine meant what it teaches, replied: "Where would obedience come in if Sisters presumed permissions every time something hard stands in the way?"

Overcoming nature, she said goodbye, and left without seeing her sister, who, as expected, arrived a few hours too late.

Tears filled Reverend Mother General's eyes when she was told what had happened. "You could have stayed and spared your sister such a bitter disappointment," she said chidingly.

As though the circumstances had been quite commonplace, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus answered: "There was nothing for me to do but to come away when you had told me to stay one day. I was not even tempted to delay when obedience was so clear."

"Father, let this chalice pass away; not my will but Thine be done."

### Cheerful Recreations

The principal virtues are common to all the saints, yet there are special virtues which are peculiar to certain holy souls. Still, in the garden of sanctity, where all bloom admirably, it is sometimes as perplexing to distinguish a special virtue as it is to choose the most fragrant plant—the choicest flower. Such is the case with Mother Mary Anne of Jesus; she practised all virtues—in which did she excel? But first, let it be understood that it is not the intention of this sketch to decide the merits of this fervent nun. That is the work of the Catholic Church. Our purpose is to set her super-edifying life before the faithful, and show how it accorded with the end she had in view when she said, "I am aiming at a place among the Seraphim. The higher my aim, the surer the attainment."

We have reviewed some of her virtues—her spirit of poverty which would have delighted the Poverella; her regularity in responding to the bell, and to duty, which would have charmed Teresa of Avila; her charity, the patent of saints; now we pause

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at the picture of the ideal recreations of the community over which she presided, and here select her as Patron of Convent Recreations.

In her circle worries were forgotten. If vexations were sometimes mentioned, she would quietly set them aside with the remark, "Let us recreate ourselves now, by and by we shall attend to serious matters."

Her conversations breathed piety, while her mere presence guarded charity and checked idle discussions.

How well, too, she knew how to please and amuse. She had on hand an inexhaustible fund of cheerfulness and humour. So pleasant were the evening gatherings that all eagerly looked forward to them, and gladly stood the fatigue of the day in view of their congenial and restful atmosphere. The hour was spent in profitable conversations, sprightly jokes, innocent tricks, there being over all the reserve and dignity becoming those who lived under the eye of God.

The devoted Mother kept a sort of constant sunshine over her community by devising joyful surprises. The Sisters might be at mending bees, at which she was always an active member. After some hours of steady sewing she would offer relaxation. "Sisters, you are tired after doing that handsome pile of mending; let us put away our work for a while, and take a walk in the garden." Chatting gaily, she would lead the Sisters, in and by round-about paths to a clump of trees, where, quite unexpectedly, they saw tables set for an inviting lunch.

Again, she would invite the Sisters to go for a walk to the beach. On reaching the edge of the cliff they would see a camp-fire down below, and figures in black which, upon nearer approach, they discovered were Mother's conspirators—real picnicky ones, with an array of pans and batter. Those were the days of hot pancakes, made in gypsy fashion; nobody minded cooking in the smoke and the combined heat of driftwood-fire and the sun's western rays—for never were there such pancakes. How do present-day thin-sliced sandwiches compare?

One Easter Monday, which, according to the spirit of the Catholic Church, is a holiday, Mother Provincial rang the bell after dinner, and announced: "Sisters, I am reluctant to ask you to work on this great holiday, but there is a quantity of wool to be picked for mattresses; if you all lend a helping hand it will soon be done."

With more or less good grace the Sisters donned their all-investing work aprons. Did you ever pick, or tease wool? It is

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anything but fancy work. The Sisters went to the laundry to do the disagreeable job. They took low seats before heaped-up baskets of sheared wool. Each began to take a handful to put on her lap when there was a shout, and another; a whole chorus of shouts, "Oh!" — "Ah!" — "Eggs! Eggs! Mother, what a trick." The greatest hilarity followed. Eggs abounded in those baskets of wool. Laughing, the roguery Mother Provincial proclaimed, "You have picked enough wool for today." Unnecessary words, for the Sisters were already appropriating eggs, and expressing their preferences for hard-boiled, soft-boiled eggs, omelettes, etc.

A certain year, after the house-cleaning which always follows the breaking up of school, and prepares the convent for the vacation coming of the Sisters dispersed in the institutions connected with the Victoria headquarters, the resourceful Mother Provincial said to the Sisters: "You have made the house nice and clean, you are tired, take a rest this afternoon; undress and go to bed." This was surely to the point, for they were, indeed, very tired after the "by hand" labour of those times. Glad of the rest, the Sisters went to their alcoves, and there they got another surprise, for on each one's stand was an egg-nog and a piece of cake. This they understood was to be taken before their afternoon nap. It was the nap of very tired nuns, and they dropped into it so completely that it took a vigorous bell-ring to rouse them from their slumber in time for supper. On entering the refectory what a surprise met their eyes. The tables were laid as for a great reception. Pretty things, good things! Nice table linen! Nice eats! The Mother Provincial, beaming hostess, received them with the little speech: "Sisters, as you never have the pleasure of arriving from our other houses, imagine this is your home-coming after a year's work in the Academy! Welcome all."

Though it was second nature for this Mother Provincial to give these surprises every once in a while, she did so with so serious a face that her novel schemes aroused no suspicions of the coming pleasure, and Sisters and pupils were invariably "taken in." These were the Mother's triumphs.

In her connection with the school, she was as ingenious in conceiving pleasures for the pupils, for they were the tenderest portion of her family, the part for which the other had its "raison d'être."

**The Obedient Bird**

A pretty incident occurred on a Saturday afternoon recreation. It shows that the spirit of the twentieth century religious is much the same as that of the glorious medieval ages.

A bird had flown into the chapel, and, feeling at ease in the spacious edifice, it flew about, alighting on cornices, now on statues, now on the altar. It was all very poetic. The Sisters were charmed—for a while. But the bird, being normal, soon began to give evidence of its healthy alimentary canal. Much like the biblical bird which had no respect for the eyes of the holy man, Tobias, this Victoria intruder left droppings everywhere and anywhere. As the afternoon wore away and the wanton prisoner could not find its way out, nor be put out, the sacristan showed annoyance. Addressing the Mother Provincial, she said: "The altar will not be fit for Holy Mass tomorrow morning if that bird stays in the chapel."

This put a serious turn to a topic which had afforded merriment that day. Turning to Sister Mary Geraldine, the Mother said: "Sister, as you are the tallest one here, go and catch that bird."

"Mother, you do not mean it," said the Sister, her amusement now turned to amazement.

The Mother smiled, that smile which meant that obedience is a conqueror. "Go, Sister, and fetch that bird to me."

"Holy obedience," murmured the Sister as she went off in quest of the aerial fugitive.

When she came into the chapel, she saw the bird hopelessly out of reach. "Little bird," she said, "come down here; Mother sent me to catch you." Heedless of the appeal, the bird continued to wing in highest altitude till it flew in the organ gallery. There it settled on the ledge of a pillar. Sister studied the position, and concluded that with a ladder she could reach the bird, if it remained there long enough.

"Birdie, stay there till I come for you," she said, and went off for a ladder. Carrying it up the winding stairs was awkward, and it bumped noisily several times. However, she got it in place and climbed up. The bird seemed interested in her manoeuvres, and, looking on, let itself be quietly taken. Sister brought it triumphantly to her Provincial-Superior. "Have you really got it?" exclaimed the Sisters, as they crowded around to see the daring visitor. They dismissed it, but the feeling remains to this day that

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they had a Superior who commanded by divine inspiration to impress upon them the merit of obedience.

So regular, so sweet, so natural was religious discipline under the leadership of this good Mother Provincial, that the Sisters actually felt satisfied with themselves. In one of those delightful recreations in which heart opened to heart, one of the Sisters said: "Now, Mother, don't you think that we are good? Admit that you are pleased with us, and that we deserve praise."

"I do not see that you deserve praise for doing what you have to do," she said, in those tones of hers which were never sharp nor wounding, and added, "Yes, you are very good." Her words and demeanor always seemed to say: "God expects every one of us to keep our Holy rules, and bear fruits of charity."

The scene is suggestive of the disciples giving an account of the wonderful works they had performed in the name of Christ, and He answering them, "Rejoice rather that your names are written in the Book of Life." And this is what that good Mother Provincial thought of her Sisters—that their names were written in the Book of Life.

### Piety

Since Mother Mary Anne of Jesus aimed at excellence in the practice of virtue, it can easily be conceived that she possessed the sap of them all, that is, the love of prayer.

The annual eight-day retreat was a veritable feast for her; it was a release from business, from the outside world. It was a vacation spent in the Garden of Eden, alone with the Divine Spouse of her soul.

Another spiritual exercise especially dear to her was the particular examination of conscience. "How fortunate we are," she would say reflectively, "to have this time in the middle of the day to recollect ourselves, and set ourselves right for the afternoon."

She recited the vocal prayers in the chapel, the community room, the refectory, in an earnest, pious tone which communicated its concentration of spirit to all present.

Though she found the greatest solace in prayer, she knew how to yield this restful exercise to the demands of charity. Once during the Forty Hours, a devotion so dear to her, there was an epidemic of influenza in the convent. This solicitous Mother Provincial was so occupied with the care of ten stricken Sisters and

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several pupils that she had not time to make a single hour of adoration during the three days' exposition.

There was no exaggeration nor singularity in the piety of this model nun. It drew to God. Virtue to be virtue must be rational. Such was hers. Good sense, practical, sound, energetic sense, guided the bark of her perfection as it steered the ship of her government. And over all was spread the sunbeam of her brightness.

From this love of prayer, it follows that her faith was lively and her confidence unbounded. Once she was in sore need of three hundred dollars to meet an urgent creditor. She asked the Sisters to bring that amount by next day, which was a Wednesday. Three hundred dollars was a big sum of money—it is now, but then it was much bigger—in fact it was so big that the Sisters did not like to assume the responsibility of praying for it. Jesting pleasantly on the matter, they told their Mother Provincial that she had better face the Bank-Saint with her request, for they lacked the courage to do so. All the same, they did pray. Whether their dispositions for prayer in that matter were perfect or not, when the Sisters met for recreation on said evening, they said, "Heaven is so far from this earth that the three hundred dollars up there have not had time to reach Victoria." Their want of faith was soon put to the blush, for, to their astonishment, the Mother Provincial triumphantly announced: "It is here; I received precisely that sum late this afternoon." St. Joseph had sent the money from an unexpected quarter. Indirectly it came from above, directly from the vague North. A man whose daughter had been with the Sisters from the age of two to fourteen, without a word from her father, came to Victoria. He remembered the Sisters and their mothering of his little girl, and in recognition gave them from his small savings the sum prayed for—exactly three hundred dollars. Had the Sisters known, they might have prayed for the twelve years' arrears, so easy for St. Joseph to procure!

But there were many other things besides money to pray for. One of the pupils was dying. The doctors had given her up. The parents had been wired to. The entire community awaited in prayer and anxiety for the last moments of the young sufferer. As usual, when a case was critical, the Mother Provincial was on attendance; this time with the infirmarian. About midnight the patient was apparently sinking. Then the woman of faith passed into the chapel. Man's extremity was God's opportunity. She knelt

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at the Blessed Virgin's altar and prayed a full hour. What passed there within those sixty minutes, God and Our Lady only know. The parents watching by their dear one noticed her become less restless. She fell asleep. It was the sleep of victorious life.

Next morning, when the doctor arrived, doubtless expecting a death scene, he found the girl alive. He took her temperature, looked surprised, said nothing, took it again and, astonished, said: "Why, Mother, what have you done with the fever?" All aglow with the happiness of her answered prayer, she replied: "I have given it to the Blessed Virgin." The consuming malady was all gone, and the girl happily on the way to perfect health.

The convent remembers another instance in which a seemingly hopeless case was, as far as can be judged, saved by the prayers of this motherly Mother; this she indeed was (a motherly Mother) to every nun, pupil and servant in her household.

