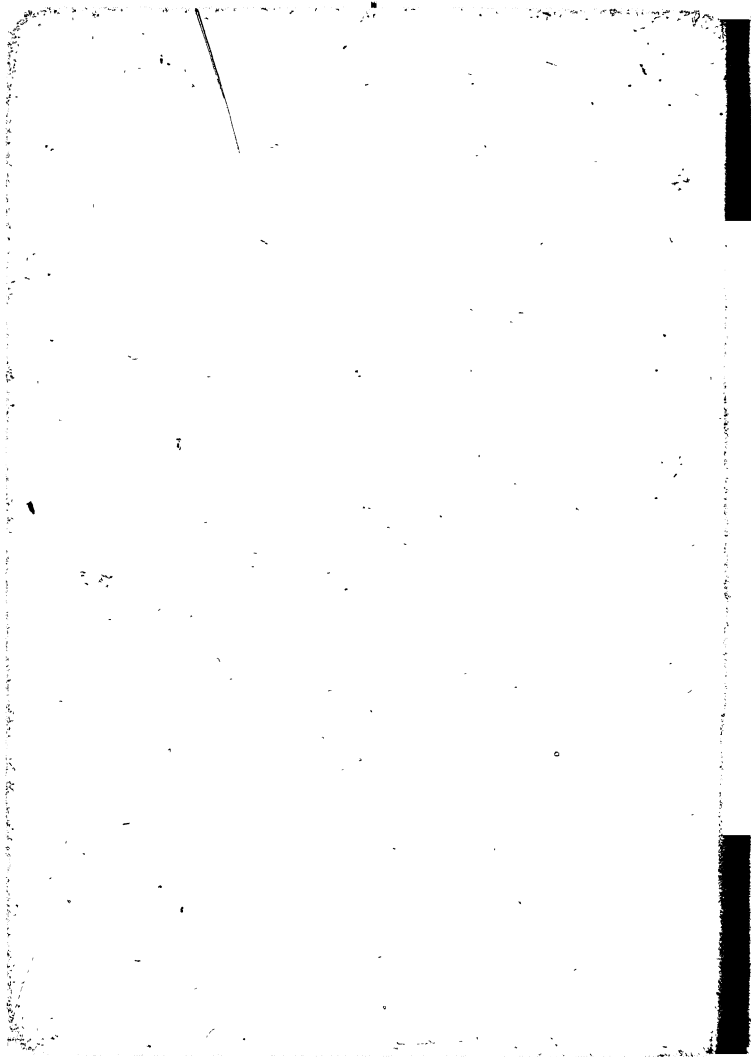


THE VIOLET

OF

OUR VILLA.



THE VIOLET OF OUR VILLA.

A SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE AND VIRTUES

OF

MISS ERNESTINE RODIER,

A PUPIL

OF THE GRADUATING COURSE

OF

VILLA MARIA.

By a SISTER GRADUATE.

MAY 1st, 1875.

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TO DEAR MADAM C. S. RODIER,

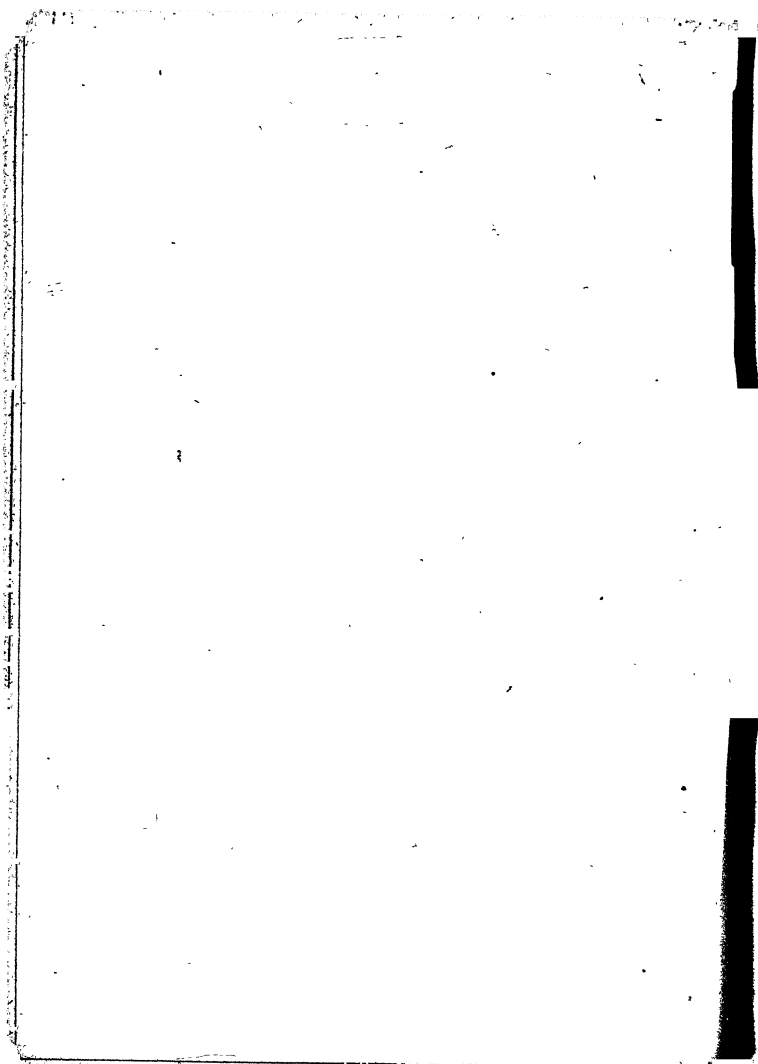
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

We wish this small volume to stand as a memorial of the affectionate intercourse, which existed between our much loved Ernestine and her sister Graduates who have been taught, together, to love Jesus and Mary.

May it also prove a solace to the grief and sorrow of the fond parent's heart, for the loss of her angelic daughter, is the earnest prayer, of the pupils of Villa Maria.

CONG. DE N. D., May 1st, 1875.

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THE VIOLET
OF
OUR VILLA,
CONG. DE NOTRE DAME.

THE large family of the Congregation of N. D., composed of upward of 15,700 members including the pupils, is, we are proud to say, the garden of the Immaculate Virgin. This celestial Queen cultivates, with truly maternal solicitude, each little flower in order to render it worthy to be presented to her divine Son. With what complacency does she not consider their variegated beauty, when she sees each and all correspond with her care, and raising towards Heaven their beautiful corollas. Oh! it is then we behold that amiable mother surveying with pleasure her delicious parterre, culling some-

times a rose, at others a daisy or a hyacinth. On the present occasion it is a modest violet we see detached from its fragile stem, and transplanted to the celestial regions.

This flower recently culled, is known to you all, dear Children of Mary. It is our loved Ernestine. Weep not for her parents who loved her so well, and you, her friends, who were so tenderly and sincerely attached to her; rejoice rather; her destiny is glorious!

She is only gone in advance of us to our heavenly home by a few days. And yet she has not gone entirely, for her mortal remains repose quite near, at a few steps from this Convent she so dearly loved—this Villa, where her young friends, her last companions, knew her, loved her. She now lies hidden in a recess of our mountain, she sleeps in her quiet tomb; but as the chrysalis, at its awaking, her holy body sanctified by the practice of every christian virtue, shall be glorious and immortal. And her soul! Oh it is in our midst! there, from behind that lovely azure

veil, she sees us, she invites us to follow in her footsteps, that we may some future day participate in her happiness. One day, sweet thought! we shall be associated to her happiness, and we also through this transparent veil shall look down on our earthly friends, and bear their wishes to the Almighty whom we shall see face to face. In order to attain this end let us imitate our regretted classmate. A word on the virtues of our young friend.

Miss Ernestine Rodier was born in Montreal, on the 25th of December, 1859; her young mind was formed from infancy to the practice of virtues superior to her age. From her most tender childhood she was remarkable for her politeness and respect, and so obedient, her good mother assured us she was never found wanting in that respect. If at times her younger brothers did not immediately conform to the desires of her dear parents, Ernestine would give them a sweet reprimand and run quickly to embrace her father or mother, saying: "You know,

dear papa, or mamma, that they do not intend to grieve you ; those little ones are so thoughtless they do not know what they are doing." To her submission Ernestine joined that delicacy of sentiment which characterizes favored souls. The mere thought of giving pleasure to her parents and at a later period to her teachers removed all obstacles ; in like manner, the fear of giving them anxiety induced her, as her journal tells us, to keep from them the secret of her moral or physical sufferings.

During her last illness, she would rarely acknowledge her sufferings, lest she should alarm her dear parents ; and she succeeded so well, that she removed all uneasiness from her mother and her sisters, though convinced herself she was beyond recovery ; this was a little secret revealed to one of her teachers.

At the age of 8 years, Ernestine was placed under the care of the Sisters of the Congregation at St. Anthony's Academy. In school she was remarkable for her docility, respect for

her teachers, condescension to her companions: all this being attributed to a happy disposition and early home training. Having attained her tenth year she was admitted to her First Communion, for which she prepared with a great spirit of faith and delicacy of conscience. Her virtues seemed to increase as she increased in years. Even at that tender age she recited long prayers and assisted at all the offices of the Church with a devotion which edified those who accompanied her.

We may date from the month of Mary, 1872, the manifestation of those amiable virtues which rendered her so agreeable to God, and so dear to those who knew her. At that period Ernestine was received into the Society of the Children of Mary, fully understanding the sweet obligations which this title imposed, and daily making conscientious efforts to imitate her Blessed Mother, for whom she always evinced a tender and sincere devotion, receiving all from Mary and referring all to her honor; even new

articles of toilet she would wear for the first time on a Saturday, in order to honor her heavenly Mother.

This love of the Blessed Virgin inspired her with many practices of devotion, as her journal testifies: "Daily recitation of the Rosary, daily visit to my Blessed Mother in one of her sanctuaries, and above all in the chapel of my Convent; Oh! how I love this sanctuary! How good God is to me here! How many graces has the Blessed Virgin showered upon me!" Further on, we read: "Offerings to my dear Mother. Three spiritual roses every day of my life, these three roses will be three acts of charity towards my neighbor."

During Lent and Advent, the month consecrated to the dead, and that dedicated to the Sacred Heart, she adds to the three roses, five acts of mortification, and her journal was not interrupted till a few days before her death, bearing testimony of her fidelity to the end in these holy practices of love for Mary.

What treasures of merit were not acquired before God by this modest young girl! in no way distinguished from her companions except by a more winning kindness towards all. So virtuous a life was not the result of an indifferent disposition, as we will see from the following quotation, April 11th, 1873: "My God! how
" proud I am still, how that offensive word has
" wounded my feelings! Did I not even feel
" a desire of revenge, but for Thy love, I wish to
" suffer all." In the evening she adds: "Thanks,
" my God! I said nothing, answered nothing, to
" that injury. I thanked that person for what
" she did, and I beg of you to bless her." In the month of October of the same year, our dear Ernestine followed for the last time the exercises of the annual retreat with her companions of the Academy. On the 21st, she writes as follows: "How happy I am! I am in retreat!
" My God, Thou who seest the depths of my soul
" Thou knowest how ardently I desire to make
" this retreat well. I beg of Thee to grant me the

“ grace to know myself, to correct my defects,
“ and to serve Thee with all my heart; yes, my
“ God, I will commence from this moment. I
“ think my predominant fault is pride, yes,
“ pride! for this afternoon, was I not hurt again
“ because A—— coldly returned my friendly
“ greeting. My God, I require humility! I beg
“ of Thee to grant me this virtue, I wish to do
“ everything to acquire it. Mary, my loved
“ Mother, come to my aid, I implore thee.”

