

To the Right Honorable Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD,
Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs.

RIGHT HONORABLE SIR,—Your humble petitioner, Sister M. U. Charlebois, assistant to the Superior of the Sisters of Charity of the General Hospital (Grey Nunnery) of Montreal, begs leave to state that having been deputed, for the second time, by Her Superior, to visit the Missions which her community have established in the extreme north, from the Saskatchewan to the McKenzie River, she was happy to remark a notable improvement and progress since her first voyage in the year 1871. This amelioration your humble petitioner attributes to the teaching and training of the youth of both sexes, by the Sisters of Charity, who, isolated in these wilds, have bravely battled not only against hunger and cold but likewise against the national prejudices. Ignorant themselves, the Indians depreciate the benefits of education—lazy and indolent, they despise labor—loving their children as the wild animal does its young, they are loth to entrust them to strangers, while the little ones reared to roam free could ill bear restraint. In order to effect the work of civilization the Sisters had to gain the former and to tame the latter. Want and the pangs of hunger finally led the Indians, little by little, to give over their children to have them clothed, fed and instructed. This arrangement, which freed the parents from all anxiety, while throwing the burden on the teachers, was accepted and still continues. Success gradually crowned the laborers' efforts, and the youths of each Mission, boys and girls can be seen after school hours and other house duties, sharing the labors of the field, and vying with their teachers in handling the spade, the hoe, and the scythe.

The result of this training is, that at the present day we find many good house-keepers who, having left the Sisters' care to be married, are remarkable for their order and economy, and becoming mothers they in turn bring their little ones back to the Home where they themselves were taught.

The Sisters receive boys also, to whom they teach all that can be useful to them, in French and in English. Several of their former scholars are now occupying places as clerks to the Bourgeois of the Hudson's Bay Company, while others have been initiated into the secrets of agriculture and of horticulture, &c.

The petitioner now humbly submits to your kind consideration the following statement of the different houses consecrated to the instruction of the Indian and half breed children of this part of the North-West:—

The "Asile Youville," at St. Albert's, established in 1859, clothes, feeds and instructs 60 children.

The "Hospice St. Joseph," at Ile à la Crosse, established in 1860, 40 children.

The "Hospice St. Joseph," at Lac La Biche, established in 1862, clothes, feeds and instructs 38 children.

The "Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur," at McKenzie River, established in 1866, 36 children.

The "Convent des Saints Anges," at Athabaska, established in 1874, has 28 children.

This work of civilization is retarded, owing to want of funds, and consequently can only develop according as the resources increase. The means of subsistence having greatly diminished lately, and the Sisters experiencing such privations, your humble petitioner was on the eve of closing two of the above-named institutions, viz.: those of McKenzie River, and of Athabaska, and was deterred from putting her project into execution, through the hope alone of obtaining from you, Right Honorable Sir, a generous grant, which will enable the establishments herein specified to continue the good works already advanced, and to augment them by increasing the number of children.

The certainty of such a result will be a powerful incentive in behalf of the demand, and lead you, Right Honorable Sir, to grant the request.

With which hope the Petitioner is,

Right Honorable Sir,

Your very humble servant,

SISTER M. U. CHARLEBOIS,

Assistant.