In the spring of 1888, Miss Conway, from Chemainus, was stricken with diphtheria in its worst form. Doctor S. Helmcken, Victoria's medical authority for over a quarter of a century, had her isolated, and said there was little chance of recovery.

"We must save the child," said the Mother Provincial. As if she had been a trained nurse, with nothing else to do, she took charge of the case. For seven days and nights she did not undress. On the eighth day the patient was declared out of danger, thanks to the prayers and nursing of the indefatigable Provincial Superior. It was Lent, and again she was fasting rigorously even in this period of great call on her strength.

Charity and duty gave her surprising endurance, for it was after this, on Easter Monday, that, though worn out with fasting and sleeplessness, she boarded the eastbound train for the seven days' trip to Montreal to plead the cause of the Yukon Missions, and secure Sisters for that difficult undertaking.

### St. Joseph and the E. & N. Train

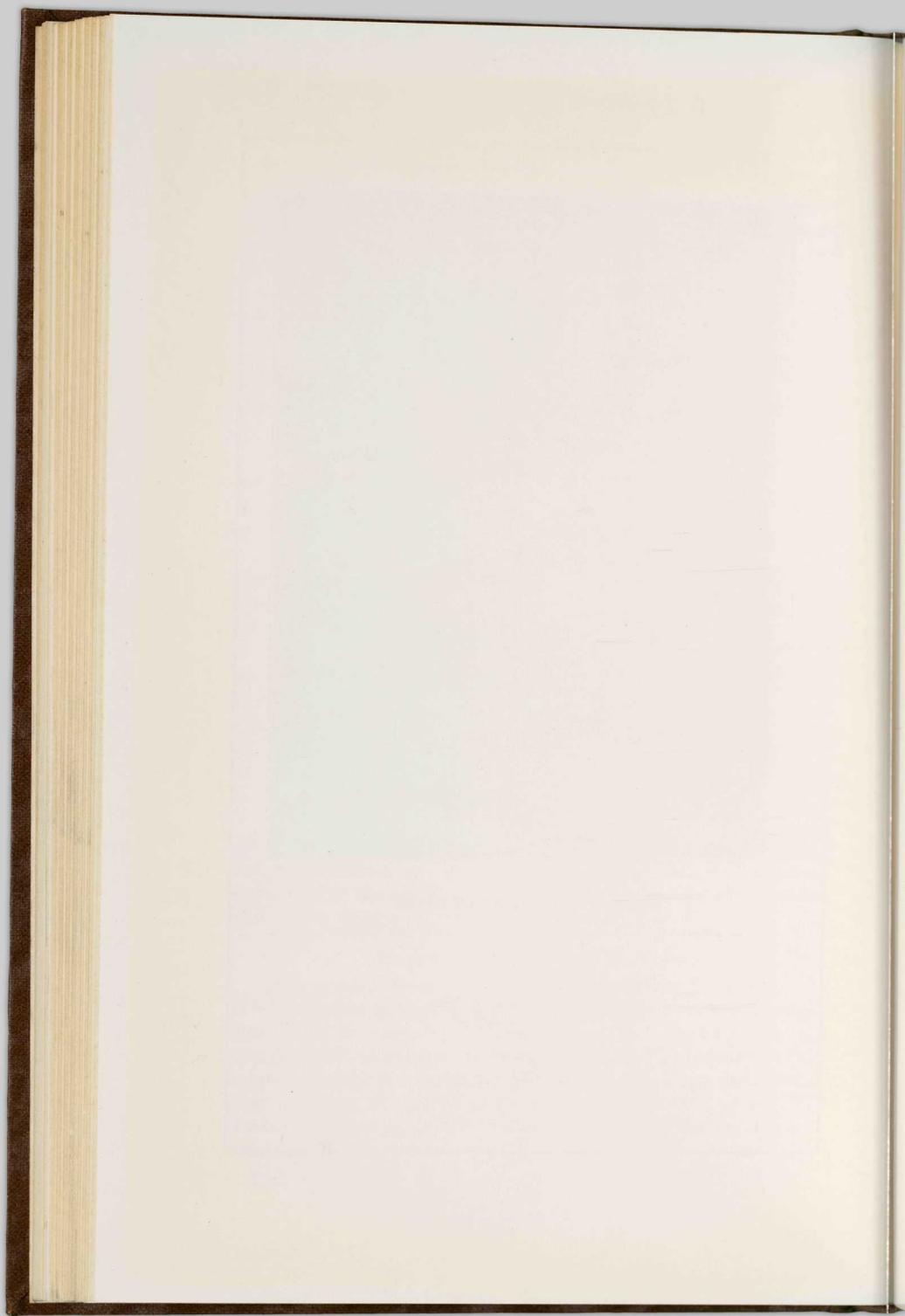
The special devotion of this Provincial was St. Joseph. In fact, he seemed to be the companion constantly at her side to whom she turned in every need. When about to leave for a trip she timed herself, as much as possible, to start on Wednesday, that she might be under his particular protection on this day dedicated to him. Though St. Joseph often did answer her trust in a visible manner, it must be said he did not always help her according to our ideas, for he did not spare her the discomforts of sea or land



**MOTHER MARY ANNE OF JESUS**

Provincial Superior of British Columbia and Alaska  
1881-1901.





## MOTHER MARY ANNE OF JESUS

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travel. But saints and the aspirants to sanctity understand one another. St. Joseph knew well that his client did not want to be spared suffering in this life.

"Here cut, here burn, but spare me in eternity."—St. Augustine.

"They went away rejoicing that they were found worthy to suffer for Christ's sake."—Acts of the Apostles.

"To suffer, or die."—St. Teresa of Avila.

"No cross, no crown."

Good St. Joseph did, however, once in a while, give instances of actually humoring the little Mother to whom he was so dear. Here is a remarkable example:

In the spring of 1887 she was due in Nanaimo on important business. As usual, she arranged to leave on Wednesday. To afford a much-needed outing to Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, a hospital Sister much wedded to her work, the Mother Provincial invited her as travelling companion.

The E. & N. Railway had recently been opened to traffic, but it was not yet connected with the city. The draw-bridge off the present Victoria station, which spans the arm of the Gorge and is the southern terminus of the line, was not finished. Consequently, up to 1888, city passengers were obliged to go further and cross the Point Ellice bridge to make connections with the train at Russell station.

The distance from the Academy was between three and four miles. Often the Sisters coming from their convents up the line, from motives of economy, walked this distance, but Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart was too advanced in years for that, so a hack was engaged for the early morning. But when the time came the conveyance did not appear. Five minutes, ten minutes, and still no sign of the hack. The automobile was not yet in vogue, nor the telephone. How rapid has been their appearance; how phenomenal their multiplication; how complete the disappearance of the fashionable hack! For a hundred years it had the place of honor at baptisms, at weddings, at funerals. But now, there is scarcely a derelict of it to be found, to show its mechanism to the present generation. Formerly a cortege of them followed a black-plumed hearse which carried one in solemn dignity to the cemetery. Now, the dead are "whisked" there in "hurry-up" automobiles. My funeral prayer is that they get me to my grave without accident.

But the two Nanaimo travellers are becoming restless waiting for the hack. The Sisters who had gathered on the porch to see

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them off began to say: "You may as well give up the thought of going today, for you will surely miss the train."

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus said, confidently: "St. Joseph will see that the train waits for us."

After waiting a little more, as the hack was not in sight, she said: "Let us start, for I am sure we shall meet the driver, and then, believe me, he will make his horses fly."

The Sisters who surrounded her were not so hopeful. Again they urged her not to set out. "Do come in; you can go tomorrow. It is out of the question that you catch the train at this late hour."

The Mother Provincial paid no heed. "Come, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, we will be in Nanaimo today, if St. Joseph has to hold the train for us."

The old nun was seventy years old, and none too spry, as one may believe, but she was too respectful to demur, so she hurried after her Provincial Superior. The Sisters looked at them till they were out of sight, hoping, but in vain, that a conveyance of some sort would pass by, to be hailed by the two Sisters who were walking as fast as they could.

On and on they went, Mother Provincial saying alternately to St. Joseph, "Hold that train for us," and to her panting companion, "Come along, Sister; St. Joseph will see us through." Every once in a while Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart would interpose: "You see, Mother, how far we are from the station, and there is no cab nor cart of any sort to be seen."

Her confidence in her patron not a whit weakened, Mother would say, all the more brightly: "Keep on; St. Joseph will manage the train so as to accommodate us."

As she said later on, she never for a moment thought when they left the convent that they would walk all that distance. She expected every instant and at every corner that a carriage would turn up, but there was not one on the road that morning, for, as was afterwards learned, they had all been hired for a ball some great distance in the country.

Breathless, and hurrying, and with ejaculations to St. Joseph, the Sisters went ahead, and at last were in sight of the station. Oh, joy! the train was there, only three blocks away. They covered one block, and then, disappointment—the whistle blew; the engine bell rang, and the train obediently steamed out, gaining speed with every puff. Like a mighty giant it seemed to defy the two nuns, mere impotent specks, signalling it.

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Dismayed, Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart stood stock still on the sidewalk, and said reproachfully: "You see, Mother, how useless it was to come on; the train is really going."

What now about Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' confidence in St. Joseph? Did it collapse? Indeed not; she was not so faint-hearted. Without slackening her pace, she said cheerily: "Never mind; come along; it will come back for us."

They continued to walk rapidly on towards the station for a minute or so, when, would you believe it, the train began to move backwards. Backwards and backwards it came to the station and, slowing down, stopped at the platform.

"Quick, quick," said Mother, "the train has come back for us."

The two nuns fairly ran. They reached the train and were barely in when it was off again. When they were seated, Mother Provincial said to her companion: "Did I not say all along that St. Joseph would see us through, though we did run through town like John Gilpin?" She had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and she ever after enjoyed comparing her race to Russell station with that of Cowper's hero through London town.

Although the reliant Mother knew that St. Joseph had brought the train back for her accommodation, she was too practical not to know, likewise, that there had been some natural cause for the immediate return of the train. She soon got the explanation. The conductor had forgotten his clearance papers and ticket book—an unheard-of thing—the train had to come back that he might get them.

It is very probable that Conductor Black reproached himself for his forgetfulness that day; that never a suspicion crossed his mind that St. Joseph, looking serenely down from heaven, was alone responsible. Neither did the good conductor lay the disturbance to the pertinacity of the two demure nuns who handed him their fare, rejoicing that they had compelled St. Joseph to send the E. & N. train back for them.

In one of her trips down from Juneau, Alaska, a six days' tourist voyage, the steamer arrived two hours earlier than it had been considered possible. The time gained enabled her to make connections with the Victoria-bound transfer and arrive at the convent in time for Holy Mass and the First Friday communion, a favour which the trustful Mother had begged St. Joseph to obtain for her.

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The more energy good people put in the salvation of their souls, the more they fear to lose it. In a poem which Mother Mary Anne of Jesus often recited, the line, "Each sickening fear the prize I ne'er shall win," correctly describes her state of mind towards things eternal. The verses sum up better than any words of ours her sufferings and the spirit in which she bore them. As they apply to many souls who are fighting the good fight to win heaven, we shall reproduce them here. They are soothing to tried hearts:

### All Known to Thee

*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path.*

My God, whose gracious pity I may claim,  
Calling Thee Father, sweet, endearing name,  
The suffering of this weak and weary frame,  
All, all is known to Thee.

From human eyes 'tis bitter to conceal  
Much that I suffer, much I hourly feel,  
But oh! this thought does tranquilize and heal,  
All, all is known to Thee.

Each secret conflict with indwelling sin;  
Each sickening fear, "I ne'er the prize shall win,"  
Each pang from irritation, turmoil, din,  
All, all is known to Thee.

When in the morning, unrefreshed I wake,  
Or, in the night but little rest I take,  
This brief appeal submissively I make,  
All, all is known to Thee.

My all by Thee is ordered, chosen, planned,  
Each drop that fills my daily sup, Thy hand  
Prescribed, for ills none else can understand,  
Lord, all is known to Thee.