Oct. 22nd: “ Yesterday, I was happy; to-day
“ I am more so. I have finished my general
“ confession, I will never renew it. To-morrow
“ I will receive absolution. Thanks my God,
“ for all this happiness!”

Oct. 23rd: “ O Lord, my heart exults with
“ joy! To-day is the last day of my retreat.....I
“ think I made it well, I did all I could; I re-
“ ceived absolution, what happiness! My God,
“ before thee I affirm I have nothing on my
“ conscience; I firmly believe, my dear Saviour,
“ that if Thou wert to call me, I would be ready

“ to undergo Thy judgment, not that I wish to
“ die now, (unless it were Thy holy will,) for I
“ wish to do penance for my sins. O, my God!
“ Thou seest that I have done what I could to
“ preserve purity of intention, and that I love
“ Thee more than all I love on earth. To-morrow
“ I will receive Thee! What joy! Oh! I desire
“ Thee ardently. I know well I am unworthy to
“ receive Thee, but I am in great need of Thy
“ graces to persevere in my good resolutions.
“ Come, come Lord! What gratitude I owe
“ Thee! I love but Thee, I rejoice but in Thee;
“ thanks, thanks my God! I can never repeat it
“ often enough! Thanks, O my God!”

Oct. 25th: “ We finished our retreat yester-
“ day morning by Holy Communion. What were
“ not my blissful emotions! I took good reso-
“ lutions; but that is not all, they must be put
“ into execution. O Jesus! O Mary! grant me
“ perseverance. I wish to do everything for
“ Thy love. “ I desire never to offend my God,
“ rather die than displease His divine majesty.

“ Now, to work. I must take up my studies. I wish to begin with all my heart and give good example to my dear companions. May I, dear Lord, never lose Thy divine presence, but be always guided by Thy all-seeing eye.” Here is a little prayer to the Blessed Virgin copied by this pious child of Mary, and which she frequently repeated on the days of Holy Communion.

Vierge Marie, écoute ma prière,
 Jusques à moi, ton fils daigne venir!
 Je l'ai reçu de tes mains, O ma Mère,
 Et c'est par toi que je veux le bénir.
 Pour l'adorer je sens mon impuissance ;
 Ah! mets en moi tes transports, ton ardeur,
 Prête ta voix à ma reconnaissance,
 Aime encore Jésus dans mon cœur.

Je tremble, hélas ! pour le Dieu que j'adore,
 Déjà de loin j'entends l'enfer frémir ;
 Tendre Marie, oh ! pour lui, je t'implore,
 Ton amour seul pourra le garantir.
 De ce trésor sois la dépositaire,
 Entre tes mains, je remets mon bonheur ;
 Je t'en conjure, O ma divine Mère,
 Conserve Jésus dans mon cœur.

Now let us see what resolutions were taken by our beloved Ernestine; we find them inscribed in her journal, for she had made this little book her daily confidant.

“1st. I am decided to resist and overcome, “with the grace of God, pride, which is my “prevailing defect. In order to accomplish this “whenever any one wounds my feelings, re- “fuses me a service or disturbs me. In the first “place, I will say nothing, I will endeavor to “have a smiling countenance; in my heart I “will humble myself by saying: Who am I? if “not a sinner? they treat me even better than “I deserve. 2nd. I will say my prayers with “great attention. 3rd. I will never say anything “that might wound or contradict my neighbor. “Jesus and Mary, give me humility, that I may “be faithful to these resolutions. 4th: I will “pray every day for the poor souls in Purgato- “ry, especially the soul which is most aban- “doned. I offer all the masses I shall hear for it, “all those which are said all over the universe,

“ all my actions, my aspirations, the palpitations
“ of my heart, as so many acts of expiation, and
“ all my sufferings and the indulgences which
“ I can gain. 5th. I will recall to mind the pre-
“ sence of God and live under His paternal eye,
“ wishing to accomplish in all things His most
“ holy will.”

Let us continue the pious lecture of Ernestine's journal, it will record her fidelity to these fervent resolutions. One month later, November 28th : “ I have just read over what I
“ wrote during the retreat; yes, my dispositions
“ then were good, have I persevered in them ?
“ My God, Thou knowest that assisted by Thy
“ powerful aid I have been faithful to my duty,
“ but I regret not having made more acts of
“ mortification. Oh ! may I have strength and
“ perseverance to the end.” January 20th.
“ “ How I have suffered physically to-night ! but
“ all for Thee, my God. I thank Thee for these
“ little sufferings. May they prove my love
“ for Thee.”

Feb. 24th: "For a whole month I had the consolation of not missing mass once, and I believe I have done my utmost each time to hear it well; this august mystery does me an immense good. We are in Lent, I wish to redouble my acts of mortification, as compensation for the fast enjoined by the Church. Holy Mother, help me, bless your child."

With regard to these little mortifications of which our dear Ernestine speaks, we have the testimony of her pious mother, who assures us that she often surprised this dear child using towards herself rigors of which she could not have supposed the possibility. Sometimes, she says, I besought her to forbear. "Ernestine smilingly would reassure me, saying: "Really, mamma, I do not practice mortification to injure me in any way." Then she would adopt another method of suffering in order to elude her mother's observation.

Towards the end of February she became weaker, frequently suffering from violent pains

in her side, and from palpitation of the heart, which caused her great difficulty in breathing; still no complaint escaped her lips. If we perceived it by the alteration of her countenance she would gaily answer: "Oh! I see, it is my countenance that is again at fault! What would you have! I was always pale." But in her little journal we read as follows: March 5th, "My God, what a sacrifice I have to make every morning getting up, going to school, I am so weak that I often shed tears without being able to overcome my feelings; but, O Lord, it is for Thy love that I make these little offerings. Thanks for giving me the opportunity. They are meritorious in Thine eyes; Thou alone seest them. Bless me, dear Saviour, and Mary, my sweet Mother, be always my protectress."

March 6th.—Ernestine, who followed the exercises of the month of St. Joseph, to this dear Saint of interior souls she confided her secrets, and placed them at the foot of his altar in the chapel; there they were found after her death. We

inscribe them textually as well as all the extracts from her journal, so as to leave to these quotations that perfume of piety which seems so natural to our dear sister Graduate. " My good " Father St. Joseph, with the firm conviction " that you will grant me whatever I ask, I beg " of you, glorious saint, to grant me a spirit of " piety, humility and charity. I implore you to " obtain for papa, mamma, my sisters and my " brothers the graces they require. I beg for " all my friends and teachers the same favors. " Good St. Joseph, bless my family, and obtain " for the Children of Mary the spirit of piety. " Protect our Holy Father Pius IX., the whole " Church, all the Clergy, and especially my dear " country, Canada. Glorious and powerful St. " Joseph, obtain for me the grace to follow the " will of God later in the choice of a state of " life. Finally, I earnestly implore you for the " conversion of and that of all sinners " Yes, good St. Joseph, hear the prayer of your " confiding child, Ernestine." St. Joseph heard

the prayer of this pious and confiding heart, and obtained for her, as a reward of her humility and charity, the crown of immortal glory which she now enjoys.

Our dear companion continued with ardor the work of her sanctification; the end of the scholastic year approached rapidly, she wrote in her journal:

June 14th.—“ I have studied a great deal for
“ my reviews, they will take place to-morrow.
“ With the grace of God I hope to succeed, in
“ order to please my dear teachers, who have
“ given themselves so much trouble to instruct
“ me; really I will never be able to repay their
“ devotedness. Now, for my spiritual state
“ how do I stand? My God, Thou alone knowest
“ it well! It is true that I make every effort to
“ please you, and to become better. I sometimes
“ have those sweet moments of happiness in
“ which I love you so much, my Jesus, but I
“ dread my weakness! Alas! at other times my
“ heart is cold. Oh! I beg of Thee give me more

“love. I wish to please Thee. I wish to become
“the angel of little sacrifices, of whom that
“admirable book ‘Paillettes d’Or’ speaks.
“Thanks, my God, for having placed that little
“work in my way, it did me so much good.
“Bless the author of it, and bring him to Hea-
“ven. To become the angel of little sacrifices
“is very difficult to my proud and haughty
“nature, it will require time, but with Jesus
“and Mary I hope to succeed.” On the
evening of that same day, before retiring to rest,
our little friend wrote her requests to the
Sacred Heart of Jesus. We find them on a
detached leaf, that she might always wear them
as the expression of her heart’s constant prayer.

“A list of my requests to the Sacred Heart of
“Jesus :

“O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I beg of Thee to
“grant me grace to save my soul, grant me
“humility to bear my little humiliations,
“patience to support contradictions and suffer-
“ings, charity never to offend my neighbor, and

“ in his absence never to allow his reputation to
“ be injured, as far as it lies in my power; but
“ this is not all, loving Jesus: guard me against
“ distractions in my prayers; give me courage;
“ my heart is cold, inflame it with Thy love,
“ and grant me grace not to omit any occasion
“ of doing penance and increase my sorrow for
“ my faults. O Lord, grant me a thousand other
“ things that I do not know, and of which I may
“ stand equally in need. Bless me, I wish to
“ do all for Thy love. Thou, O God! knowest my
“ thoughts, purify them, and make them worthy
“ of Thee, O my God!”

The month of July arrived, and the distribution of prizes took place; she received the well merited honors of her Course, which she finished successfully. On July 11th she writes: “ Al-
“ ready the eleventh day of my vacation! how
“ quickly time passes! I am so happy with my
“ parents, who surround me with so much
“ affection. We all start for the country on
“ Tuesday, otherwise there would be no plea-

“ sure. We are going to Beauharnois. I am so
“ happy. We will be quiet there, almost soli-
“ tary, but we will have the Blessed Sacrament
“ under the same roof with us. Thanks, my God!
“ for having placed me so near Thee during my
“ vacations. I will try to become better. My
“ poor soul has undergone many violent temp-
“ tations. I have neglected several occasions of
“ self-denial, I will avail myself of others by
“ way of compensation. Mary, my good
“ Mother, you possess my heart, place therein
“ humility, patience and meekness.”

It was really in company with our dear Lord that Ernestine spent her vacations as her mother remarked, witness of the angelic piety of her dear child. Besides her morning visit to the chapel which she never missed, on returning from a walk her first greeting was to Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist. When the family returned to their city residence, at the end of August, it was decided that Ernestine should go to Villa Maria, to follow the Graduating Course,

which was a great sacrifice to this poor child who had never yet left the paternal roof, but she cheerfully submitted, happy to present this act of abnegation to her divine Saviour.

September 1st.—The Angelus had just pealed its last joyous note of welcome to the happy pupils of Villa Maria, and many a hasty congratulation had been exchanged, when, from the Graduating Course down to the Junior Class, all began to examine their ranks, not simply for the pleasure of realizing their numerical standing, but to learn if one and all of their happy groups were complete, or what new acquisitions had been added to each Course.

The Graduates numbered twenty-two, when all united to intone the Magnificat, our Mother's Canticle of gratitude. Our dear Ernestine, though somewhat sad on finding herself separated from her cherished parents for the first time, nevertheless overcame herself sufficiently to enter into the sentiments of her sister graduates, and seemed to enjoy fully the picturesque

scenery, the promenades and pastimes of her Villa home.

The following day, conversing with a pupil who appeared lonesome : " Ah ! " said she, " if we " have a few privations here, have we not " enough to compensate for them ? Where could we find such magnificent scenery, delightful walks, and brilliant parterres, such a lovely lake surrounded by shady groves, and covered with the pleasure boats of our dear companions ; but above all, our exquisitely beautiful *calm* and *holy* chapel, where we are free from all care and danger, ever guarded by the maternal eye of Mary." In this manner she consoled her young friend, utterly forgetful of self.

