

PART I.



A CHAPLET OF YEARS



ORIGIN OF THE SISTERS OF ST. ANN

IN one of the fairest orchards of a parish fittingly called "Terrebonne," near the city of Montreal, a woman about thirty-five sat in grave conversation with a young man some twelve years her junior. They were brother and sister; their eyes told you that—large, brown, vivacious eyes, wells of kindness and humour.

"My dear brother, I have come on this visit to the old home to tell you that I have formed the project of founding a religious order."

"Esther, that is a very solemn undertaking; do you realize what it means? You know better than I do, that founders of religious orders have had to pass through bitter ordeals."

"Yes, John, I have long counted the cost and weighed the suffering, and I frankly admit that nature shrinks from it all; moreover, my reason holds out before me that it is temerity on my part to entertain the remotest idea of being instrumental in establishing such a work in the Church; but, again, I am urged on by an irresistible force which I believe may be divine. I can no longer resist the inspiration, nor argue with doubt. As you are now the representative of the family, I thought proper to inform you of my design and let you know that I will at once take the initial step towards its fulfilment."

"It is a seriously important one, Esther, and I dread to think of the pain and misunderstanding it will bring upon you. At home you were doubly dear to us all, and now as mistress of your flourishing school in Vandreuil, where you enjoy the favour of 'la Seigneuresse' of Harwood Manor, you are highly considered; in all probability, the Cross will supplant this prestige."

"Remember, John, if it is really God's work, His grace will not be wanting."

"Yes, nothing but our lack of co-operation with Him can defeat His purposes. But, may I know your plans?"

"Certainly, I came here to tell them to you. The light of God may in time make them more definite; just now, I have chiefly in view the Christian education of children in city boarding-schools, and in country parishes where schools are few and far between. The well-to-do can