The effectual means to cure what I deplore,  
In me Thy longed-for likeness to restore,  
Self to dethrone, never to govern more,  
All, all is known to Thee.

And this continued feebleness—this state,  
That seems to unnerve and incapacitate—  
Will work the cure my hopes and prayers await;  
That cure I leave to Thee.

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Nor will the bitter draught distasteful prove,  
While I recall the Son of Thy dear love;  
The cup Thou wouldst not for our sake remove,  
That cup He drank for me.

He drank it to the dregs—no drop remained  
Of wrath for those whose cup of woe He drained;  
Man ne'er can know what that sad cup contained,  
But all is known to Thee.

Those who lived side by side with Mother Mary Anne of Jesus through two decades understand how truly every verse is the epitome of her interior life.

An experience she once related to her Sisters in their family-like recreation hour illustrates the intensity with which she meditated on eternity. It reminds readers of the life of St. Francis Borgia, of a like effect produced on him by that subject.

"I experienced last night," she said, "how terrible is the thought of damnation. I was lying awake thinking of death, when I was seized with the idea, call it temptation, that I was doomed to perdition. The agony of mind I went through is indescribable. I sat up and felt my eyes bulging with terror; the perspiration poured from me; my very hair dripped. I know now something of the sense of despair. I think if this conviction that I was damned had lasted a little longer, I would have lost my reason. After an hour or so it passed away. A feeling of relief followed when I realized that I was really in my bed; peace came upon me as I thought with thankfulness, 'I am a religious.'"

This holy nun, who had the tact of introducing a few moments of pious talk during the relaxation period, often spoke with peculiar pathos of the shortness of life, the merit of suffering, the joys of heaven, the necessity of preparing for a holy death. None of these subjects sounded "preachy" on her lips. Like salt, they seasoned her conversations, and were a stimulant to higher things.

Her temperamental brightness and her temperamental thought of death, though so contrary in appearance, worked together beautifully. Cheeriness and holiness are twins.

The thought of the other world was so habitual with her that it entered her letters, as it did her conversations. In one of them she says: "My New Year's wishes I very sincerely offered for you on the eve of 1900, when we had the happiness of having the Blessed Sacrament exposed all night in our chapel. Everyone

enjoyed this privilege, and I have no doubt that having employed the first hours of the New Year in prayer and adoration will draw special blessings upon us all. Our years are passing quickly, and soon for each of us will come the great reckoning day. Let us then renew our good resolutions, and when the restraint of religious life becomes onerous, or irksome, let us think of what we are to receive in return for the trifling sacrifices we have to make. At our last hour, what would we not wish to have done? The faithful observance of the rule is for us the key of heaven; nothing more is asked of us. People of the world suffer more than we do in order to gratify their desires, or serve human beings. May the New Year be for you truly happy and meritorious for eternity."

The perfect accord which existed between her life and her words were daily evidence, to her Sisters and pupils, of the saying: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

#### Hospitality

In the sight of God the motive sanctifies, annuls, or condemns an action, be this action ever so ordinary, or exalted.

Hospitality, which is characteristic of certain barbarous people, and a mark of polite society, became a virtue with Mother Mary Anne of Jesus. She acquired it from the example of her predecessor, Mother Mary Providence. In the retirement which preceded her election, she pushed her avoidance of visitors to positive incivility. She soon redeemed herself.

It is well to think sometimes of the incentives which should make us elevate the reception of guests to an act pleasing to God.

Our Lord intimated hospitality when He said to His disciples, "He who receives you, receives Me." He rewarded the hospitality of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, where He was so much "at Home," by one of His most striking miracles—raising Lazarus from a four days' burial in death, to prolonged, healthy life. He repaid the hospitality of St. Peter, which must have been humble, indeed, by immediately curing his mother-in-law of a fever which had held her in bed.

How lovely, too, His appreciation of the hospitality of the two disciples of Emmaus who pressed Him to lodge and sup with them. While the gospel does not say so, it may be inferred that they were going to an inn, and consequently the disciples would pay for one they took for an utter stranger.

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Christ, the Exemplar of all virtues in the New Law, was pre-figured by Abraham, the Father and exemplar of the Old Law. This patriarch affords the first example of hospitality recorded in the Bible. It is too beautiful to pass over. On a certain sultry day he sat outside his tent, when he saw three strangers approaching. They were really angels, but he did not know it. Before they had a chance to say anything, he advanced to meet them, and said: "If I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant. I will fetch water and wash ye your feet while you rest under the tree; I will set bread before you to strengthen your heart . . ."

What the meal lacked in variety it made up in quantity. A whole fatted calf, dressed and cooked, was placed before the three guests, with milk, butter and cakes. These were of no mean size, since it had taken three measures of meal—a fifty-pound sack of flour—to make them.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' hospitality was whole-hearted like this. She did everything possible for the comfort and enjoyment of guests, whether their stay was long or short. The best room and bedding, the finest plate and food were for them. She herself saw that the linen was changed every few days, that their laundry was done, that hot and cold water was at hand. (Houses were not as yet provided with attached taps and basins.) She kept fruit and light refreshments on the guest-room table during their stay. Though she ate little, and that little she took quickly, when there were visitors she partook of everything and was the last to finish eating. This led a Sister who habitually sat next to her to say: "I am glad when we have visitors, because then Mother's politeness makes her eat more."

Regardless of expense, she would hire a hack and put it at the disposal of visiting nuns and relatives of the sisters, that they might see Victoria's lovely surroundings—Beacon Hill, Cedar district, Goldstream and other points of beauty. The automobile has since made these near-by places, but in the early years of this twentieth century they were long drives from the Humboldt Street convent.

Thus her hospitality was "Doing unto others as you would be done by."

### Mortification

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus was penetrated with the truth that to live a godly life one must live a mortified life. As there are many degrees of sanctity, so there are of mortification. We would

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attain a fair degree of it if we bore the haps and mishaps of every day with patience and resignation to God's holy will. Those who put their whole soul in trying to do this much, always do more. The convent rule affords the religious many opportunities for self-renunciation, but the fervent add to them.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus was one of those fervent souls. The word "enough" did not exist in the work of her sanctification. Her spirit of penance was deeply rooted in her interior. A line from the poem she loved so well: "'Tis bitter to conceal much I hourly feel," applied to her. What she concealed was between God and herself: being very quick and energetic, she would have to exercise much control to be the exemplary nun she was.

Constant tension to hide her feelings shortened her life. Had she shared with her sympathetic community the crushing sorrow which marked the last year of her life, the support of her Sisters might have sustained her; but no, she would not miss so great a chance of merit. Besides this motive, she would not, at the price of life itself, expose its authors to censure. The blow overwhelmed her; it deprived her of rest; it sapped her strength, but not a word escaped her lips to blame others, to justify herself, or betray the cause or source of her trial. It was surmised—that is all.

The proximate cause of her death was sharp physical suffering, which might have been relieved had it not been for her spirit of penance and obedience. If at the beginning of her malady she had consented to take the opiate recommended by the infirmarian, its calming effect would have kept in reserve the vitality she wasted in struggling with pain. According to the opinion of the medical men, every attack lessened her chances of controlling the next. But no representations could induce her to consent to the deliberate privation of suffering. This is an extreme view taken by ultra-mortified souls. In this, too, Our Blessed Lord is their model. When, on arriving at Calvary, He was presented with wine mixed with gall, He merely tasted it for its bitterness, then would not drink it because it was an opiate—a potion intended to deaden pain.

The malady took its course unhindered. It reached the point where the patient writhed in pain. The infirmarian could not bear the sight. Again she reasoned with her on the urgency of accepting the hypodermic. The poor sufferer agreed to abide by the decision of her director. At that time the use of opiates for medical purposes was not so generally admitted as it is now. The chaplain decided against it. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus did not complain,

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but the Sisters did. In her brief intervals of partial relief, she prepared, by will power, prayer and resignation to God's holy will, for the next hours of agony. The infirmarian could stand it no longer.

She went to the chaplain. "If you saw Mother now, when her suffering is at its height, you would realize the extent of her torture and change your mind about the opiate. At first her attacks lasted from one to three, but now it is from nine to three. After that they are bad enough, but tolerable."

The priest went up to the sick room. When he saw the patient in her terrible suffering, he said: "Oh, I never thought one could suffer so much. This is martyrdom. Give her a hypo. at once."

Three weeks sooner this might have meant relief, perhaps life. Now, the system was too exhausted. This was surely penance and obedience unto death.

In religious communities the criterion of penance or mortification is strict adherence to the rule and to common life. Without this, other penitential inflictions, such as fasting, discipline and hair-shirts, would be shams.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus had the touchstone of genuine mortification. She observed the rule in its letter and in its spirit, and, as for common life, she would never tolerate that things be different for her than for the rest. The order of a community runs on smoothly. The bell rings; subjects rarely meet obstacles to its summons. Not so the Superior; she is often interrupted in her course. Business calls, charity calls, break in on time, place, and fulfilling of rule. Such intrusions would justify compensation. Mother would not have any. The Sister who was cook during the greater part of her administration was strongly attached to her. Often she slipped delicacies into Mother's table drawer. Repeatedly she was forbidden to do this. The devoted cook paid no heed; her extras were passed on to others, untouched by her Provincial; still she kept on trying to tempt. To put an end to it—though everybody was on the cook's side—Mother administered an effective remedy.

One day she found two savory doughnuts in her table drawer. Forthwith she beckons to the cook, whose place was about half-way down the long line of tables, and whispers: "Sister, take these doughnuts and eat them, at table, in presence of everyone."

This Sister cook was the wittiest that ever joined an order; where she was, pleasure reigned. She had often laughed over other

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attempts to stop her well-meant attentions to her Provincial, but this was a penalty she could not laugh off. Speaking about it, she said: "I cannot tell you the humiliation I felt—I, the cook, eating doughnuts, and forbidden to offer any to those near me. It looked so greedy and selfish. I fancied all eyes on me, and wished I could disappear. The worst is, I had such a lump in my throat, I could not eat them fast, and I was two days getting through them."

But the kind cook, God bless her, was not so easily reformed in her path of goodness. Mother Provincial was often called away during the meals. She would then put her plate, with what was on it, in her table drawer, to eat later on. The cook, who kept a filial surveillance over her Provincial's meals, would go and rob the drawer of the cold victuals, empty them in the leavings can, and when the unfinished meal happened to be resumed, she would come with a plate of warm food. The Mother considered the throwing away of her first supply of food contrary to poverty. She often chided Sister for the waste, and for the being waited upon. The irrepressible cook only laughed, and said: "What you want me to do for others, I must do for you." A stand heartily endorsed by the Sisters. But not by the Mother Provincial, who would say: "Am I not a religious; must I not be poor, and mortified? How many poor people would be glad to have what you throw from my plate."

These talks, admirable as they were, went in through one ear and out of the other, like many sermons. The ministrations of the merry cook were not one whit diminished. She enjoyed the rebukes they brought upon her. The cause was so praiseworthy.

But this Mother Provincial meant what she said. Her interpretation of poverty and penance was too deep for her to tolerate anything she considered against their spirit. Since exhortations had no weight with the cook, she would try something else. The opportunity was not long in coming.

One day when she returned to finish her interrupted dinner, a thing she often forgot to do, the cook came pleasantly with a plate of fresh food. The Mother asked: "Sister, what did you do with the food I had on my plate?"

"I threw it in the leavings can," she replied, triumphant as a conqueror.

Without a word, Mother went outside where the can was kept, picked out what might have been thrown away from her plate, and, coming back to the table, sat down and ate it.

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You poor cook! We can understand your feelings. Heretofore, reproaches from your Provincial for your solicitude for her health had delighted you, but to see the Mother you revere eat that refuse—it was too much. No wonder the tears come to your eyes.

The tender Mother could not inflict correction without first feeling it herself. She said to the grieved Sister: "I cannot in conscience allow these breaches of poverty, or of common life on my account. You surely know this, for we are all taught the same."