On entering the Graduating Class, the call of duty was ever foremost in her mind, and by constant application and piety she surmounted every difficulty, being always the model of her class. Her room-mate, Miss M. S., thus speaks of her : " When I see with what angelic piety Ernestine kneels before her little statue of the

Blessed Virgin, I say, if all that Catholics teach concerning devotion to the Mother of God be true, that young girl will surely succeed well in every duty here, and gain an imperishable crown hereafter. What would I not give to resemble her ! She seems so sweet, so happy. Such were the impressions made in a short time by Ernestine on a young girl of eighteen, who ignored both her language and her religion ; but no selfish motive prompted Ernestine in her practices of devotion ; and the sequel will show what example can accomplish.

The daily promenades of our scholastic year had commenced ; for one and all, these salutary walks are a source of pleasure, but to this dear child of Mary they became so many pilgrimages. With what accents of devotion, relate her companions, did she not unite in our joyous concerts, when firmly seated in our small boats, with oars in hand, plying swiftly through the limpid waters of our miniature lake, rivaling each other who would first reach our Lady

of the Woods, to intone the Magnificat, so dear to us all. On another occasion, returning from one of our gay promenades, we fortunately passed by a garden where the melons appeared very tempting, some seemed falling from the stem: there is no harm, said one to another, in picking up one, and we shall have a little treat, by way of amusement; a straw hat covered with fresh leaves served as a basket, and to complete the little feast a few tempting tomatoes were thrown into the new basket, and anything else that seemed ready to fall from the parent stem.

On reaching the terrace we hastened to divide our booty, and each enjoyed the feast with great relish, Ernestine being the only one who refused to partake of it; one of her companions said, "Oh! for my part I never refuse the manna when it falls into my cup, and we know that Mother Superioress is too good to consider our little feast as a theft;" still she was struck by the delicacy manifested by Ernestine who persisted in her refusal.

Another of our favorite walks was N. D. de Toutes Graces. Ernestine would say to her companions, "How I love to pray in that church, it bears such a glorious title." Going thither on one occasion, she said to M. L. L., "I am going to recite the Rosary for you, will you not say yours for me?" "Oh! yes," replied her companion, "so that we may obtain all the graces prepared for the faithful graduate during her last year. Ernestine after a moment's reflection said, "I do not think I will finish this year, I believe death is not far distant." Henceforward, says the same young person, I never looked at Ernestine without thinking that my dear young friend predicted the truth: her delicate health, her sweetness, her piety, all confirmed me in the opinion that she was called to a better world; and the same evening I communicated my thoughts concerning Ernestine to Mother St. C., a teacher of the Graduating Course.

An undergraduate receiving from home some pious pictures, just met Ernestine, whom she

only knew by seeing her in the chapel or in the dining-room, but to whom she looked up with affection, said to her, "You would give me much pleasure, Miss Rodier, by accepting one of these pictures." With that amiable simplicity that ever characterized Ernestine, she selected one, affectionately thanking her young friend: the title, "The Entrance of a Child of Mary into Heaven." This picture with its pious sentiments became her daily guide, and she would change it from one book to another in order not to lose sight of it. One of her companions, G. de G., observing this, if the picture was forgotten, she would admonish Ernestine with mock gravity; Ernestine would receive the rebuke smilingly and hasten to find her treasure, adding at the same time, "it is so very pretty."

Very different was her expression, remarked her gay friend, when I would speak during silence. Then she would say, "speak no more, this is not right; remember we should be the first to give example."

When the Superioress of the Villa would meet Ernestine, and with maternal kindness urge her not to fatigue herself by study, and add, "when you feel weak go to the dining-room and take some refreshments; besides, when you are fatigued in the class-room, ask your teachers to give you a companion to go out on the lawn," she would return to her companions covered with confusion, saying with tears in her eyes, "How good the Superioress is! How kind to me! Indeed all the nuns and pupils are so devoted that I am ashamed to be so little worthy of their attention;" her humility making her see nothing but kindness and charity in others, as the following extracts from her weekly compositions bear ample testimony:

[First Letter.]

VILLA MARIA, Sept. 5th, 1874.

DEAR FRIEND,

In my last letter I announced the day of my entrance to Villa Maria, so you know by this

time we are busily engaged at our scholastic duties.

This morning we were studying Ancient History. I find it very attractive and instructive: What can be better calculated to excite our curiosity than the recital of the events that have transpired since the creation of the world? What surprises me particularly is, to consider the world in its primitive purity, and to see by what degrees it fell into the greatest corruption, and how slow but sure God is in His chastisements.

My dear, I know how much you like to converse on classical duties, therefore I need not apologize for the dryness of a subject I intend to resume in a few days. When time permits, I will communicate with you freely my impressions on History, Geography, &c., and now I must bid you a hasty good by, but not before embracing you affectionately.

Ever your invariable friend,

ERNESTINE.

[Second Letter to a different friend.]

VILLA MARIA, Sept. 8th, 1874.

DEAR FRIEND,

Do not think I have forgotten my promise of giving you my ideas and feelings concerning convent life, as a boarder.

On arriving at the Villa I found myself preceded by several pupils. Mother Superior and several of the nuns received us very kindly. You may suppose the moment of taking leave of my dear parents came sooner than I expected, and notwithstanding all my good resolutions, the unbidden tear would come in spite of me. However, I was given in charge to some charming companions, their amiability prevailed, and I joined in their amusements without an effort. In the course of the evening we had a grand illumination around the statue of St. Joseph, which is situated in a circular terrace in front of the grand entrance.

Before retiring to our sleeping rooms, we went to the chapel for evening prayers and the Rosary, after which we sang the Magnificat, with organ and full chorus, in order to obtain success for the coming year, by placing ourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. All the pupils appear delighted to resume their studies; as for myself, you do not expect that I can say precisely the same thing, you must bear in mind that it is the first time I have been separated from my dear parents, still I presume my present feelings will not last long.

You know we have always our dear Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, so I propose to pay many a visit to our dear little chapel, and to have recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in all my difficulties. In the meantime I shall defer all further communication till I have the pleasure of seeing you.

Ever your affectionate and loving

ERNESTINE RODIER.

● [Third Letter.]

VILLA MARIA, Sept. 8th, 1874.

DEAR MOTHER LA NATIVITÉ,

What a happy day this is! It is not only the feast of our Immaculate Mother Mary, but also that of our much loved Mother La Nativité, who is such a good dear Mother to all the favored pupils of the Villa.

Our sentiments are known to you, dear Mother, but words often fail when the heart feels most; suffice to say that our fervent prayers will ascend to the Throne of the Most High, imploring choice blessings on our much loved Mother La Nativité, that she may enjoy long, long years for the consolation of her happy pupils. As for the Graduates who celebrate this festival for the last time in their Villa home, it will form the brightest link in Memory's chain, and as it returns with each revolving year we shall celebrate it in spirit with those who have the happiness of enjoying your maternal care.

With respect and gratitude, Rev. Mother,

Your grateful pupil,

ERNESTINE RODIER.

[Fourth Letter.]

VILLA MARIA, Sept. 15th, 1864.

DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter of the 10th inst. I have just received, and am charmed with the contents; if you wish to give me pleasure, continue to write in this style, such letters are my sweetest recreation.

You want to know how convent life agrees with me, truly I like it better than I expected. I have been here but a short time, and I feel quite at home.

I do not intend to give you an account of my daily life, you have been a pupil here yourself, therefore you know all about our daily routine. I regret your health obliges you to interrupt your studies, I hope in the course of a short time you will be able to resume them. I applaud your resolution of continuing to study at home though you have nearly finished your Course, there are so many things we ignore that we should bestow as

much leisure as is at our disposal to augment our fund of knowledge. Moreover, study is such an agreeable companion of youth, that it should be relinquished with regret.

I congratulate you on the interesting works you intend perusing, and I would request you to give me your impressions on each of them. Now, I must say I expect an occasional visit; the distance from Montreal is not so great, and the drive, or even the walk, should not injure you. You know I will not be the only one delighted to receive you, our kind teachers are always happy to see their former pupils.

In the meantime I request a souvenir in your prayers for my success.

Your ever affectionate friend,

ERNESTINE RODIER.

[Fifth Letter.]

VILLA MARIA, Sept. 28th, 1874.

DEAR FRIEND,

When I cast a glance on the past, and think over our school days, with their joys and

sorrows, all seems like a dream. And how much shorter will not this last year appear, there is so much to be accomplished.

Without doubt the Graduating Course has many charms: in the first place the kindness of our dear teachers, who are so devoted to our improvement, and the amiability of our companions make us almost forget the home circle, or I should say, they form such a good substitute, they leave us almost without a wish.

Our apartments so gay and cheerful, formerly occupied by Lady Elgin, command a magnificent view: beautiful terraces and villas, the city and its environs, the majestic St. Lawrence, all unite to form a beautiful panorama on which the eye wanders at pleasure, until it seeks repose in the azure blue of our heavens, and thence penetrates with love and gratitude the veil that conceals our Heavenly Father, who made all things for the enjoyment of His unworthy children.

Our time is agreeably diversified with

recreations, promenades and charming surprises in one form or another, and I am told this is but the prelude of what follows.

On commencing our course we all took serious resolutions to make the most of this our last year, being convinced that fidelity in this respect is essential to our success; hence you can imagine with what ardor we endeavor to overcome every difficulty, and to avoid these little temptations incidental to the graduating pupil, so that no foul stain may ever tarnish the memory of this year. On the contrary, may it ever prove to us, in the desert of life, that beautiful soft green oasis, where the soul loves to repose from the turmoil and strife of the busy world. Courage then! With the assistance of our dear teachers and the protection of **Mary**, success must crown the noble aspirations of the Graduates of '75. You will join me, I am sure, in saying Amen.

Yours affectionately,

ERNESTINE RODIER.

October follows with all its joys and vicissitudes, but for our dear Ernestine this month had in store what her pious soul cherished most; prayer, recollection, in a word the Retreat; her desire to profit by it was manifested in her every act, and the holy calm of her soul was depicted in her countenance. Great was her joy when she saw the radiant brow of her dear companion, already alluded to, Miss M. S., after the regenerating waters of Baptism made this amiable friend a child of God and heir of Heaven,—Ernestine being among the privileged few of the Children of Mary present at this blissful ceremony. Oh! how she prayed while her tears flowed plentifully, and, as she afterwards relates she never was so much affected in her life as when she heard her young friend pronounce the “Credo.” We regret we cannot find her composition on that occasion.

Her charity was so admirable that no one ever heard her find fault with any of her young friends. Her respectable mother tells us that

she would often say, "you can scarcely imagine how good and pious the pupils are at Villa Maria."

A few days after the retreat our promenade was to the Cemetery; one of her teachers was singularly struck by an answer she received from Ernestine. Seeing her dress to go out, she asked where she was going. "We are going," said Ernestine, "to bring the resolutions of our retreat to the Cemetery; will we not be happy to find them there on a future day?" Her companion along the route observed that she repeated the *De Profundis* almost incessantly. One of her companions, speaking of her, gives this glorious testimony: "Ernestine was a model of humility, self-denial and piety joined to the greatest amiability of character." The same friend adds, "that whilst the graduating pupils were busy preparing an evening's amusement for the sombre soirées of October, Ernestine took part in a little operetta entitled '*L'Esprit et le Cœur*.'—'*Mind and Heart*.' She had to sing

alone, and her voice being weak, she could scarcely reach the highest notes. I accompanied her on the piano; when coming to those notes she would laugh and say, 'for this time I will stop here.'" "The same evening," says one of her classmates, G. L., "she and I had a comic song; we had not time to commit the song to memory, but as it was on the programme, we determined to make the most of it; the beginning went on pretty well, but the end was an extempore after our own fashion, which created peals of laughter. 'No matter,' said Ernestine to G. L., 'we have gained our point, we wished to amuse, and I am sure we have succeeded beyond our most sanguine expectations.' I replied, so much the better, none of the other courses will attempt to surpass us in improvisation." It is one of the customs of the school for each course to give a monthly literary soir e which creates both emulation and amusement.