But if this Mother ate little and loved poverty, she saw to it that the dishes that came to the table were wholesome and generous and that the board was invitingly laid.

The above-mentioned Sister, though she was cook many years, never acquired a sense of proportion in serving meals. She inclined to being too sparing. Mother Provincial never lacked courage to give her lessons about it. Either she would take the platters back to the kitchen to have them replenished, or call for the cook: "Sister, see how little there is in these dishes; there is not enough for a half-way-round helping," or, "I do believe you have counted the slices of meat; go and put on more." And with an eye to delf: "You have served fruit in that discolored dish." "Change those chipped bowls. Our table must be plain, but perfect in its plainness."

Such corrections, no matter how deserved and discreetly given, are not milk and honey to nature. On the whole, Sister accepted them with ready good humor and from respectful fondness for her Provincial Superior. On one occasion, however, she was offended; in fact, so offended, that, forgetting that she was a woman in the thirties, she acted like a hurt child, and—she is nodding from heaven for me to tell the whole truth—she sulked. It is a splendid story.

Mother had said: "Sister, prepare a cup of coffee for that poor woman who received Holy Communion in the chapel this morning." When Mother went for the tray, she found the pot of coffee and a very slim toast. "What a stingy toast," she said. "If that was the only breakfast you were to give, could you not have served two toasts?"

In the evening recreation, Mother noticed that Sister was out of sorts. "What is the matter?" she inquired, for it was not often Sister Mary Damian was seen and not heard. "Well, Mother, it's about that toast of this morning which you said was stingy. I have been feeling badly about it all day." Having out with it, the silli-

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ness of it struck her "funny-bone," and she burst out laughing. So did Mother and everybody else.

All the same, well-disposed people derive profit from insignificant things. This exhibition of childishness which often lurks in grown-ups left a lesson which is remembered to this day.

This Sister cook was remarkable in many ways. She had a measure of the gift which produced that masterpiece of nonsense, "Alice in Wonderland." This product of a genius was not thought out at an author's desk. It is the extempore story of a kind gentleman, told to a party of children out on an excursion. Absurdity follows absurdity like the revolutions of a boat's wheels.

In this manner, too, Sister Mary Damian could reel off nonsense. In the course of conversation, she would unexpectedly drift from sense to nonsense so cleverly that it would be some time before her hearers caught on to her ruse. People often say to familiars: "Talk sense." To this amiable Sister, her companions, when they wanted to be amused, said: "Parlez en fou."

She had another faculty which enlivened the recreations of the nuns. She was a pantomimist, an artistic, deluding one. The Sisters would invite her to play the violin. Her consecrated vocation evident in all she did, she would rise, and with ease and grace play an imaginary instrument. No movement was omitted—the adjusting of the phantom violin on the shoulder, the right hold of the bow, the ear attentive to possible discord. The performance was captivating. So true were the execution and the rhythm that a melody could easily be supplemented.

But while I have been saying these nice things about her, she has been getting into trouble. It is all about her strained kitchen economy, for which she got lessons of every sort. As during her life she wanted us to enjoy them with her, so now in her perfected state of bliss she would all the more offer us a laugh at her expense.

One day she brought a large dish of strawberries in the community-room for the admiration of the Sisters.

Having duly admired them, Mother said: "This will be a nice dessert for the Sisters tomorrow."

"Oh no, Mother," interposed the economical cook, "I am going to can them."

"Sisters," called out Mother, "let us help Sister can these berries," and, suiting action to words, she put a berry to her mouth. The signal was quickly taken up. Sister stood aghast as the

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luscious fruit was passed round the room and the dish returned empty.

A second instance of this nature has come down the years. Perhaps Sister had forgotten the fate of the berries; at any rate, she displayed a box of beautiful plums in the recreation room. "Mother," she asked, "do you know a good recipe for canning these?"

"No, Sister, I do not; perhaps the Sisters do. Sisters, do any of you know how to can plums? I know this way," and she began to eat one. The Sisters with one voice chimed out, "That is the only recipe we know." The plums quickly disappeared. The cook did not like this very well. Always on such occasions, after the first feeling of disappointment, she entered in the kind spirit underlying the impromptu party.

It was observed that Mother allowed these treats when the Sisters were unusually tired, after some excess of work. She had this feature common to saints, to give plenty to others and take little herself. Having on these occasions taken merely enough to set "the ball a-rolling," she invited everyone to spare the cook the trouble of clearing the receptacles.

With this Superior the title "Mother" carried its meaning. Her maternal heart embraced the details of the life of every Sister, pupil and servant under her jurisdiction. Pitying the Sisters who taught in town, at Songhees Reserve, Pandora Avenue, View Street—places too far for the Sisters to come home for the mid-day meal—she made supper a second dinner, with hot dessert, etc. To be sure, this meant surplus work in the kitchen and higher bills, but with her the well-being of the Sisters was of paramount importance. Our Blessed Lord multiplied bread and fishes to feed His followers. We could almost say "more than that," for even after His resurrection He invited the tired fishermen who had fished all night without catching anything, to "come and dine." And risen Christ that He was, He waited upon them, serving them "a fish cooked on hot coals, and bread," a meal He Himself had prepared.

The care Mother Mary Anne of Jesus took of her Sisters extended beyond the kitchen. She relieved them of their manual labor in hidden ways. Nearly every Sister has something to say of how her work was slyly done for her. One of them, who had to do a long corridor when she came home from the Pandora school, would, nine times out of ten, find it swept and dusted. Question as she might, she could not find out who did it for her. One day,

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having returned home earlier than usual, she caught Mother doing it at a great rate.

"Oh, Mother, so it is you who have been doing this corridor all along."

"Hush! you should not have come up. I had left word for you to go and rest. You are too tired to do this, and it is nothing for me. Do not tell the Sisters, for they will make a fuss over my doing a bit of sweeping."

This was not a secret for a recipient to keep.

Indeed, the active Mother did more than "a bit of sweeping."

In her humility and to spare others repulsive work, she secretly cleaned the lavatories. The wonder is that she could do so many of these things without ever a clue to who did them. Those who hear this will think that the Sisters were dense as fog and blind as moles not to find her out. Such have still to live with those "who worketh for the Father, who knoweth the secrets of hearts."

The Sisters often tried to explain how it was possible for their Mother Provincial to accomplish so much in the intellectual and manual line. Some said it was because she was a saint, others, because she was naturally quick. The best solution is that she was both. Holiness does not of itself make one expeditious.

(N.B.—The word "saint" should be used cautiously in print. It is employed here to show the estimate in which this good nun was held by her community.)

In 1893, the year of Pope Leo XIII.'s Golden Jubilee of priesthood, the apostolic blessing was promised to the members of religious communities who would offer their good works for the space of thirty days. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus wanted to take full advantage of this privilege. At that time she was Superior of St. Joseph's Hospital. It was not on the scale it now is, but such as it was, there was little help and much to do. Early in the morning, Mother would go up to the top floor, help in the pantry, wash dishes, sweep halls, tidy rooms, and having done all she could there, go to the next floor to be as useful as possible there also, and so on. She explained: "The more we do, the greater our share in the blessing." It happened to be Lent, so she was fasting.

Often the merit of the good is appreciated only after their death. That of this fervent nun was recognized during her life. In February, 1892, she made the annual retreat with a small number of Sisters. While waiting for her to come and open the exercises

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by the recitation of the *Veni Creator*, Sister Mary Angele, ex-Mother General, said: "What a holy retreat we are going to have with Mother in our midst. How much she will pray and how many penances she will perform." Then, joining her hands, she said, piously, "My God, I unite myself to Mother's meritorious acts during this retreat."

Simple as it was, it remains in my mind one of the most impressive scenes I have ever witnessed. It was as much a tribute to Sister Mary Angele's lowly opinion of self as it was to the saintly reputation of her young Provincial.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus was a great sufferer. She suffered from cold in all seasons; she had chronic neuralgic headache, and, as if this was not enough for one head, that facial nerve ache known as "tic-doloureux" joined in. Gallstones also declared themselves. To keep them in check she for many years subjected herself to a daily dose of olive oil—delicious for Italians, perhaps, but not for an Irish woman. Despite this accumulation of ills, she never complained; any allusion to them she passed over quickly. Once, after the refectory reading of the life of a saint who was becoming crazy with headaches, Mother remarked quietly, "I can well understand that." The book saint was cured by a pilgrimage to a certain shrine. If she, too, could have made such a pilgrimage!

But, she may not have wished to be cured, for she wrote, October, 1896: "The pain I have is quite bearable, and if it does not grow more acute I can do my work quite well. Indeed, if I had to choose, I would prefer my present state to perfect health, for a little corporal suffering brings me nearer to God. Is not that what is most to be looked for and loved on earth?"

She once went to Quamichan (Duncan) on a fast day. Leaving Victoria on the 9 a.m. train, she reached the other end at eleven. There remained some miles of country road to the convent. Being unexpected, the rig had not been sent to meet her, so she walked. It was pouring rain. She arrived at one o'clock with clogged shoes and dripping garments. However, of two evils she had really chosen the lesser, because she was always car-sick when driving. The Sisters were distressed over the walk, the drenched clothes, the fasting, but she took it all blithely.

On fast days, extreme pallor or high color told of racking headache. Full of pity, the Sisters would say: "Mother, you should not fast, for your headaches are worse when you do." To this she would reply: "Where would be the merit of fasting if we did not

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suffer from it?" Maybe this is theology, but it was not the doctrine of the community's compassion and affection for their Mother.

On account of her great caution, little is known of her corporal austerities. Occasionally some of them came to light. One morning, having been called early from her room, which, with its bed recess, was also her office, a Sister stole in to sweep, etc., but what did she find in the recess—a rough board lengthways on the bed and a gunny sack undergarment. She came discreetly away. The laundress declared that she found tiny pieces of flesh and blood spots on Mother's under waist; these she accounted for as being the result of a strenuous application of the discipline.

Considering herself more like the equal of her Sisters than one occupying a position over them, it cost this unassuming Mother much to admonish the community. But she did not falter in this duty. The tendency of human nature is to relax. Souls, the best of them, are backsliders in the service of God. This sad truth, which is in ourselves and in the world around us, is well expressed by St. Paul, that great authority on human nature: "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Another writer has made this terrifying statement: "I have seen the stars of heaven fall." Bearing this in mind, it need not surprise us that religious have to be kept on the narrow path by being reminded of their conscious or unconscious shortcomings, especially of negligence in some rule or other.

This is the duty of the Superior. No one likes to put another's faults before them. Parents hold consultations before doing so to their own offspring. It requires tact, courage, and it must be done. So heavily did this responsibility rest upon Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, that we do not hesitate to advance that herein lay the most severe ordeal of her Superiorship. She was strong of character, yet in the beginning of her career as Provincial, she more than once broke down when talking with her assistant, Sister Mary Angele, of the remarks she had to make. Then, bracing up, she would say: "It is my duty; I will do it." Waiving all signs of faint-heartedness, she would address the Sisters in a convinced and convincing tone. Those who knew her can affirm that she never corrected from irascibility nor personal feeling. It was felt that she exercised authority as one accountable to God for the maintenance of religious discipline. When, in particular cases, she had to call attention to some frailty inherent to human nature, she soon healed the smart by asking a favor of that one or paying her tactful attention—excellent restoratives!

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"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity. . . . For there the Lord hath commanded blessing and life for evermore." (Psalm 132.)

### Care of the Sick

Mention has already been made of the boundless charity of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus for the sick and dying, but the subject is exhaustless, and we shall all be better for hearing more of it.

We are dealing with the times when most of the nursing of the sick was done in the home and religious were cared for in their convent infirmaries. Only extreme cases were taken to hospitals.

Again and again Mother Mary Anne of Jesus constituted herself day and night nurse. She was sunny, she was untiring, she was capable. Instinctively she knew what to do and say. Her bright, harmless allusions to the foibles of her patients went a long way towards their improvement.

A Sister who was always muffled in flannels was taken sick in Kamloops. As her case was thought serious, she was brought to the Victoria infirmary at headquarters. As she was being comfortably settled in bed she said despondently: "Mother, I have come home to die."

Quick as a flash Mother rejoined: "Hurry, then, to make your will, and please be sure to bequeath me all your flannels and liniments."

The Sister vows that this brisk, happy remark made her better. It produced a hearty laugh which brought about a favorable reaction.

However, all were not cured by Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' brightness any more than all were not made saints by her holy example.

She left nothing untried and spared no expense for the health of the Sisters. In her day (perhaps it is so yet), it was extraordinary for nuns in America to go to health resorts in search of recovery. Mother braved public opinion. To give two young Sisters a chance of overcoming their ailments she sent them to Harrison Hot Springs, where they spent two months. But perhaps cures obtained away from normal surroundings are as few and far between as miracles.

A certain home-made liniment had been recommended for rheumatism. At once Mother prepared the ingredients. Their

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efficacy depended on their being thoroughly mixed. This required hours of shaking by hand (even hospitals had no automatic shakers at that time). Having brought the liniment to the desired consistency, she then, on her knees, frictioned a rheumatic novice twice a day for two months.

One of the Sisters gives this account of her own case: "If I am not a cripple today I owe it to the charity of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus. By one of those unaccountable twists, I had fallen and broken my knee. After a long treatment it healed, but it remained stiff and refused to bend. It was important that it lose its rigidity. The severe process by which this was to be brought about was made most difficult by my nervous condition. From November 25th till New Year's Day Mother worked at my stubborn knee three times a day, always in a kneeling position, and unruffled and undiscouraged by my screams, which could be heard over all the house. How pleased she was to note the gradual relaxing of the limb. She was jubilant when, in her playful manner, she said, 'Sister, I make you a New Year's gift of a flexible knee.' May she be for ever rewarded for this heroic act of charity."

A certain Friday afternoon a Sister came home from the Pandora Avenue school with a swollen, aching face, caused by a festering jaw. Mother, whose presence seemed to be guided by telepathy, so quick was she to appear in the hour of need, met her with that brightness which dispelled low spirits, and said: "You may have my room; I'll rent it to you for two days. It is nice and sunny there, and I shall have you well by Monday." The room was on the third floor; a novice was sick on the first. All night Mother went from one to the other with hot fomentations, which she heated in the kitchen. How tired she must have been after two days and nights of this nursing, for she did not retire during the day. There are some who say they have known her to pass three consecutive days and nights without lying down at all. The recovery of her patients was her rest and tonic. She breathed freely when they were on their feet.

While we follow her, in mind, through her assiduous care and watchfulness of the sick, let us not forget that she was seldom free from headache, that she had gallstones and poor circulation, yet she filled the duties of local Superior of the Victoria Convent and Provincial Superior of several institutions in British Columbia and Alaska. How could she do it all?

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A number of Sisters had influenza. The infirmarian did her share, but Mother was here, there and everywhere. In the wee hours of the morning she brought each patient a quartered orange, improved by being presented on a pretty plate with a tiny sugar bowl and a silver spoon. This is ordinary in a hospital, but rather unusual in a community of a hundred or more, living family regime. When on Easter these convalescents were allowed their first square meal, Mother, for whom giving surprises was the spice of life, invited them into the sun-bathed community room, where she had prepared a prettily-laid and choice-laden table for them.

Go the rounds of the Sisters and you will hear each tell something of this nature about that selfless Mother Provincial who was always devising pleasure and solace for others. Her whole administration of twenty years was made on this Christ-like programme.

Once, when the infirmarian had gone on a vacation, Mother, who substituted for her, having no really sick cases, had to do something to satisfy her charitable propensity. Every night, after prayers, she carried to the dormitory a tray of glasses filled with egg-nogs, and left one at each sister's cell—a drink enjoyed for itself and for the giver.

The surprise one gets in reading the Lives of the Saints is that the more abstemious they are themselves, the more they want to feed other people. For instance, St. Ignatius, when Superior of his Jesuit community, coaxed his cook to serve dinner of lampreys to the brethren. The cook represented that they were expensive and it was Holy Week, but the saint pleaded and won his point.

Lampreys are a luxury, I suppose, though I have lived my three-score-and-ten and have never tasted them, nor do I care to. When at school, I learned that the Roman patricians used to breed them in lakes on their premises and fatten them on their unsatisfactory slaves which they cast in to them.

It goes without saying that Mother Mary Anne of Jesus accompanied her ministrations to the sick with prayer and penance. The more hopeless the case, the stronger her faith. "God wants to try our perseverance in prayer," she would say. Only when death had stiffened the mortal remains would she give up hoping for a cure.

But let us give one more example of her all-round thoughtfulness for the well-being of others. The Sisters of the hospital were very hard-worked and the sympathy of the convent Sisters was all for them. When they came to the convent for the annual retreat,

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the considerateness of this good Mother descended into particulars which charity alone could conceive. She would not hear of their sharing the domestic duties. She bought a set of mugs for their special use, and at bedtime filled them from a jug of gruel, or milk, or lemonade, or "pot a la reine," which, with biscuits, she passed around at each one's sleeping apartment.

St. Teresa of Spain tells us, in her autobiography, that she used to fold the mantles of the Sisters and hold her candle up to light them on the stairs, and she calls these little acts, "Straws that kindle the love of God." Mother Mary Anne of Jesus made use of many of these straws.

It has been revealed that when our Blessed Lord, "Who had not where to lay His head," took His repose under the stars with His disciples, He would get up when they were asleep and go from one to the other to adjust their covering and make them as comfortable as the situation permitted. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus drew her tender charity from that source of divine love.

### Friendship With Her Predecessor

Beautiful, indeed, must be the love for one another of the Blessed in Heaven, since that which we saw in our community circle between Mother Mary Anne of Jesus and her predecessor, Mother Mary Providence, was so admirable. This charming friendship which existed between a young Provincial and one double her age, whom she had succeeded, was admired by everyone who saw it—the clergy, lay friends, the Sisters, the hospital nurses, and the pupils. No human element entered into it; no endearing words were ever exchanged between them.

Visitors to the St. Ann's Community carried back to their own homes the story of the beautiful friendship of these two noted religious. The eyesight of the elder was strong and that of the younger weak. It was delightful to hear the one say, with a tinge of mischief, "Let me thread your needle," or the other, with a complimentary smile, "Will you thread my needle?" There was a volume of love and pleasure in the act.

The young Provincial encompassed her senior with respectful, loving attentions. This filial deference flowed easily from a heart penetrated to the core with the merits of one whose place she felt utterly incapable of filling.

Mother Mary Providence had implicit confidence in the ability of her youthful Superior. They seemed necessary to each other, at

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first for the government of the Institute in the West, then, as the years went on, their relations became much like those between our Blessed Lady and her aged cousin, St. Elizabeth.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus often said: "How shall it be when death comes? One of us must go first. I would like to take care of Mother Mary Providence in her last illness, and yet, how could I stand by and see her die? On the other hand, I would wish her to be spared the sorrow of seeing me go."

When Mother Mary Anne of Jesus was called first, outsiders asked: "How shall Mother Mary Providence live on now? Those two nuns depended so completely on each other, it does not seem that the survivor can do without her companion."

Their death farewell was as beautiful as their life friendship had been. The Sisters were kneeling about the room, praying, sometimes aloud, sometimes silently, their eyes riveted on their dying Mother. She, who had so long given them surpassing love, gave them no sign of consciousness as they bowed in their sanctified sorrow. There were no tears, no sobs. The silence of the presence of the age-appointed Death messenger prevailed. About half an hour before the end, she moved her head slightly towards the right, where Mother Mary Providence had the nearest place to the dying nun's pillow, and in a glance of recognition, smiled at her—such a restful, contented smile, as if she even then leaned on that strong support.

"Mother," exclaimed Mother Mary Providence in a responsive burst of joy and grief. The Sisters were deeply affected.

So closed, in a scene of angelic sweetness, a long and edifying friendship.

### Letters

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, so early called to the religious state, lived everything that is implied in her holy vocation. Her letters bore its stamp. In the scrutiny of Mother Church, letters and writings are a great factor in deciding whether their contents agree or disagree with the teaching of Holy Faith.

The letters of this good nun always contained some holy thought and reflection; indeed, so profitable were they that the Sisters often used them for their spiritual reading, and meditated them in their visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

She always remembered the birthdays and feast days of those under her charge. Invariably she gave token of this remembrance

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by a letter and pious picture, if the person was at a distance, and so timed as to be received on the actual day.

In October, 1897, she was on a business trip at the New Westminster Convent. She remarked to the Superior: "The seventh will be Sister Mary Bruno's feast, I must write to her." Sister was then in Alaska, at a post which it took five days for the mail to reach, but neither distance, nor long absence, nor important transactions had excluded the Sister's namesday from the memory of this ideal Mother.

She remembered the birthdays of the pupils as well. This might have been in order when she was Superior, as well as Provincial, at the academy, but she carried the occasion in mind even when she was engrossed with the duties of superiorship at the hospital. She either sent them a card or invited them to lunch. Some of the girls were heard to say: "It was already much for Mother Mary Anne of Jesus to remember our birthdays in the midst of her many convent occupations, but how extraordinary that she remembers them away from us in her busy hospital life."

As a rule, when people have a good thing they like to share it with others. The sharers may not have the same estimate of it as the giver, but they accept the implied desire to please. We hope such will be the case in the presentation of a few of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' letters.

### New Year's Letter to the Community

"December 31, 1887. My very dear Sisters: Ere time in its rapid flight buries in the gulf of eternity the last hours of this year, immortalized by the saddest of memories (the murder of Archbishop Seghers), I come to offer you my good wishes for the year about to throw open its portals to us.

"A New Year! What has it in store for us? Joys . . . ? Sorrows . . . ? Rending farewells . . . ? So many questions which God alone can answer.

"With no wish to lift the mysterious veil with which the merciful goodness of God covers the future, let us confide in His Providence and forthwith accept the share of suffering and happiness which 1888 holds in store for us.

"I pray the Child Jesus to bless you from His lowly crib, and associate you to His spirit of charity, of prayerfulness, and of poverty, so that, growing in these eminently religious virtues, you may reap the fruit of your daily toil.

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"May meditation of the incomprehensible annihilations of the Incarnate Word increase in your hearts the love of humility and mortification.

"May you enjoy a happy state of health which will enable you to acquit yourselves generously of your allotted duties; in truth, health is a treasure which assists admirably even in the acquisition of virtue.

"In the dispensing of my wishes at the aurora of the New Year I stop at our little cemetery, the dwelling of the mortal remains of those who have gone from our religious family to heaven. There in God's acre, I ask of those beloved Sisters who have ended life's struggle and who, we hope, are in heaven enjoying the reward of their sacrifices, to obtain precious spiritual gifts for us—an increase of love for our Lord and His Holy Mother, and stricter fidelity to our religious obligations.

"Passing from this spot, where we, in all probability, shall be laid to rest, I go with you all, my dear Sisters, to the distant Yukon to kneel on the icy grave of our saintly Archbishop, our signal benefactor and devoted Father, taken from us in so tragical and lamentable a manner. Uttering there the "fiat" of resignation, we beseech heaven to augment the glory of him whom we mourn, and further beg the Divine Master, for whom he gave up all, to grant him eternal remuneration for the inappreciable good he accomplished in the diocese and the multiple favors he bestowed on our community.

"The thought of the bliss which this martyr to zeal now enjoys should console us for our immense loss, and his example should encourage us to work generously for God. Let us attach ourselves to prayer: it is a help of which neither trials nor death can rob us; it is the scrip and staff for our earthly pilgrimage; it draws the grace of God upon our souls; finally, it opens for us the gate of our true country. There we shall meet, I hope, our loved ones now beyond the tomb.

"I renew my good wishes and solicit a memento near the Crib of our Infant Redeemer."