October left us souvenirs never to be forgotten, they were joyful, pious, and happy; it had

brought us two grand congés, one was given in order to let us assist at the religious profession of a young Graduate of 1871, Miss B. N., who in our midst had learned what it is to be a Catholic and had the courage to embrace Catholicism in the midst of difficulties; she renounced the pomp and vanities of the brilliant circles of society in which she moved to become an humble child of Mary. The same day one of the Graduates of 1874, Miss J. M., gave us an agreeable surprise by her entrance into the Novitiate.

November was ushered in under the most favorable auspices; the eve our teachers announced the special devotion of the coming month. The "Stations of the Cross" were to be made daily; moreover, it was expected we would be as generous as our predecessors in making the sacrifice of our pocket money for the souls in Purgatory. The same evening, I have the pleasure to state, that the Graduates gave a sum necessary for thirty-six masses, and the next

week their good example had operated so effectively on the other courses, that we were enabled to have one hundred and ninety masses offered for the same end. Ernestine was delighted at this, and on that occasion she said to the Superioress, Mother La Nativité: "Is it not admirable; not a single pupil has been wanting in this pious devotion. Our charity for the souls in Purgatory will bear its fruit in good season, no doubt."

The last souvenirs of our dear Ernestine being attached to the Forty Hours devotion, the piety and fervor with which she followed these holy exercises we can learn from her composition on that occasion :

VILLA MARIA, Oct. 6th, 1874.

DEAR MAMMA,

With what sweet emotions have our hearts overflowed during the "Quarante Ore!" still my enjoyment is never complete till shared with you, my darling mamma. You know this blissful devotion by experience, therefore I need not

describe it; I shall content myself by giving you an account of the closing ceremonies, after assuring you that I never felt more consolation in prayer than during those three days.

Our little chapel was beautifully decorated, all seemed to announce the joy of an Easter festival. At ten o'clock A.M. the priest entered, robed in his richest vestments. Mass being said, we intoned the "Pange Lingua," and the procession was formed in the centre aisle.

The junior pupils opened the march. The different courses were preceded by their respective teachers, who appeared as so many angels leading those young souls to God. The Graduates preceded the Blessed Sacrament, each bearing a taper, and wearing a long white veil. They seemed deeply penetrated with the honor conferred on them. All looked so holy and recollected that we felt transported to the heavenly Jerusalem, to that glorious band of Virgins who are to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. What added to our dream of

bliss was the beautiful decorations that met our astonished gaze as we passed through the various apartments all having been prepared the night previous, so that we scarcely knew our own apartments. Altars and statues were richly adorned with flowers, and scrolls bearing various inscriptions suitable to the occasion. On passing through the music hall, the harps, pianos and organ sent forth their sweetest notes in homage to the Divine Visitor, thence into the Library, where Mater Admirabilis was surrounded with exquisite flowers and an aureole of lights.

Passing through the central hall we beheld the statue of the admirable foundress of this establishment beneath that of the Immaculate Virgin, on an improvised altar at the entrance of the Community, all surrounded by the richest decorations. At this sight I awoke from my holy reverie to think of the Venerable M. Bourgeois, heroine of Canada, reaping in joy what she had sowed in tears, fancying I heard the Immaculate

Virgin say to her : "Go to Canada ! I will not abandon thee !" and our dear Mother Bourgeois, reply, "Blessed Mother, nothing now remains to be done but repeat your own glorious canticle, Magnificat anima mea Dominum." Yes, these words are truly the spirit of her Community of which she may be justly proud, having for over two centuries a succession of children worthy their Immaculate Mother, thereby gloriously accomplishing her promise. During the procession, the most delicious music reverberated from chapel, halls, and music rooms, and made us almost fancy the angels were assisting us ; the most profound respect was manifested in every countenance. I felt so happy. I was ready to exclaim : "O Lord it is good for us to be here ; let us now fix our tents, &c." I used to envy the happiness of those souls who lived in the time of our Saviour, but now I feel I have nothing to desire.

As my heart turned with love and gratitude to the Author of all bliss, I felt an impression of

delight never to be effaced. And while I contemplated our dear Mother La Nativité followed by all the pupils into the chapel again, I said to myself: May we not be thus assembled in our Heavenly Home, when we will all be so many gems in the Crown of our loved Mother La Nativité. We can do nothing worthy of her here below, O Lord grant us to be her crown and glory hereafter.

Dear mother, my letter is rather long ; but you know, whether at home or abroad, I must let you know my feelings, as the pleasure of communicating all to you is a double source of enjoyment for your ever loving and grateful child,

ERNESTINE ROBIER.

A few days more, and our dear Ernestine is obliged to go home ; her cough begins to excite uneasiness. Ernestine's teachers went frequently to see her, and she herself had paid us a visit about Christmas, therefore, no immediate danger was apprehended.

After leaving the Villa we read as follows, in her journal: "It is from my little blue room, "which I love so much, that I write these lines. "I am now almost three weeks at home surrounded, protected and caressed with the "sweetest and most tender affection, which "would restore me to perfect health, if it were "possible. But I have a very bad cold; this "evening, I feel my chest all on fire. I am "tired and weak, I have coughed so much, but "I will try to forget my sufferings, to talk of "that which fills my soul. I have had the happiness of following the exercises of the retreat "at Notre Dame. I feel that it has done me "good. I received Holy Communion this morning. I am perfectly happy, notwithstanding "my constant sufferings. My Saviour, Thou art "my Lord and Master, remain in my heart, my "true source of happiness, for Thou alone canst "give me true joy.

"But, dear Lord, I still hunger for Thee!
"When shall I receive Thee again? To-morrow

“ wilt Thou not grant that favor to Thy poor child ? yes, to-morrow I will again receive thee. “ I renew the resolutions which I have already “ taken for Thy love: to practice humility, to “ be charitable on every occasion, always appear “ gay, pleased with what others do, and sacrifice “ myself for all, as far as lies in my power.”

From this moment our dear invalid deceived herself no longer, although her sickness had changes, as she writes in her journal. She commenced her preparations for eternity, but on account of her extreme delicacy of feeling she did not allow her family to perceive that she knew the gravity of her illness, nor what she suffered. She submitted with the most amiable condescension and apparent confidence to take all the remedies prescribed.

The last day of December she wrote to one of her teachers: “ You ask me, dear mother, for some news of my poor health, I will tell you frankly, but confidentially, for *here* this would alarm those who surround me, they are all so

kind and watch over me with unequalled tenderness; but, for all that, my cough does not diminish, on the contrary, it is becoming almost incessant, and my nights are sleepless, fever is consuming me! Really, I think it time to prepare for the journey from time to eternity! The holy will of God be done! I only wish and ask for that; otherwise I would not be happy. God is my father, He loves me, and knows better than I what is suitable for me, life or death!

“Death, this word makes me shudder. I do not wish to conceal it, dear mother, it is very sad to die; however, it is the gate by which we must all pass to reach God, I submit to it. It is a sacrifice, but I am happy to make it in expiation of my sins. What pains me most, is to grieve my beloved parents, they are so devoted and love their children so tenderly. I know their grief will be extreme, when I am no longer here to receive their caresses; however, our Lord will console them and you too, dear mother, St. F.B., will you not? Enough! enough!

I fear to afflict you by my sad missive, forgive me!"

The disease rapidly pursued its work of destruction, and our dear one was so calm, so resigned, that her mother and sisters still hoped to see her recover. Ernestine's good heart was rejoiced by this illusion which gave happiness to those whom she dreaded so much to grieve. Her energy seemed to triumph over her weakness, she spent the day with her family occupied in working for the poor, and two days before her death she was hastening to finish a second pair of stockings, which she had designed for a poor woman. Another instance I must add which occurred shortly before her death: "Dear mother, I never begged a favor for myself, and now I have one to ask? remember your poor child is very unworthy of all the graces that our dear Lord has thought fit to bestow on her. I would not grieve you willingly, my darling mother, but you must know it, I will soon be no more. Will you then for the

love of God, in my name, adopt that poor helpless person.....this will be something to acquit my debt of gratitude to God, and a lasting token of your love for your poor little Ernestine." This truly pious lady did not hesitate an instant to assure her cherished child that her request would be complied with to its full extent.

Feb. 9th.—Our dear Ernestine, who was now confined to the house, received Holy Communion in her room. She thus expresses her happiness to one of her teachers: "Your welcome note would have added to my happiness had it been possible, but I am extremely happy. I have received my divine Saviour, what more can I desire! This communion gave me much consolation; I greatly needed it, dear mother, St. F.B., because for four long weeks my soul has not been strengthened by this heavenly Manna. You know what holy joy a communion brings with it; I have often repeated your sweet invocations. Do not trouble yourself about my sufferings, I beg of you, dear mother; I do not

suffer as much as I should. God has pity on me. Besides, I have my Crucifix here, the statue of the Blessed Virgin in front of me, my angel guardian by my side. With your fervent prayers, those of my family, and Holy Communion this morning, surely my suffering days and nights will always be supportable with such consolations."

This was the last of Ernestine's letters. Her illness made such rapid progress that on the night of the 17th her confessor was hastily called in, and he administered the last sacraments. The next morning, being a little better, she said to one of her friends who appeared greatly afflicted: "I am going to die it is true, but God is good; He calls me to Himself while I as yet have known but His benefits and the tenderness of my loving parents, and kind friends like yourself. He spares me the trials of this life, weep not, I beg of you."

Feb. 19th.—At 9 P.M. she received for the second time the Holy Viaticum and gained the

indulgences of the jubilee. Notwithstanding her extreme weakness she knelt to receive Holy Communion. Her thanksgiving resembled an ecstasy; her face was radiant, every trace of suffering had disappeared to give place to an expression of happiness.

It was only on the eve of her death that we learned she was much worse, and no hope of recovery. This caused quite a sensation. On learning the sad news, we were all anxious to visit her and give her a last proof of our attachment, but this being impossible, three in the name of all were permitted to accompany her teachers,—even the Superioress, Mother La Nativité, though not well, would go herself to see her darling child for the last time. Ernestine recognized them, and looking at them affectionately pressed their hands, being too weak to speak, but she took the hand of the Superioress and kissed it affectionately. One of her companions taking her harp accompanied the others, who sang the consecration of a child of Mary,

On listening with ecstatic attention to the music, not being able to speak she wrote on a scrap of paper, "Tell them to come nearer, so that I may hear the words." Nothing was more touching than the sweet tones of the harp, mingling with the sad and sympathetic voices of her dear companions, and her music teacher St. S

M. L. L. on returning home said, Ernestine had but one great desire, that of pleasing God, her parents and teachers, surely, she has attained the height of her ambition, dying we may almost say in an ecstasy of love for God, surrounded by those she prized most on earth, her parents and teachers. A few hours after their return to the Villa, we received the painful news of her death. The following day we received an invitation for the funeral service. Six of the Graduates were chosen as pall-bearers. Mr. Rodier had the polite attention to send up eight covered carriages, consequently about forty pupils from the Villa attended the funeral, and had the happiness of giving their regretted com-

panion a farewell embrace. A crown, emblematic of the affection of her companions, rested on her spotless remains, bearing an inscription analogous to the sentiments of her heart: "Qu'il est doux d'aimer Jésus. O Ernestine! enfant chérie de Marie, priez pour vos compagnes de Villa Maria."

As the funeral reached the French Cathedral, and the pall-bearers ascended the grand portico, they were joined by their companions who preceded them draped in long white veils, forming a regular line on either side, through which the funeral cortege passed into the church. The service was grand and imposing. Thence we accompanied her to the Cemetery, and returned home to the Villa with sad and holy thoughts. May our death be like Ernestine's, was the general ejaculation.

On entering our little chapel for prayer the same evening, we were forcibly reminded of our dear departed one, seeing her Prie-Dieu and chair draped in white, looped up by frosted

sprays and knotted with black crape ; her prayer book and favorite picture remained on the Prie-Dieu till the month's mind. The mass was said by her maternal uncle, Rev. P. L. Lapierre ; her father, mother, sisters, and a few select friends, came out to the Villa for that occasion. Our little chapel was festooned from chandeliers to pillars with white tarletan gracefully looped up with crape. After the funeral march, so sad and impressive, the pupils intoned the hymn "Marie est la porte des Cieux." Mass being ended, a few of the pupils took their place in the centre of the chapel, beside her Prie-Dieu, where the harp on which she was wont to play was standing ; they sang once more the consecration of a child of Mary with sympathetic tones more easily felt than described, it being the same hymn they sang for her a few hours previous to her death.

The Rev. Mr. Lapierre made a short and eloquent discourse appropriate to the occasion, but our hearts were too much moved to attempt

to give an account of it. The depths of the soul are sometimes unutterable.

However, we all left the chapel with holy awe and salutary thoughts of our dear departed companion. You, dear Ernestine! we are sure in your glorious Home will not forget us; you will often present us to Jesus and Mary, and bear our hopes to our Immortal Mother, M. Bourgeois, showing her the fruit of her many labors in behalf of Canada, where she delighted to consider her Congregation as the parterre of Mary. Speak also of our loved Villa to the angel guardians of your loving companions, so that all may become lovely flowers, worthy to be transplanted to the Heavenly Jerusalem to share in the everlasting sunshine of the modest violet of our mountain home.

Let us now complete this short notice of the life of this dear child of Mary with the necrological account of it, written by a friendly hand, who better than any one else knew and appreciated our darling sister Graduate. May these

edifying lines produce in our hearts a love of virtue and the desire of serving God as faithfully as did our regretted companion.

An angel has departed from our midst. Tuesday morning, an immense crowd flocked to the Parish Church, which was draped in deep mourning; the adjoining streets were lined with an eager multitude, all awaited the arrival of a funeral procession. Strangers asked who was this celebrated personage, whose funeral was attended with such pomp. It was but a sweet modest young girl of sixteen, whose mortal remains were brought to receive a last benediction in the church where she had so often prayed.

A young girl, whose daily prayer, found in her journal, was as follows: "O Lord, grant that I may live unnoticed, that I may do good to every one, for Thy love, and that Thou alone mayest know it." And the Lord who has said He will exalt the humble, has honored His humble child, for her praise is in every mouth,

and she obtained even here below general esteem and affection.

Miss Mary Ernestine Rodier, daughter of Mr. C. S. Rodier, jun., was one of those privileged beings our Lord generally lends us for a short time. Pious, mild, grateful, modest, and charitable, all her pleasure consisted in making every one around her happy. She ingeniously acknowledged she took but one resolution every day, that of pleasing all those with whom she might have communication. She adds in her journal: "When at night I find that I have been faithful to my promise, I am not proud of what is so easy, for is there anything so sweet as to please our neighbors?"

On one occasion, conversing with her companions who were making plans for the future, she said: "I know not what will be my mission here below; could I have my wish, it would be a ray of sunshine, which carries joy and happiness wherever it penetrates."

Miss Ernestine Rodier, from her most tender

age, was confided to the Rev. Srs. of the Congregation of N. D., and during several years she studied with application and success. The remembrance of her virtues will always live in the hearts of her companions, who would all wish to follow her to the abode of the Blessed, as the pen of one of her friends expressed it, in a few lines, In Memoriam, placed in her coffin. The 1st of September, 1874, found her in the establishment of Villa Maria, to follow the Graduating Course. She was not long there before she won the esteem of her teachers and the pupils. After a short stay, she reckoned as many sisters and friends as she had companions. Unfortunately her debility began to give serious anxiety, and her parents judged proper to recall her to the bosom of her family, where the care and the tenderness of a devoted father and of loved brothers and sisters, and all the resources of medical art, contended in vain against the cruel disease of consumption; which carried her off on Saturday, Feb. 20, at 3.35 p.m. Her

last moments were the echo of her whole life, and her death was that of the just. Until the end she showed herself amiable, of an unchangeable serenity; not being able to speak, she received every one with a smile. Notwithstanding her sufferings she still found means to practice self-denial; this sister virtue of humility shone particularly in this angel of the earth. The night before her death one of the good religious, who watched by her side, offered her some grapes to refresh her burning chest; but she answered: "Sister, it is Lent; it would be an immortification, for I do not require them." Being asked to take something after her medicine, she tearfully begged to be dispensed, saying: "Leave me, I entreat you, the merit of my little sufferings." And added another time, while looking at her kind mother, "Well, mamma, so as not to distress you I accept something, provided you have a mass said each time for the most abandoned souls in Purgatory," and this pious treasure,

increased by her ingenious mortification, amounted to a pretty large sum which has already been given for the benefit of the poor souls who, abandoned by others, were not forgotten by our angelic little friend.

After her death her countenance acquired a celestial beauty; a ray of that glory which her soul already enjoyed was no doubt reflected on that body sanctified by so many virtues. The young ladies of St. Anthony's Academy in deep mourning, a deputation of forty young ladies, pupils of Villa Maria, an equal number from St. Denis Academy, the community of the Rev. Srs. of the Congregation, deputations from the different other communities, besides a great number of relatives and friends of the family, pressed round the catafalque, and a large number of clergy filled the sanctuary. The maternal uncle of the deceased, Rev. Mr. Lapierre, officiated. The pallbearers: Misses Swift, A. McGarvey, M. L. Levesque, A. Collins, G. de Grosbois, G. Leprohon, with their companions from Villa Maria,

draped in long white veils and the insignia of the Children of Mary. On her coffin some friendly hands had placed two crowns and a cross of flowers.

We will here insert a few lines by one of the Graduates: M. F.

IN MEMORIAM.

The sun o'er the mountain his first ray was shedding,
Lo! all was so tranquil, so holy and fair,
That well might you pause, and with fondest emotion
Await to see Angels bright gathering there.

And ah! though I saw not their heavenly faces,
Full well did I know they were hovering round;
Their beauty I saw on each object about me,
Their voices I heard in each soft breathing sound.

And there stood the Villa in grandeur unrival'd,
Still charming and sweet as it smiled on the green;
My heart with my lips in fond harmony murmur'd,
"How like unto Mary, its Heavenly Queen."

So gently I came to the shrine of our Mother,
Where fled the brightest of youth's happy hours,
To feast once again on the wealth of its beauties,
Inhale the sweet perfume of Mary's dear flowers.

Ah! how can I say with what joy I approach'd them,
Their vesture still gemm'd with the dewdrops so bright,
Oh! flow'rs of the mountain of Mary's own Villa,
Oh! blossoms of faith, of celestial delight.

But of all which I gazed on, one bed was the fairest,
How each lovely face to the morning inclines ;
Soon after I heard, those were specially cultur'd,
Would shortly be scatter'd in various climes.

Still 'twas not the rose that enticed me to linger,
Nor was it the violet so modest and blue,
Or the fuchsia, the cactus, the dahlia or tulip,
'Twas one of more holy, more exquisite hue—

A lily that gracefully waved in the sunlight,
Her beauty surpassing, I ne'er can forget ;
The impress she made on my heart is still verdant,
The awe she awoke in my *soul* is there yet.

So spotless and pure that I knew when I saw her
'Twas "Israel's Lily," through holiest love,
Had lent us this fond cherished child of her bosom,
As a type of the joys which await us above.

Oh! child of the Virgin, blest flow'r of election!
Oh! beautiful lily, of exquisite worth,
As I left thee, I fancied the angels were whispering,
Remember! remember! she is not of this earth.

The sun o'er the mountain his last ray was shedding,
I anxiously wended my way through the lawn,
To see, by the soft parting beam of his glory,
The flow'r which wak'd such emotions at dawn.

I enter'd the garden, what change had stole o'er it?
Ah! why did each flow'ret dear droop her fair head?
I paus'd not to ask, but with eager impatience
I hasten'd to visit my own beloved bed.

I came, but alas! had it all been a vision,
Had fancy but made me a subject of mirth?
I turn'd fast away, when lo! soft came the whisper,
"She's gone, oh! remember, she bloom'd not for earth!"

Yes, gone in the fullness of innocence blest,
The Angel who spoke that has borne her away;
He cull'd her ere night's gloomy shades had o'erspread her
And brought her to regions of glorious day.

And now near the throne of Immaculate Mary,
'Mid flow'rs like herself our dear lily doth shine;
All bathed in the light of the Lamb evêr holy.
She prays for the dear ones she's left for a time—

For her own loving parents, friends true and faithful,
That all may rejoin her when life will be done.
Ah! Mary our Queen hears the prayer of her flow'ret,
And bears it with love to the heart of her Son.

Then weep not for her, oh! ye children of Mary!
Remember her spirit is hovering nigh;
Each peal of your organ, each breath of devotion,
Ernestine fondly wafts to your Mother on high.

Oh! yes, from Heaven, where thy soul like a dove has flown to thy God, Ernestine, send consolation to the hearts of thy afflicted parents. Acquit a debt which their tenderness, their unlimited devotedness made thee contract, by obtaining for them health and happiness whilst on earth. And thy friends, do not forget them; see their grief, their prayers, and their hopes; obtain for them, that, by imitating thy virtues, they may meet thee one day on that Heavenly shore, to share in thy happiness for all eternity.

We here insert a few lines wherein we think our dear Sister Graduate is viewed in her true light as the modest violet; though we consider the lily an equally appropriate emblem, as representing our dear young friend's angelic purity.

IN MEMORIAM.

Before the Virgin's lofty throne
An Angel bright doth stand,
On his mission sweet he speedeth,
His golden wings expand.

To blest Marg'rite Bourgeois' parterre
He's borne in full flight,
A flower for the Virgin Queen
He culls before to-night.

Lo! in Mary's own dear Villa,
'Mid flowers rich and rare,
We now behold this Angel,
With beauty passing fair.

Ah! see! how he scans each flow'ret,
He views them one by one ;
Still pauses not, with onward flight,
He skims across the lawn.

When lo! the rose with petals soft
Displays her lovely face ;
To the queenly flower, he says,
Nay friend! you're in your place.

The lily then, with noble pride,
Lifts up her regal head,
Yet still he passeth onward,
Though nought to her he said.

The cactus and the tulip too,
The lovely jessamine spray,
The mignonnette and hyacinth,
Their beauty all display.

Behold him now! he penetrates
That modest little glade,
Where the brooklet murmurs gently
To the blossoms in the shade.

He stoops down to the violet,
With meek and modest eye,
The fragrance of this flow'ret sweet
Has reached the realms on high.

The Villa's flowers in mourning deep
Now droop their heads so fair;
In vain they'll seek their favorite,
Throughout the gay parterre.

But list! the joyful Alleluias,
That welcome her on high,
With modest beauty now shall shine
O'er flowers of brighter dye.

Hark! hark! you angel choristers
With thuribles so bright,
They lead her to the Virgin Mother,
'Mid rays of endless light,

A CHILD OF MARY.

And there, our beauteous flow'ret
 Basks in the golden ray;
 Her incense floats before the Lamb,
 For an eternal day.

'Mid joys so sweet, her parents dear
 She never can forget,
 For them and for her friends, she says,
 Dear Lord, they'll meet me yet.

Mary, Mother, Queen and Virgin,
 List! to our humble prayer:
 Let us, like darling Ernestine,
 Thy joys forever share.