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December 31, 1897. This New Year's letter addressed to the novices will be found full of profit for every earnest Catholic:

"Soon the finger of time will point to a new figure on the calendar of the Christian era and this year will have sunk into the abyss of eternity.

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"After craving the loving and all-merciful Heart of Jesus to forgive us our many shortcomings of the past, let us greet with joy and gratitude the New Year about to dawn.

"Day by day the approaching 1898 will unfold to us joys and sorrows, reverses and successes, earnest labor and peaceful rest. Let us in spirit accept these varied events as coming from the hand of a kind Father, whose Providence has foreseen them and ordained them for our greater good. In His mercy He will adjust the future, be it what it may, to our eternal welfare—if we are submissive to His holy will.

"My heart is full of good wishes for you, my dear Sisters, and I come to wish you sincerely, one and all, a most Happy New Year, rich in merit before the all-seeing eye of God. May you employ well every moment of the precious time granted you to prepare for your religious career, and the eternal hereafter. Bear in mind this life is a field of battle; we must then be accustomed to warfare. Make now an abundant supply of spiritual resources from which you may draw in the hour of need. Fear only not to profit enough of the present.

"You are laying the foundation of your religious life. What the foundations are worth, such will be the value of the edifice. The more your period of formation will have attained the desired results, the more your future will be fruitful and happy.

"Initiate yourselves in the great secrets of the spiritual life: In prayer and meditation, which place us in contact with the things of God Himself; in pious readings, which move and nourish the soul; in the practice of the particular examination of conscience which is so powerful an auxiliary in the combat with our defects; in mortification which represses the evil within us and strengthens our generous resolutions in the path of duty."

[The weight of example went with the advice given in these letters. In reading them, those who knew the writer could say that the doctrine which flowed from the abundance of her heart, she practised in her whole conduct.]

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### Birthday Letter to a St. Ann's Pupil Who Became a Nun

"Twenty-five years of your life have already passed. Many and precious are the graces you have received during that time—the call to religious life above all others, except Baptism, you should consider the greatest.

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"As you today cast a retrospective glance on the years that have gone since your consecration to God, and see in what you have been wanting, renew your good resolutions, and begin a new quarter of a century full of generosity and gratitude to our Lord for His manifold favors.

"I very sincerely wish you may see many, many returns of this day; may its silvery coloring be changed to a golden hue. While waiting that ripe birthday, endeavor so to live that each and every one of your days bear the golden tinge of fidelity to God. By so doing, your life will be truly happy. . . ."

### On the Occasion of a Baptismal Anniversary

"I do not forget that tomorrow will be the 68th anniversary of your Baptism. My earnest wish is that it may be all happiness for you. Yes, happy, thrice happy!

"I offer you my communion, Holy Mass, as also the Way of the Cross for your dear departed. May God spare you many years to our dear community, whose interests you have always promoted in so exemplary a manner.

"Sister Mary Z—writes from Dawson that it is 60 below zero. Their bazaar netted \$15,000. A fire which broke out in a dance-house caused a loss of half a million. They say it is a wicked place. How much God is offended! To us, as faithful spouses, it belongs to make reparation."

Her last letter, a year later, February 10th, 1901, was to the same and shows that, though the finger of death was already signalling her out, she was faithful to anniversaries:

"I am most busy preparing to leave for Kamloops, but no amount of occupation can exclude from my memory that the 15th is the anniversary of your Baptism, nor prevent me from giving you proof of my constant remembrance.

"My heart cannot forget the anniversaries of our dear seniors, our dear Foundresses, who have spent their years in the service of the religious family of whom we are the children.

"May God multiply your years to help, to encourage, to edify us!"

### Executive Ability

The amiable rule of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, so conducive to the happiness of the Sisters and others under her government, was coupled with a proportionate amount of business ability.

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In a convent, the example of a Superior striving for her own sanctification, and exercising beneficence to all around, makes its heart life a reflection of paradise. Beautiful and desirable as this is, it is not the essential on which an order can proceed in a useful and practical course.

Matter prevails in this world, so there must be adjustment between temporal and spiritual concerns. The existence of the Church and of religious institutions depends on this equilibrium of business and dogma. Brain and spirit must work in twinlike accord. Convents operate this way. Most of the brainwork falls to the Superior.

The greatest wave of expansion of the Sisters of St. Ann on the Pacific Coast came between 1886 and 1890. It began with a fifty thousand dollar addition to the Victoria Academy on Humboldt Street. FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS! A huge sum today, but forty-five years ago, a pile of dollars seemingly sky-high!

Those years saw the opening of schools and hospitals in the face-to-face mining towns of Juneau and Douglas Island, Alaska. Distance, expensive travel, poverty, a score of inhabitants—was not such a venture tempting Providence?

St. Joseph's Hospital, too, had to be enlarged for a third time, and brought up to requirements. The Vancouver school, on corner of Homer and Dunsmuir, peeked into existence then. An unpretentious building erected after the fire which destroyed the embryo city.

These enterprises called for loans, securities, interest. If the good which accrues to the Church through these channels was to be done, it had to be through the Sisters of St. Ann, whom God had appointed to conduct the schools and brave the difficulties, financial and otherwise. But the worry of it! Sometimes, when quite overwhelmed by the thought of these liabilities, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus would find relief in the expression, "At the end of the world all debts shall be cancelled."

God helps those who help themselves; especially does He do this for those who rely on Him and work solely for Him. In imperceptible ways He pilots them through business labyrinths, with their co-operation, of course. To this they must bring all the resourcefulness with which He has gifted them. The means are furrowed with worry, engulfed in perplexity, submerged in prayer. Thanks to the courage, the ability, the dependence on God of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus and her adviser, Mother Mary Provi-

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dence, the schools, hospitals and orphanages of the Sisters of St. Ann were able to triumph over pioneer conditions and progress steadily onward.

Many think that the position of Superior is enviable. Such have to learn that the post is set among briers. Consider the problem of maintaining large institutions; the anxiety for the health of the staff, the planning how best to help the Catholic cause—their chief aim. Besides these paramount matters and multifarious minor ones, Superiors do not always receive the consideration which their title supposes. For instance, when, for the benefit of Catholic education, the Sisters of St. Ann, upon the request of Bishop Durieu, of New Westminster, opened their first school in Vancouver, B. C., they purchased lots and erected the building on borrowed money.

They secured the loan from a private individual. The Province did not then have the solidly established banks and loan companies of the present day. The advantage of dealing directly with a personal lender was that a promissory note sufficed. The lender to whom the Sisters were directed was a woman, once a servant, who had known how to save her wages. A more distrustful person, at least of nuns, cannot be found. This may be accounted for by the fact that she knew neither how to read nor write, not even how to sign her name. The interest was paid twice a year. On the morning of the appointed date, precisely at eight, she rang the parlor door-bell. She would brook no delay. If the Superior was at breakfast, or engaged, and the portress asked the lender to wait a few minutes, she would answer sharply: "None of your scheming; tell her to come at once." The Superior learned her lesson. It was one she had to practice many a year. The interest, whatever betide other bills, was always ready, yet the lender's suspicions were ever on the watch. They seemed part of the contract.

The promissory note stipulated that the interest and capital were to be paid in gold—American gold; a difficult but not impossible condition in earlier British Columbia times. As the years rolled by, the lender relaxed on this point, not because there was not so much gold in circulation, but because the sum was too heavy to carry. She used a leather bag for the purpose. Do you wonder that it got to look shabby?

A second lesson which the Superior learned from the "lender" was to hold the money very much in evidence when she entered the parlor on interest pay-day morning. There was no such civility as

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a greeting. The woman came for business, and strict business it was. After counting the money carefully, she would ask, "Is the receipt ready?" "Certainly." Which means that as she could not write it herself, the Superior wrote it for her, signature included. Next the woman commanded, "Read it. Not too fast!"

As the Superior read: "Received from the Sisters of St. Ann the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars for interest from May 16 to November 16," the distrustful lender stood over her shoulder and had her point to every word of the formula, date and all. She nodded approval over that much, but it was not sufficient security. "Copy that in my book," handing her a memorandum. When it was duly copied, she would say: "Read it!" The obedient Superior would do so, pointing, as before, to every word, while the lender, mistrustful to the end, kept her eyes on the moving finger. After these precautions she would make a cross before her name. The memo. she kept for herself, the original she, of course, gave to the Superior. Do not say that Shylock is dead when I tell you that this lender was as wary after sixteen years of these punctual half-yearly payments as she had been at the start. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus did not take offence at this want of trust in her fairness. She took people as they were.

Once when Mother Mary Anne of Jesus was too sick to leave her room, she passed the interest and instructions to the assistant bookkeeper. Next morning when the lender came bright and early, she frowned at the substitute. And yet they were acquaintances of long standing, almost friends. If you do not mind an aside, I shall tell you what started their friendship.

Long before the loan transaction, this woman, who, though nearing the old-maid boundary, held rose-hued prospects of matrimony, dropped into the convent one Sunday after Holy Mass, and, going straight to the point, confided to this Sister, "Jim . . . and Bill . . . have both proposed to me. They are sober, quiet, hard-working men. I do not know which to accept. I want you to advise me which to take."

Well, of all the embarrassing situations for a Sister to be in! Nuns prepare young women for their place in the world, but it does not enter their vocation to be match-makers; moreover, this particular nun had taken the veil of religion at fifteen, and she was not even now old enough to be worldly-wise.

Nonplussed, she said: "How can I help in your choice when I do not know either man, never having heard of them?" She

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expected this reasoning would be final. It was not. The two-score-old lass persisted: "Sisters are the best advisers, and I know the man you name will be the right one."

Poor Sister, what a quandary you are in! Yes, but not for long. Believe it, love is a flame which must find a vent. The prospective fiancee gave hers free play. She dwelt on the merits of both her admirers, and the young Sister quite innocently got her cue. The advice asked was mere camouflage. No two persons can be exactly on the same level in another's affections. When the vital question was repeated, the Sister knew, without a doubt, that she was expected to say "Jim," and she did. It was no mistake, for the damsel said: "I thought so too."

But transacting heart affairs and business affairs are two quite different propositions, which fact brings us back to the parlor to face the lender, who was facing the once young Sister and demanding, "Where is the Superior?" "I am sorry to say that she is too sick to leave her room." "None of that now; what trick are you up to?" The Sister offered to take her up to the sick room, an offer she humanely declined. Thus reconciled, both went through the receipt programme quite amicably.

### Forgiveness

Tried goodness, not that which comes without effort nor occasion to be practised, deserves reward.

Perhaps Job had only the goodness that springs from a naturally good man when God drew satan's attention to him by saying: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, and God-fearing and avoiding evil?" Wonderful praise, that!

But satan retorted: "He is rich and blessed in everything; let him be tried, then we shall see."

Sure of His servant, God gave the fiend leave to do his worst against the best man in the whole world. And didn't he do it! But it was to his discomfiture, and Job's immortal glory.

In much the same manner God would seem to like to "show off" how His followers meet the enemy of salvation; how they foil his attacks with big virtues and little virtues. Under which of these headings does forgiveness of injuries fall? If Christ, who knew our proud, touchy dispositions so well, thought it necessary to insert the petition: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive," in the "Our Father"—a prayer which is said oftener than any other,

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it must be that forgiveness is not easy. However, for nuns it takes the form of returning whole-hearted good for ill will. That the circle of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' virtues might be enlarged, God furnished her with an unusual occasion for doing this.

A person of superior birth and culture, under no claim to charity and to whom the Sisters of St. Ann had no obligation, made a preposterous request of them—a proposition altogether out of the range of rhyme, reason and justice. Cost what may, it had to be refused. The personage took offence at the veto. He made his grievance common talk, and even carried it to the guest table. Gossip often re-echoed his bitter words in the convent parlor. Mother Mary Anne of Jesus silenced the first allusion to the subject by charitable excuses.