As we were sending this little memoir to press the following letter was forwarded to us by the person to whom it was addressed; we insert it textually. At the same time we received a very handsome present for the altar in the name of dear Ernestine: a complete set of candlesticks and a cross for the Tabernacle before which she loved to pray. We did not require this new souvenir of dear Ernestine to keep her still fresh in our memory; however, we do not feel the less grateful to Mrs. C. S. Rodier for the magnificent gift.

VILLA MARIA, Feb. 27th, 1875.

DEAR FRIEND,

My task to-day does not consist in recalling the ordinary occurrences of our beloved Villa home; ah! no, the subject of this letter will be at the same time sad and consoling. It is also a warning and even a condemnation to many convent girls who do not profit of the advantages offered them, and think but of present enjoyment. If they do sometimes cast a thought on the future, it is not that glorious future that will last forever, but on those days when they will be tasting the enchanting cup of pleasure that a deceitful world holds forth to allure them.

Half our term has passed, and Almighty God has chosen two of Mary's children: one He has called to His own special service, and faithful to her Heavenly Spouse she now treads the well beaten track of Virgins. The other was found worthy to receive a still greater grace, the death of the just. As the latter is unknown

to you, pardon me, if I dwell a short time on her endearing qualities.

Our dear Ernestine left one of our convents for the Villa in September. Though she was with us but for the space of a few months, she won the affection and esteem of her teachers and companions: Every one admired her piety, her unhesitating obedience, her constant application to her studies, her humility, her charity, and all those beautiful qualities that adorn the heart of Mary, for whom she had always manifested the greatest love and veneration. She was a "Child of Mary," and a faithful imitator of the virtues of her beautiful model. What more could I say of her goodness and virtue? The heart of Mary lacked no virtue, and our dear Ernestine did all she could to imitate her Blessed Mother.

Towards the beginning of December she returned home on account of her declining health. Consumption, that fatal disease, made rapid progress, but she was perfectly resigned

to the holy will of God. In the midst of her greatest sufferings she was always the same considerate, patient, loving, grateful child, doing her utmost to lessen the trouble she fancied she gave to those around her.

Here also her great love of mortification showed itself more than ever, she refused the little delicacies offered her after taking those remedies most disagreeable to the taste, saying that as she had but a short time to remain on this earth she could not renounce such an easy way of gaining merit.

We were all aware that she would never recover, but when on the evening of the 19th inst. we were told that she would hardly pass the night we were taken by surprise, because we firmly hoped she would be spared some time longer for the edification of her family and her companions, because we frequently heard from her. On the following day Mother La Nativité, two other nuns, her teachers, and three of our companions went to see her; she was very happy

to see them, and seemed grateful for their visit. That afternoon at half-past three o'clock her spirit passed away, and we doubt not that Mary came to conduct her faithful child to the enjoyment of eternal bliss as she had already obtained for her the happiness of receiving the Sacraments of the dying, plenary indulgences, and to a child of Mary, the privilege scarcely less esteemed, *that* of entering Heaven on a Saturday.

It was this loving child who comforted her parents and obtained for them resignation. How consoling it must indeed have been to see how well their beloved child was prepared to meet her Judge, and how by their joint efforts and God's holy grace they had accomplished the duty imposed upon them.

On Tuesday, the 23rd, the funeral took place in Notre Dame, an immense concourse attended this solemn ceremony; and next to her parents and relations none could have felt more deeply for our darling Ernestine than those who

numbered her among their class-mates in our Villa.

Never shall this funeral service of one so dear be forgotten, and when we think of the companion that is praying for us in Heaven, it will remind us that our hour will soon come; may it also prevent us from attaching ourselves to this land of exile; may her peaceful, happy death encourage us to follow in her footsteps, so that when we shall have arrived at that awful moment, we may be as resigned and as happy as was our dear Ernestine, because all our hope, all our affection, shall be in God.

Cease not to pray that such may be the happy end

Of your loving and affectionate friend,

C. D.

Having just received a copy of the sermon of the month's mind of dear Ernestine through the obliging politeness of the Rev. P. L. Lapierre, we are happy to add it to this small

volume, as another touching souvenir of a day which will always live in the memory of the Graduates of 1875.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

I did not expect, young ladies, to have the pleasure of addressing you this morning, but I could not refuse the invitation of the venerable and worthy religious foundress and superioress of the Establishment of Villa Maria, whom every one calls by the sweet name of “Mother,” which she deserves by so many titles.

In the large city of Montreal, in the different parts of Canada, and throughout the United States, how many young persons like yourselves, young ladies, have loved, respected, and venerated the good Mother La Nativité. A great number of religious owe to her skilful direction the development of their sublime vocation.

Hundreds of ladies of the world are indebted to her for being women according to the heart of God—christian mothers who are the hopes of the Church, and the safeguard of society; conse-

quently, these good mothers are happy to confide their children to her, whose wisdom, science and virtue formed their hearts, enlightened their understanding, and of whom they preserve an undying souvenir. Among the latter is the mother of your dear departed companion. This dear child I am confident died the death of which the Prophet speaks, rich in the gifts of God's grace, and after having accomplished the work of her sanctification.

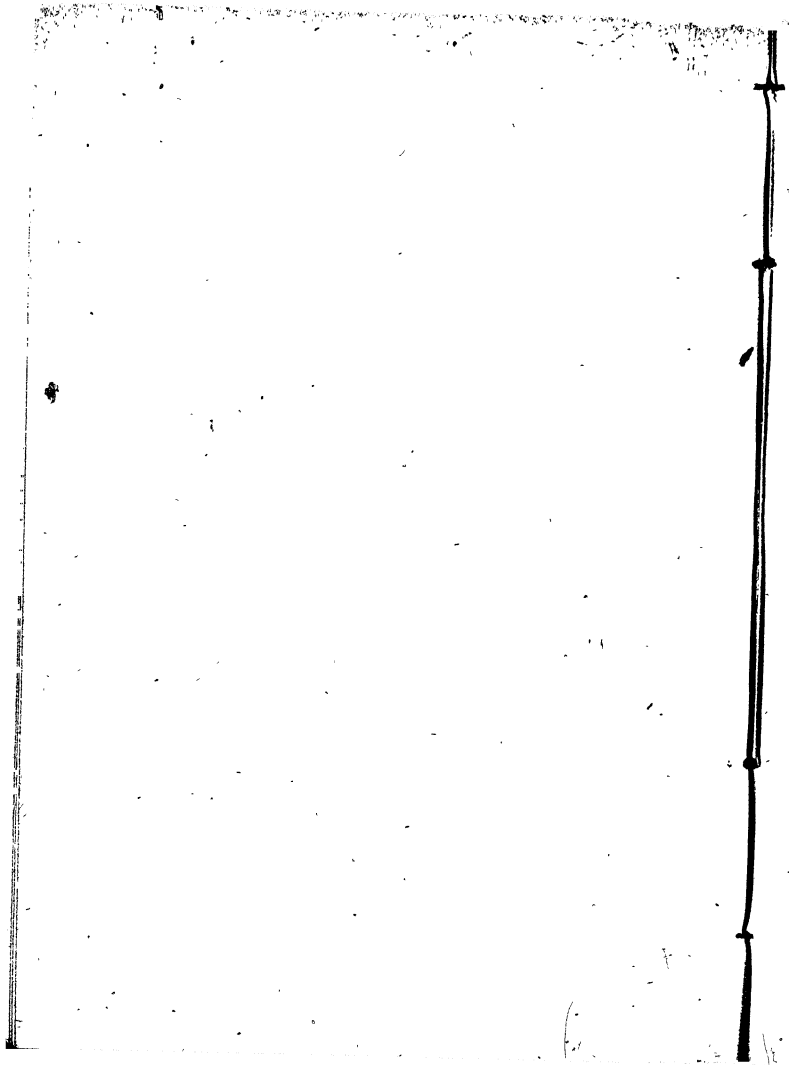
It was beneath the shades of a convent that she grew up, it was under the influence of religious instruction she developed those virtues which rendered her agreeable to God, so dear to her parents and teachers, and which acquired for her your affection during her short sojourn among you. Let us hope that she already enjoys that happiness after which we still sigh.

To die well, young ladies, to die the death of the just is a great science, "the science of sciences," and it is particularly this science which you come to study here, under the

skilful direction of your devoted teachers. They teach you to live well, and that is the secret of dying well, for death is the echo of life. Your pious mistresses help you with their counsels and experience during your pilgrimage from time to eternity. You are every day witness of their devotedness, you are the objects of their maternal care: that, perhaps, which you do not understand sufficiently, the pious and touching reunion of this morning tells you, it is the tender and constant souvenir which your good mothers preserve of you. It outlives all, and it goes even further than the tomb, and when, young ladies, you shall sleep in the shadow of death, they will still think of you, and their affection will follow you by the prayers which they will offer to God in your behalf.

On beholding you, thus united, at the foot of the altar under the eye of Jesus, and the guardianship of angels, I represent to myself Mary in the temple of Jerusalem, preparing herself to fulfil the high destiny to which the Lord called

her.. Be faithful to the principles which these holy religious endeavor to inculcate, practice generously the christian virtues which you see so beautifully exemplified, and then, young ladies, on the day on which God will call you to Himself you will be enrolled with your deceased companion in that army of blessed souls, who sing the glories of Jesus and Mary; that is why the Holy Ghost has said: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." May we all, young ladies, obtain this happy death, which should be the predominant desire of every christian soul, and may you long preserve the dear and venerated Superioress, who teaches you the way to heaven by precept and example.



TRANSLATION

FROM AN ABRIDGED HISTORY

OF THE

VEN. MARGARET BOURGEOIS,

FOUNDRRESS OF THE

CONG. DE NOTRE DAME,

MONTREAL.

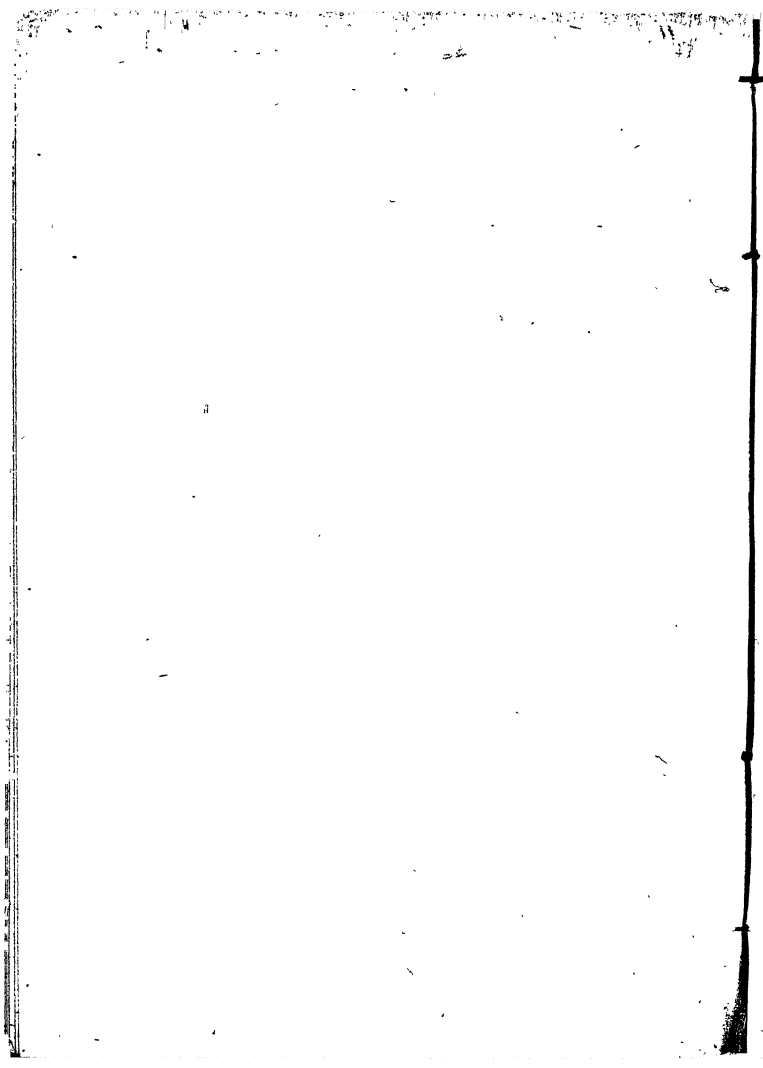
BY

RANSONET.

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NOTE.

It is thought it might prove agreeable to find appended a translation of an abridged life of the celebrated Foundress of the Congregation de N. D., *the unpretending benefactress of Canada*, by Ransonet, written at the remote period of 1728. In this translation we perceive that the spirit of zeal and usefulness is as successful *to-day* in forming the female mind and heart as it was in the *heroic age of Canada*. The following sketch of the virtues of that *dear and cherished child* of the Congregation vividly illustrates this remark.



DEDICATION

TO THE

REV. MOTHER ST. VICTOR, SUPERIORESS GENERAL
OF THE CONGREGATION DE NOTRE DAME.

REV. AND DEAR MOTHER,

With mingled emotions of gratitude, respect and affection, I beg your acceptance, in the name of my Sister Graduates, of the translation of the life of your heroic and holy foundress, the unpretending and inestimable benefactress of Canada, as a birth-day offering.

If my youthful pen has been ennobled by the undertaking, I feel conscious that the work must have suffered much from its limited knowledge and inexperience.

I, therefore, claim for this very modest offering that kind indulgence you have so often manifested in the inspection of our classes.

Should it meet with the flattering encouragement of your approbation, to which its merit has certainly no right, I should consider myself amply rewarded.

With much respect,

I have the honor to remain,

Rev. and Dear Mother,

Your most grateful pupil of the Cong. de N. D.

VILLA MARIA.

DEDICATION.

MADAM,

Pray receive a narrative made by order of his Lordship of T..... You secluded yourself some few years ago from the world, and without abandoning the secular state you attained a point of christian perfection, to which the cloister can scarcely pretend.

Your illustrious brother, struck by this noble action, followed your example; shortly after this change, a ray of powerful and divine light led him to consecrate himself to the ministry of our altars.

Inspired by Episcopal zeal, notwithstanding your tears and my own, he crosses the proud Atlantic and stands on the Canadian shore, where he would still be, or, to speak more correctly, where he would no longer exist, had not persons highly distinguished for their intel-

ligence, whose advice he punctually^d reduced to practice, obliged him to return to his native land, to repair his feeble and exhausted constitution. Anxious, on his return, to accomplish what he had promised to the Sisters of the Congregation, (viz.,) to obtain a historian to write the life of their holy foundress, I had the pleasure of being selected for this honorable and glorious employment. In giving an account of the origin of this little work, I perceive, madam, that I have referred to the eminent virtues of his Lordship of T..... As I have the honor of belonging to your family by the ties of consanguinity, I would formerly have apprehended to have even alluded to his merits, but would it not be affectation to be now silent on these exalted qualifications, which the sovereign Pontiff has solemnly recognised by crowning them with the Episcopal dignity.

As to the relation of the deeds of Sister Bourgeois, I entertain not the slightest doubt

but it will prove grateful to your piety; may neither its style nor manner displease your judicious and delicate taste! However that may be, I shall, at least, have had the satisfaction of presenting it to you, as a testimony of the profound respect with which I remain,

Madam,

Your very humble and

Most obedient servant,

RANSONET.

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SKETCH OF THE LIFE
OF THE
FOUNDRRESS OF THE
CONG. DE NOTRE DAME.

DURING the period of 28 years which has now elapsed since the death of Sister Bourgeois, the Sisters of the Congregation have been anxiously solicitous to have the life of this heroine compiled. The clergy of Canada being totally engaged in their ministerial functions could not possibly gratify them in this respect, they, therefore, turned their views towards Europe, and, by a providential occurrence, they were induced to cast their eyes upon me for the execution of their designs. Having accepted the charge of Historian, a large collection of memoirs, quite void of what I sought, was transmitted to me; many years of the Sister B.....'s life, though passed in eventful avo-

cations, were suppressed; facts without attending circumstances, and some even without the least perspicuity or conclusion, were given. These memoirs were composed of papers belonging to the Sister B..... herself, which indeed contained some few particulars of her life, and of some *others* written by a virtuous clergyman of Quebec, in whom the Sister B..... placed implicit confidence.

After glancing over these documents, I acquainted the Sisters of the Congregation respecting the scanty information they conveyed; to my communication, they replied, that they would feel fully satisfied with whatever I could draw up from these deficient materials. As I write principally for their satisfaction, I would consider myself culpable should I desist under pretence that the work would be considered imperfect. I, therefore, re-examined the barren memoirs and collected the most complete relations, of which I have disposed in the following life. Though I freely acknowledge that the

history is not complete, I do not pretend thereby to say that it does not deserve to be read ; what it does contain is of so edifying and so heroic a nature, that both the spiritual and worldly may dwell on it with pleasure and advantage. May the Almighty grant it may contribute to His glory !

By the terms HOLY, MIRACLE, which I occasionally apply to Sister B....., I understand them and wish them to be understood according to the decree of Pope Urbain the VIII, relative to Saints not yet canonized.

APPROBATION

OF THE ABBE DUPUIS, DR. OF SORBONNE AND
VICAR-GENERAL OF HIS LORDSHIP THE
ARCHBISHOP OF LYONS.

I have read a work entitled, The Life of Sister Margaret Bourgeois, it is highly edifying, and the manner in which it is written will contribute to manifest the distinguished talent of the author.

At Lyons, the 7th January,
DUPUIS, VICAR GENERAL.

LIFE OF SISTER MARGARET BOURGEOIS, FOUNDRESS
AND FIRST SUPERIOR OF A COMMUNITY OF
SECULAR NUNS ESTABLISHED IN CANADA,
UNDER THE TITLE OF "CONGREGATION DE
NOTRE DAME."

I WRITE the life of a female who dares in our own days cross the vast, the immense, ocean, to go and form in the midst of the barbarous savages of America a new institution of virgins, devoted to female education.

This christian heroine was born in Troyes, in Champagne, the 15th of April, 1620, and received with the regenerating waters of Baptism the name of Margaret. Her parents, Abraham Bourgeois and Guillemete Garnier, enjoyed that comfort which virtue and mediocrity of fortune are known to impart. Margaret when yet a child had the misfortune of losing her beloved mother; still the pious and paternal solicitude carefully attended to her education. As early as her tenth year, though she had never seen a religious community, she was frequently ob-

served assembling children ; and instilling into their infant minds a love of duty. May not this be considered as a spark of that admirable zeal which afterwards inflamed her soul ?

In the course of two or three years, which had now elapsed under the observing eye of her enlightened and pious father, she increased so rapidly in prudence that he no longer hesitated to place her at the head of his household. This new appointment, in protecting her against that bane of youth *indolence*, wonderfully tended to preserve her pure and innocent in the critical period of life, to which she had now attained. For the moment, the young Margaret felt satisfied in avoiding notable defects. It was not before her twenty-first year, that her desires became enlarged by the following incidents :

Attending at the Jacobin Church on the festival of the Rosary, the concourse of people not permitting the procession to be made in the enclosure, as usual, it was consequently conducted through the street. In passing before

the celebrated and magnificent church of Notre Dame, the pious eye of Margaret was raised towards the statue of the mother of our divine Redeemer, placed on the frontispiece of the building. To her religious glance the image was no stranger, but now it appears to her of a beauty so extraordinary, that her very heart is touched and filled with divine love; conceiving instantaneously a profound contempt of dress and affected neatness, to which she had heretofore manifested a decided inclination. Her cheerful and sweet disposition caused her to be much sought in society, in which she felt much gratification; but a total separation from all she formerly seemed to cherish now takes place; and the young, gay, and amiable Margaret relishes nothing but the celestial intercourse of her Maker. This change was as permanent as it was sudden. Taking Mr. Jandret, a most virtuous priest and director of the Carmelite nuns, for confessor, she made rapid progress in the path of perfection. The virtues which now re-

commended her to God were a tender piety, a contempt of the world, mortification, compassion for the poor; in a word, she might have been already styled the personification of every virtue.

God jealous of a heart which He had so highly ornamented with His most precious gifts, placed it in the happy necessity of never dividing its affections; by inspiring Margaret Bourgeois to consecrate herself to Him by a vow of Virginity: this inspiration she submitted to Mr. Jandret, her confessor, who disapproved of it, forbidding her to pronounce this vow before the age of thirty; but the enlightened guide afterwards observing and admiring the divine operations of grace in this highly privileged soul, permitted her to unite herself more intimately to her God by the vow of Chastity in her twenty-third year, some few years later she added that of Poverty.

Margaret Bourgeois was thus progressing in a spiritual life, when Mr. Jandret was one day

expatiating on the advantages of a religious life; she felt a strong inclination to become a *nun*; she, therefore, requested to be admitted as a member among the Carmelites, or Claristes, but was not accepted by either of these Communities, Providence blinding these religious to the merits of the applicant, that no obstacle might prevent the execution of His eternal designs. Mr. Jandret was busily engaged about this time in forming the plan of a new Community. He tells us that our Lord, at His Ascension, left three examples to the devout sex, viz., *Magdalen*, *Martha* and the *Blessed Virgin*. The first is that of contemplative souls, the second that of active and exterior charity, the last included both these virtues; it was the *latter* that this respectable clergyman intended to propose to his Community. He felt that the moment to realize his long cherished anticipations was now at hand; he accordingly conferred with a Theologian of Troyes, on the rule which he already had examined, and approved

by several Doctors of Sorbonne, and gave it to Sister Bourgeois and two other young ladies, to be observed. These three novices retired for that purpose to a spacious apartment given them by Miss de Chuly, sister to Mr. de Maisonneuve, then Governor of Montreal, in Canada. One of the happy three died shortly after, the second withdrew: Mr. Jandret consequently gave up the design as a fruitless attempt, from which, nevertheless, Sister Bourgeois derived lasting advantages; the useless efforts she then made, under the directions of this pious and enlightened man, served as a rule to direct her in the important undertaking she so fortunately completed without any human assistance, in the *wilds* of Canada. In the meantime, her fondly cherished father fell ill, and died. The attention and care shown by his darling daughter on this occasion strikingly demonstrates how far virtue enhances filial affection. When the tear of sorrow was wiped from the eye of the devoted daughter, she abandoned herself to the noble activity of

her zeal in watching over unprotected innocence. But what virtue does not this imply? unquestionably a large share of labor, prayer, mortification, *abstraction* from worldly thoughts, *subdued passions*, and self-annihilation. It was certainly from the familiar practice of these virtues that she was ever stimulated to what was beautiful, great, noble, and difficult, for the love of God and her neighbour, as the following trait which I have selected from many others will attest :

She was one day informed that a promising and amiable girl had been carried off by dissolute and infamous men ; her very heart bled at the recital of such a daring outrage. Arming herself with the image of our Redemption she flies to the assistance of the innocent victim, and arrives just soon enough to extricate, *to deliver* the lamb from the mortal teeth of those devouring wolves. On approaching the abode of these diabolical men, her moral courage increases, and she conjures them in the name of a

crucified God, whose likeness she presents, to give up their prey; but crime is enshrined in the inmost recess of their cruel hearts. To be freed from the importunities of this courageous woman, they present a pistol, threatening her with instant destruction if she do not immediately retire; but to no purpose: she is not to be deterred from what the view of her suffering God dictates; the very sacrifice of her life is of a minor consideration, provided she saves the sweet, unprotected girl from infamy. "Wretches," continues she, with more than human energy, "it is Jesus Christ Himself that you thus attack in the person of his members. Know that sooner or later He will be revenged of your sacrilegious temerity." This apostrophe had an immediate and electrical effect, the trembling victim was unhesitatingly restored to her deliverer. With what joy and gratitude did the palpitating heart of this pure and sweet girl testify its feelings to its *saviour*! nor is she henceforth to be separated from her benefactress;

she follows her to Canada, where she serves as an ornament to the infant establishment of Sister Bourgeois. Such charity as this knows no geographical boundaries. While the Sister Bourgeois thus labored for the salvation of others, vigilantly she watches over her own soul. As the Apostle of the Gentiles, she chastises her body and brings it under subjection, lest after contributing to the salvation of others she might be rejected.