This deplorable ill-feeling had lasted some sixteen years or so, when, early one morning, word was brought to the convent that the grieved person was dying. He had been stricken by apoplexy. Charity and forgiveness never hastened more quickly to a dying bedside to render loving assistance than did Mother May Anne of Jesus and companion, on hearing that news. That she, because of her position, had been the target of that person's attacks, made her all the more eager to help him at the supreme moment. She installed herself as nurse; among the services this entailed was standing over the patient for hours to wipe the foam from his mouth. In giving the details of this sickness and death to the community, she said: "How thankful I am that God so arranged I was the one to do what his mother and relatives would have done had he not been in a strange land. In his few moments of consciousness I think and hope he knew we were near, doing what he would like us to do."

In this sweet, useful spirit she had given the essence of forgiveness for a long chain of misrepresentations against herself and her Institute.

### Educator

In reviewing the lives of pioneer nuns, one marvels at their versatility. It sounds like well-meant exaggeration. Rather let us think that God, who fits the back for the burden, endows them more generously than He does others of the rank and file. Perhaps, too, it is their eagerness in His service that enables them to cope with any undertaking, any amount of labor.

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus, who was the link between the pioneer and modern periods of Victoria, carried the temperamental

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qualities of the one into the other. That she was versatile, active, energetic, these chapters on her capable administration, her motherful government, her kind nursing have proved. All this skill was acquired, for by inclination and novitiate training she was a teacher. When, at the early age of twenty-six, she was taken from the teacher's platform to guide St. Ann's Institute, relinquishing teaching was not the least of her privations.

Teaching being her element, it is not surprising that as Provincial Superior, she forwarded education as one of the interests she had most at heart. She obtained that the Academy be empowered to confer graduating medals and diplomas on the pupils who had completed the course of studies then outlined. In the Music department she introduced the harp, guitar, zither, mandolin, and soon the performance on these instruments lent much grace to the receptions to distinguished visitors. Alas, that Victoria Academy's harp, like that of Tara's Halls—

"The pride of former days,  
That once the soul of music shed"—

now stands mute in convent hall with dangling strings, from which the soul of music has long since fled.

Alive to improvement in the Art department, she secured a talented artist from the Mother House, and equipped the studio with a full set of casts and a more modern course in oil and china.

In the "90's," Business Courses for young women were in their initial stage. Their usefulness as a means of livelihood for leaving students appealed to this practical Mother Superior. Soon Providence sent St. Ann's novitiate a candidate who was a competent stenographer and typist. The alert Mother lost no time in opening a Commercial department, the first equipped one in the city of Victoria.

Not only on these broader lines did Mother Mary Anne of Jesus spur the progress of the academy, she descended into particulars, even down to the standing of a class in the three "R's." She outlined weekly work for backward pupils, and knew the mentality of every one in the school. She insisted on spelling, writing and composition—subjects which should be better championed than they are at present.

In convent schools the honour subject is Christian doctrine. Teaching it devolves, as much as possible, on the Superior. It was an honor and happiness to which this ardent educator clung. Busy and full as her day was, she allowed no call to interfere with this

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period. Intelligent answers so delighted her that she repeated them, with animation, at the community recreations, for the edification of the Sisters.

She had two maxims, one for spiritual life, the other for education. They were:

"The only way to holiness is the royal road of the cross."

"The only way to learning is the royal road of hard study."

She explained: "From all I have read in the lives of the saints and in spiritual books, I see there is no escaping what St. John of the Cross says, namely, that there is no other way to holiness but the royal road of the cross." With regard to the second maxim, "I have welcomed new ideas in teaching and heard with pleasure of short and easy methods. I have given free scope to their exponents, but after fair trial I have come to the conclusion that now, as in the past, there is no royal road to learning but that of very hard study." She believed, too, that up to the age of nine or ten, children should be let learn mechanically, that it was straining their intelligence to have them analyze then, as their reasoning powers developed later on.

*"It is appointed for all men once to die."*

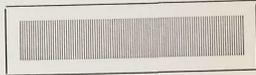
All too soon, according to human thought, Mother Mary Anne of Jesus fell under this sentence. She was in her forty-seventh year when long sieges of gastritis, neuralgia, stomach ulcers, gallstones, in league with unabated activity in her many responsibilities, began to tell their destruction. Will power and the habit of mortification could no longer control the nervous system. Her movements were now restless, agitated, but her dealings with one and all were kind and magnetic as ever, and her regularity and vigilance uniformly uplifting.

In February, 1901, against the protests of the Sisters, who realized better than she did how sick she was, she went to Kamloops—a three hundred and thirty mile trip—for the annual visitation. On the train she took her temperature. It registered 102. She was keeping her Lenten fast. She hurried through the visitation regulations and, returning home, made a brave attempt to keep up. It was useless. She had entered on the last stage of her journey to eternity.

People had often said of her, "What a beautiful death Mother Mary Anne of Jesus will have. She is so good to the sick and dying. She prays so much at their bedside and she has so great

From the Log Cabin Convent, 1858, with its 35 pupils, to

St. Ann's Academy,  
1928, with a roll of  
396 pupils. ❁ ❁





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devotion to St. Joseph. Surely she will die on a Wednesday—his day.”

These pious deductions were drawn not only by those in her near surroundings, but by families who had seen her minister to their dear ones in their homes, for, whenever friends or patrons had announced that there was sickness among them, she had given day and night attendance with alacrity. These friendly predictions were not fulfilled.

Christ was entitled to a beautiful death, and He died on the cross.

The sick room of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus became her Gethsemane. Not unlike Our Blessed Saviour, she asked the Sisters to remain at a distance—she who had so much enjoyed their companionship. And they, in reciprocal affection, hoping that absolute rest would help her recovery, respected her wishes. However, unknown to her, a Sister took up her stand in an adjoining room, refraining from any sound which might betray her proximity. Keenly attentive to the slightest move in the sick room, she heard occasional faint moans of pain, pacing up and down the small room at intervals, and semi-whispered ejaculations, especially: “My Jesus, mercy,” “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,” “Thy holy will be done.” And yet, in the evening, when the infirmarian made one of her restricted calls, the sufferer would say plaintively, “I have not prayed today.”

In her voluntary solitude the patient suffered, prayed and wept. To her great physical pain was added deep sadness. It was inexplicable, or, was it the agency of her Divine Spouse Who would have her soul, like His, “sorrowful unto death.” When a Sister came in to offer a service, she was gently dismissed with the words: “No, thank you, there is nothing to be done. Please let me suffer alone.”

All the while, a fluid tumor was forming on the brain and the tic douleureux was keeping up its persistent attacks. It may have been the natural course of her ailments, but to spiritual insight it seemed a coincidence that her sufferings, which were most tortuous from ten on, subsided after three in the afternoon.

About four weeks of this sustained suffering reduced the patient to exhaustion. On March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, the Convent had to resign itself to see her removed to the hospital. An operation was immediately performed to relieve the tic, but the doctors admitted that her days were numbered. The patient had

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known it all along, and more than once she had pleaded to be anointed, but Death deceives love. The Sisters would not, could not believe she would die. The hospital nurses, so unerring in recognizing death symptoms in others, failed to see them in their Mother Provincial. Time after time they reasoned her off in her desire to receive the Last Sacraments. Yielding at last, more from an expedient to quiet her than because they believed it a proximate necessity, the nurse explained the case to Father Schumn, Redemptorist, who was giving the spring retreat to the community. After visiting the patient he consented to administer her, saying, "In all probability she will recover, but she is sick enough to justify my giving her the last rites."

At that momentous hour, when the Christian soul may well be emerged in self, this good Mother gave an example of self-effacement.

Father Schumn had a reputation for sanctity, and the Sisters were glad to think that their Mother, whose life they considered saintly, would be anointed by so holy a priest. When she heard that the retreat master was going to administer her, mindful of hospital etiquette, she said: "Will not the chaplain feel slighted to have his rights encroached upon, and perhaps make it unpleasant for the hospital?" A prudent remark, which had already been adjusted. But towards whom was she showing this consideration? To one becoming known as unworthy his sacred calling. For the sake of peace, this unselfish Mother was ready to sacrifice the offices of a true priest of God for those of one who, like another Judas, was proving traitor to his Master's cause. The merit or demerit of the minister does not affect the sacrament, as we know, but what Christian would not prefer to receive them from fit rather than unfit hands?

Mother Mary Anne of Jesus having been assured that no trouble would arise from the preference of the retreat master over the chaplain, received the holy rites from the Redemptorist on March 25, feast of Our Lady's Annunciation. As if she had retained her faculties just long enough to receive Extreme Unction and Holy Viaticum, shortly after the priest left the room her mind began to wander. Though she lingered a month after that, she was never sufficiently normal to receive Holy Communion, that divine panacea of nuns.

As April rolled on without bringing a favorable change, the community slowly realized that its dear Mother Mary Anne of

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Jesus would not recover. An agreement was made with the hospital Sisters that, no matter at what hour the end might be near, the convent Sisters were to be notified. On the morning of April 23, a light tap was heard at the dormitory doors. No need of a second. No need of an explanation. In a few minutes the community was across the street, in the hospital room where their dear Mother was softly passing into eternity. The violence of pain had spent itself. Serene and still she waited in bridal composure for the presence of her Celestial Bridegroom. While the Sisters, to whom she had been a source of so much happiness and edification, knelt, eyes riveted on her, and prayed with the fervor of loving, sorrowful hearts, she imperceptibly glided into His sacred embrace.

How true is the saying of ascetic writers that, "If it is hard to live in religion, it is easy to die in it." This consideration has directed many vocations to the convent.

On this never-to-be-forgotten day of the Sisterhood's loss, the sun was shining brightly, and spring, unconcerned at their sorrow, was throbbing life in every blade of grass when the remains were brought from the hospital to the convent, and for two days exposed to the view of the faithful.

A bier is the repository of many tributes. Here comes an old missionary nun with her meed of praise to deposit in the casket before us. She has long been known for her clear judgment and peaceful activity. She says: "I was councillor when the time came to suggest a successor to Mother Mary Providence.<sup>1</sup> Who to choose for the onerous office of Vicar in the province most distant from the Mother House? The choice was all the more difficult because of the eminent qualifications of brain, heart, and faith displayed by the retiring Superior during twenty-two years. Long I prayed and long I studied the possibilities of eligible Sisters. My choice was decided by examples of spirited action towards pupils and Sisters which I witnessed in Sister Mary Anne of Jesus. Trifling incidents in themselves, if you will, but character is often revealed in little things. This is one: Two young Sisters who were watering trees during the recreation hour began to splash water on each other. Several looked on amused. Not so this Sister. She went directly up to them and said: "Stop, this is not becoming." She herself was playful, but always with religious propriety. I reflected that if she had so much courage in guarding religious decorum, she would be able to brave difficulties and set aside human respect in matters of a graver nature.

<sup>1</sup>Life being written.

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"The other four councillors also had her under observation and concluded that, though so young, she united all desirable points. We had the assurance that hers would be a firm and prudent administration. Time has proved that we chose beyond our expectations. The general opinion, too, of the Sisters was that Sister Mary Anne of Jesus would be nominated. The voice of the people is the voice of God.

"The humility which some time before had made her say, when appointed on the New Westminster staff: 'What will Sister Superior do with a know-nothing like me, I cannot even hold a needle?' marked her whole life, but when the sceptre of authority was forced into her hands, it became fearless humility. Personally she accounted herself as nothing, but where regular observance, discipline and progress were concerned, she was all courage and resourcefulness."

Here is a tribute from an old pupil. She relates: "At one time there was quite a colony of American girls in the Academy. A certain year we all joined in a great celebration of Washington's birthday, February 22. Not long after, some of the girls conspired to organize a British celebration which would put the U.S.A. element to the blush. The spirit was one of envious rivalry. Friction was imminent. One of the seniors took up a stand against the movement. Addressing the jealous malcontents, she said: 'Girls, when pupils come among us from another country, we should treat them like guests; besides, when Mother Mary Anne of Jesus was alive, two words were never tolerated in our conversations; these were 'religion' and 'nationality.' Let us respect her memory.' Good feeling was at once restored."

Given over the cold, waxlike features of our dear Dead is this testimony to her heroic practice of mortification. "One day," relates the discoverer, "I took the liberty of opening the drawer of Mother Mary Anne of Jesus' wash-stand, to put in a piece of soap, which it was my office to distribute. I was shocked, and yet moved to tears, to see there a blood-stained, wire-pointed belt. I understood that she wore this sharp, penitential instrument. An armet of this nature is severe enough for the most mortified, but, a belt! What pain!"

The clergy, whom Mother Mary Anne of Jesus had always looked up to in a spirit of faith, also felt her loss. She had been helpful to them in many ways. It was a time when missionary priests and Sisters lived, like the early Christians, "having but one

## MOTHER MARY ANNE OF JESUS

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heart and one soul." The missionaries from the West Coast Indian stations came to Victoria once a year. They came to make their retreat, to procure provisions, and, incidentally, to experience the sensation of a few days' intercourse with civilized people. They brought bags of altar linen to be restored from blackish to refined white. There were cassocks, too, that needed repair; the cassocks of the native acolytes—not exactly "My Lady's" fancy work. It was a busy time for the Victoria nuns; everyone and everything was put to the task of renovation, the Mother Provincial supervising, helping so that all be done quickly and well.

Her veneration for priests met its return. The clergy relied upon her judgment and were often guided by it. In 1899, good Father Rondeau, who for forty years had been the gentle missionary of Cowichan district, now in his seventy-sixth year, became sick of the sickness which was "unto death." He came to St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria, where it was joy to care for the dear old priest. Loved and revered by whites, Indians and all who met him, he was particularly so by the Sisters of St. Ann. He had made the voyage West with the first four in 1858, had been their first chaplain in Victoria, and their pleasant, fatherly helper in their Cowichan work. After a stay in the hospital, feeling himself somewhat better, though under no delusion as to the nature of his malady, he longed to go back to the old familiar place and die there. He was allowed to go, but though his assistant was all devotion to the lovable old priest, he could not neglect his apostolate among his scattered flock to give his revered senior the attention he should have had. The dear old Father was advised to return to the hospital, for his was a lingering disease. It was hard for him to see the wisdom of this move. The abode of his years of misery was dear to him; his wants were few; his disposition simple and winning. Still, his friends wanted his comfort, but they could not prevail upon him to go where he would get it. Finally, he said: "Wait a while; Mother Mary Anne of Jesus will be coming for her visitation soon. I will do as she says." And he did. Of course, she advised the hospital. During the many weeks he was there, she visited him often and sat beside him with some light work in hand, so as to make him feel her time was not pressing. She enlisted others in her little strategies to keep him from being lonely.

This dear priest, who had been kindness itself, almost too kind, received even here on earth the reward of kindness.

## PIONEER NUNS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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But the time has come to screw the lid over the remains of our departed Mother Mary Anne of Jesus. Bishop Orth assisted at the obsequies with the clergy and a concourse of people. The cathedral choir, understanding that the Sisters were too bereaved to sing the Requiem Mass, lent them its aid.

The passing away of this endeared Mother Provincial left the Sisterhood in such profound mourning that the Reverend Mother General of the Institute came across the continent to lift the community from its grief, for, with all its resignation, it bordered on the morbid. After some days of sympathetic talk, during which she freely condoled with them, she assembled the Sisters, and, speaking most feelingly, said: "Sisters, you have been living with the dead for these three months. I know the sincerity of your love, esteem and sorrow for our deceased Mother Mary Anne of Jesus. The Order has lost a precious subject, but you must now rouse yourselves from this depression. The Holy Ghost would have us live in joy of spirit. He often tells us so in the Sacred Scriptures, where the word 'rejoice' occurs often and the word 'weep' seldom. Remember, too, that our morning and evening prayers begin with the invitation, 'Let us rejoice on this day which the Lord hath made.'" Her presence and her words renewed life in their souls.

That was thirty years ago, but the memory of this just nun is still fresh; it is the subject of fervor rekindling conversations. To have lived with this model religious is counted among God's special blessings.

Among several appreciations, this, from "The Victoria Times," is taken:

"By the death of Sister Mary Anne of Jesus, who for many years has been closely identified with the work of the Catholic Church in this city, Victoria has lost one whose name will be a grateful memory. The deceased lady had been a resident of Victoria twenty-five years, and the existence of the excellent convent and school connected therewith, and the admirably equipped St. Joseph's Hospital owe much to her devoted labors.

"The self-sacrificing life of such a lady leaves a fragrance behind which tends to purify the whole community. Her kindness of heart, her genial disposition, her broad charity, combined to make hers a rare and beautiful character. She was esteemed not only by those with whom her work brought her in daily contact, but by everyone, without regard to creed, who came within the sphere of her influence."

## MOTHER MARY ANNE OF JESUS

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There can be no more beautiful ending to the sketch of this admirable nun than this letter of hers, which portrays so vividly her conception of the spiritual nuptials with the King of Kings, a conception to which she conformed her life:

"November 18, 1896. My dear Sister: Soon the happy years of your noviceship will have passed by. The solemn hour will come when, if found worthy, you will be allowed to pronounce the words that are to make you a Spouse of Christ. Oh! let the thought of such an alliance ever stimulate you in the work of your correction.

"Religious virtues are the diamonds with which you are to deck yourself. Above all, the gems of deep, true humility and unsparing self-abnegation. With these you will be pleasing to God, a consolation to your superiors, a subject of edification to your companions, and you will enjoy the only happiness which deserves the name.

"Be generous, then; let nothing deter you in the path of duty. Let your motto ever be—'Of pleasure, rather less than more; of self-sacrifice, rather more than less.'

"With this in practice you will not fail to make great progress in religious virtues and increase daily in the pure love of Our Crucified Lord, Our Divine Exemplar.—Your devoted in Christ, Sister Mary Anne of Jesus."

Dear Mother Mary Anne of Jesus came,  
The effects of her God-fearing life we trace,  
As day by day some student speaks her name,  
Or finds some thought of her about the place.  
The "valiant woman" sung in Proverbs' tome  
Was found in her, whose every deed and care  
Was sanctified by purest intent formed—  
The warp of duty, silver-woofed with prayer.

—Commemorative Jubilee Poem, 1908.

SISTER MARY THEODORE,  
Chronicler of St. Ann's Academy.

## *A Mustard-Seed, Tree-Grown*

From the lowly beginnings, in 1858, of St. Ann's first convent in British Columbia—in a log cabin 20 by 30 feet—have evolved the following works and institutions of the Sisters of St. Ann in the West:

### IN VICTORIA

#### Schools

- 1858—An addition doubling the size of the Log Cabin Convent.  
1861—A boarding school, a day school, and orphanage all combined, on View Street, known as the "Brick Convent" because it was one of the first brick buildings in the city.  
1871—New Convent on Humboldt Street, to which the View Street Convent staff and pupils were removed.  
1886—The Humboldt Street Convent enlarged. Cathedral moved from original site, and attached to the convent to be the Sisters' Chapel.  
1888—St. Ann's Kindergarten and Primary School opened in vacated View Street "Brick Convent." Later on, 1898, conducted in new building on Blanshard Street.  
1889—St. Ann's Novitiate opened in Humboldt Street Convent.  
1892—Humboldt Street Convent raised to the standard of an Academy. First conferring of graduation diplomas. Business Department introduced.  
\*1895—Indian Day School on Songhees Reserve placed under the control of the Sisters.  
1899—St. Aloysius Protectorate for Boys, Pandora Street.  
1910—Annex to Humboldt Street Academy built, providing High School rooms, and modernized Art and Music Studios.  
1930—St. Ann's Primary School removed from corner of Blanshard and View Streets to new building on Heywood Avenue. The Kindergarten branch discontinued.

#### Hospital Progress

- 1878—St. Ann's inaugurates ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, Collinson Street, at a cost of \$13,800.00.  
1888—A \$33,000.00 addition joined to original building.  
1897—Further expansion requires another addition. Cost \$33,500.00.  
1900—School of Nursing established.  
1908—Previous additions extended, the width of the block, to Humboldt Street. \$135,000.00.  
1919—St. Joseph's officially approved and recognized a "Standardized Hospital."  
1920—St. Joseph's ranked Class "A" Hospital by American College of Surgeons.  
1926—Vernon Villa Sanitarium, Humboldt Street, St. Joseph's Annex, opened. \$15,000.00.  
1928—Building of a Surgical and Maternity Unit comprising Children's Wards and Sun-rooms. \$365,000.00.  
1929—Nurses' Home, corner of Collinson and Rupert Streets. \$116,500.00.

## *St. Ann's Branches Out*

### Vancouver Island

- 1864—Indian Mission School, Cowichan, now Duncan.  
1871—Indian Mission School changed to Girls' Orphanage.  
1877—Boarding and Day School, Wallace Street, Nanaimo.  
1891—Industrial School for Indians, Kuper Island.  
1904—Cowichan Girls' Orphanage transferred to Nanaimo, and combined with its Boarding and Day School.  
1904—St. Aloysius Protectorate for Boys, Victoria, transferred to Duncan.  
\*1909—Day School, Ladysmith.  
1921—Old Duncan building discarded; new one provided for Young Boys' Boarding School and Protectorate combined.  
1926—Lourdes' Hospital, Campbell River.

### Mainland

- 1865—Boarding and Day School, New Westminster.  
1868—Indian Mission School, Matsqui, now Mission City.  
\*1876—Boarding School, Williams Lake.  
1880—Boarding and Day School, Kamloops Flats, removed to city site.  
1888—Day School, corner of Homer and Dunsmuir Streets, Vancouver.  
1890—Industrial School for Indians, Kamloops.  
1912—Parochial School (Kitsilano), 7th Avenue, Vancouver.  
1928—Little Flower Academy (Shaughnessy Heights), Alexandra Street, Vancouver.

### Yukon Territory, Canada

- 1897—St. Mary's Hospital, Dawson.  
1898—Day School and Music Department, Dawson.  
\*1904—Day School, White Horse.

### U. S. A.

- 1886—Hospital and Day School, Juneau, Southern Alaska.  
1888—Indian Mission School, Holy Cross, Lower Yukon, Alaska.  
1894—Indian Mission School, Akulurak, Lower Yukon, Alaska.  
1896—Hospital and Day School, Douglas Island, Southern Alaska.  
1899—Day School for Indians, Nulato, Lower Yukon, Alaska.  
1909—Hospital, Fairbanks, Alaska.  
1914—Hospital for Natives and Northern Adventurers, Holy Cross, Lower Yukon, Alaska.  
1927—Queen of Angels Parochial School, Port Angeles, State of Washington.

*Nuns laboured,  
Patrons responded,  
God gave increase.*

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\* Discontinued.

## WESTWARD

During a period of fifty years—1858 to 1908—one hundred and thirty-two Sisters of St. Ann left their Eastern home and kindred, crossed sea and continent westward, to consecrate their young womanhood to the welfare of British Columbia. Of these:

- 91 were from the Eastern Provinces of Canada,
- 30 were from the United States,
- 4 were from Ireland,
- 3 were from Germany,
- 3 were from Holland,
- 1 was from Belgium.



### ROUTES BY WHICH THESE SISTERS CAME TO VICTORIA, THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE SISTERS OF ST. ANN IN THE WEST:

#### Starting from Montreal, Province of Quebec—

- 12 traveled via New York, the Atlantic, the Isthmus of Panama, the Pacific. Two months' voyage.
- 8 traveled via New York, the Atlantic, Nicaragua, the Pacific. Two months' voyage.
- 33 traveled via Chicago, Omaha, Ogden, San Francisco by Southern Pacific Railway, the Pacific. Two weeks' trip.
- 8 traveled via Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Portland, by the Northern Pacific Railway, Puget Sound. Eight days' trip.
- From 1887 on, via Ottawa, Winnipeg, Regina, Vancouver, Straits of Georgia. Six days' trip and less.

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