Among the different acts of mortification she then practiced was that of passing the night on the ground. Heaven's *all-seeing eye* is fixed with complacency on the untiring *efforts* of Margaret Bourgeois; and bestows on her two particular favors as an encouragement to prepare her for the execution of that eternal design for which she had been chosen.

For several months after receiving Holy Communion she frequently felt her heart inflamed with an inexpressible consuming love, which even appeared exteriorly; and on the

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, probably in 1650, during the procession of the most Holy Sacrament she raised her eyes in adoration to the Sacred Host, and beheld a child of incomparable beauty. These favors were succeeded by a more distinct knowledge of the designs of the Most High. In order to unfold them, we must retrograde some few years.

In 1640 Mr. de Maisonneuve assumed for the first time the office of Governor of Montreal. On his departure from Troyes, the Nuns of the Order of Père Fourrier persistently entreated to be allowed to accompany him, to establish a branch of their Order in the new Colony. Had he hearkened to the impulse of his zeal, he would have most certainly complied; but prudence required he should wait for a more favorable moment. He visited his native land some few years subsequent; the Ladies, of course, reiterated their demand, a renewal of promises was the only reply of Mr. de Maisonneuve.

In 1652 Mr. de Maisonneuve returned a second

time to his country. About the same period Margaret Bourgeois perceived in her sleep a person whose garb was partly ecclesiastical and partly civilian, such as the clergy are wont to wear in travelling: This dream made a more lasting impression on her mind than the ordinary visions of the night ever produced.

Some time after, as she was talking with one of the Nuns at the grate in the Convent of Notre Dame, Mr. de Maisonneuve, whom she had never seen, and of whose arrival she was perfectly ignorant, came to the Convent; she no sooner beheld him, than she exclaimed: "Behold my priest, the very same I saw in my dream!" fully convinced that the vision was supernatural, and that God thereby gave her to understand that He had appointed her for the operation of some good work conjointly with Mr. de Maisonneuve, who was then nothing more than a secular as to his state of life, but who possessed the eminent virtues of an ecclesiastic, particularly those of prudence and zeal.

Without further delay, Margaret Bourgeois presents herself to this gentleman, to pass under his protection to the *wilds* of the Canadian forests, there to open a school for the instruction of the *Indian girl*. Her offer was gratefully accepted, and the Nuns of whom we have spoken were thanked by Mr. de Maisonneuve, as well as another most estimable young lady, Miss Crolo, who felt desirous to accompany Margaret Bourgeois in her perilous undertaking. Notwithstanding, some years after, the same Miss Crolo became an associate of the heroic Margaret in Canada.

Behold now a virtuous female, alone under the protection of an officer, crossing to a yet unknown, uncivilized part of the Globe, guided by the bright star of confidence in God! The consideration of her delicate situation alarmed her modesty.

The acknowledged prudence of the Governor of Montreal did not quite tranquilize her: ordinary decorum seemed to condemn such a step,

but faith triumphs. Her enlightened guide, Mr. Jandret, fully convinced that his penitent's call was from the Father of light, wisely thought that no difficulty should stop its execution. He nevertheless referred her to an enlightened priest to whom she sometimes revealed her conscience; he likewise, after three days of deep deliberation, agreed in opinion with Mr. Jandret.

His Lordship the Bishop was then absent from his metropolis; his Vicar General was consequently consulted on the same subject. After recommending it to God, whom he ardently prayed to direct him, he concurred with the former gentleman; this agreement of sentiment quite decided the courageous Margaret.

In vain did a scrupulous and timid critic declaim against the indiscretion of this resolution, the success which followed proves a sufficient justification of the proceeding; it was even justified by the miraculous approbation of the Holy Mother of God. Margaret Bourgeois being one morning alone in her apartment, perfectly

awake, and pondering over occurrences which had no relation to her departure for New France, suddenly there appeared before her a majestic and beautiful woman, clothed in white, who addressed her in these words: "Depart, I will not forsake you," and instantly disappeared.

A ray of divine light, to which her heart was ever open, as the bosom of the sun-flower is ever expanded to the genial rays of the sun, assured her that this person was no other than the Mother of our Lord; she felt a renewal of consolation and strength.

In the beginning of February, 1653, M. Bourgeois having attained her thirty-third year distributed what she possessed in alms, and without disclosing her intention to her family set out for Canada. Her uncle, Mr. Cossard, and Miss de Chuly were then going to Paris, M. Bourgeois under some plausible pretence accompanied them to the Capital. Scarcely had they arrived, when Mr. Cassard was recalled to Troyes on urgent business; however, before he

left Paris, his niece begged him to accompany her to some public notary, in whose presence she openly declares her undertaking, and at the same time passes a contract, that her inheritance should be bestowed on her brother and sister, of whom Mr. Cossard was guardian. The uncle was startled with astonishment, remained for some time in deep silence, seeming to anticipate a revocation of the deed.

Being disappointed in his anticipations, he used every effort to dissuade her; affection, tenderness, and even ridicule were employed, but all to no purpose; Margaret was inflexible.

On his return to Troyes, what was not the excitement created by the unexpected intelligence: relations, friends, in fact, the entire city was in movement; letters after letters were dispatched, but the ties of Nature and the efforts of human prudence avail naught when opposed to the voice of God.

Sister Bourgeois is the appellation by which she is now generally known, on account of the dress she assumes.

Sister Bourgeois left Mr. de Maisonneuve at Paris, whom she had found in the Capital on her arrival, and departed for Orleans unaccompanied. This circumstance led to a suspicion of her virtues, and at the hotel where the stage stopped she was miraculously preserved from insult.

With the most heartfelt gratitude she returned thanks to God for this special protection, and set out for Nantes.

On her way thither, her influence was so great among the passengers that they daily recited with her, the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and devoutly said the Rosary, to which was added a spiritual lecture. She even prevailed on the rowers to proceed during the night contrary to their custom, that the little crew might have the advantage of complying with the precept of the Church, by assisting at Mass on Sunday.

Landing at Nantes, she immediately inquired for the abode of Mr. La Coq, a merchant of that city, whose dwelling was assigned by Mr. de

Maisonneuve as the rendezvous of the passengers for Canada. This merchant was known at Nantes by a different name, that of De la Bessonière. The sister's inquiries were therefore vain for a length of time; at last she providentially inquired again,— of a gentleman whom she accidentally met,— if he knew such a person as a Mr. Le Coq. The gentleman happened to be the very individual she so anxiously sought. Mr. de Maisonneuve had already acquainted him by letter of her arrival in Nantes. She was therefore most cordially received and lodged in his own mansion till her departure for Canada. In the interval which elapsed she chose for confessor a religious, to whom she confided her past and present intentions; she likewise told him that she had declined when in Paris the offer of admittance into a religious Community for which she formerly felt some inclination.

The confessor who was of this order unhesitatingly decided that she should accept the

proffered offer; and recommended her to write instantly to that effect. Again this docile and gentle mind is cast into an abyss of perplexity, respecting the will of her Sovereign Director. In this dilemma, to whom will she have recourse but to Him who mercifully invites those who suffer and are heavy laden to come to Him for refreshment. In the most bewildered state, she throws herself at the feet of this only true Comforter, in the Chapel of the Capuchin Friars. There her pure and humble heart overflowed with feelings of Faith, Hope and Charity.

There also, on that very altar, at the feet of her hidden God, she lays her fears and doubts. Instantly, He whom the winds and seas obey stills the agitated waters, and peace, confidence, and Divine light assures her that she is destined for Canada.

Notwithstanding the Divine assurance, she thought herself obliged to comply with the injunctions of her confessor. She accordingly

wrote two letters to Paris, to which, by a particular appointment of Providence, no answer was returned.

In this state of things, Mr. de Maisonneuve, arrived at Nantes. On his arrival, an anonymous letter was sent him to prevail on Sister Bourgeois to become a Carmelite nun. This communication was disregarded, and served rather to induce Mr. de Maisonneuve to strain every nerve to strengthen the design of Sister Bourgeois to continue what she had so well begun. In the meantime, the unassuming manners of Sister Bourgeois conciliated the esteem and affection of the family of Mr. De la Bessonière to a point rarely equalled. Mr. De la Bessonière declined receiving any compensation for board and lodging, and begged the sister to accept, for her personal comfort, the handsome present of a bed and bedding, with a quantity of fresh water which he had put on board for her use, knowing that wine had long been deemed a superfluous luxury. All is now

prepared for the separation of this self-sacrificing heroine, from *all* that is dear to her sensitive and affectionate heart.

What conflicting emotions must now have agitated her mind, on the point of exiling herself from the cherished associations of her childhood and youth, and of changing the sunny skies of her beloved France for the snowy *wilds* and icy atmosphere of the unexplored *wastes* of Canada. But our heroine counts no sacrifice. *Her loss, is her gain!* and if she regrets anything, it is that she can make no sacrifice; for in every trial, Almighty God showers upon her the richest rewards. The stormy billows of the ocean now become the theatre of her trials. Many trying incidents might be here related of that adventurous voyage, so dangerous in itself and of which the barren memoirs already mentioned give little account; this, in all probability, is owing to the marked humility of that *modest flower*, who ever sought the shade.

The 22nd of Sept., 1653, the unassuming

daughter of France, chosen from the midst of thousands, set foot on that promised land which had been so ardently desired. This country the principal part of the N. E. of America which lies west of France, from which it is separated by the vast Atlantic. It is bounded on the north by Hudson's Bay and Labrador, on the east by the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans and New England, on the south by *New Spain*, and on the west by *New Mexico*. It was discovered in 1504, by the French, who took possession of it and gave it the name of New France; but it could not be properly called an established colony before 1604, when the French began to settle towards the south, commonly known by the name of Mississippi, but which geographers called Louisiana. Canada is one immense forest interspersed by rivers and lakes, which renders the climate extremely cold, notwithstanding its geographical situation in the Temperate zone. Unless the greatest precaution be taken, a cheek or a hand will be frozen in an imperceptible

lapse of time, which will mortify and fall off if we have the imprudence to present either to the fire, instead of applying snow. This excessive cold is succeeded by such intense heat, that the grain is sown and reaped in the space of three months.

The principal river is the majestic St. Lawrence, which will bear on its icy bosom the heaviest laden vehicle, for the space of six or seven long months. This immense body of water is 25 leagues at its mouth, and contains lakes of 600 leagues in circumference. It is navigable for ships 150 leagues from the ocean. Its waters at Niagara form a most stupendous cataract, falling perpendicularly with an incredible shock over a precipice of 200 feet.

The natives of this barbarous country are Indians, well formed, muscular and beardless. Their complexion would be tolerably fair, did they not destroy it by friction of oil and paint of divers colors. At all seasons of the year, these children of the forest go bareheaded. In

winter they roll themselves in skins, in summer the men suspend some loose covering from the belt, and the Indian woman is half clothed with a kind of skirt, that descends not quite as low as the knee, the remainder of the body is exposed. They live partly on game, partly on horse or dogs flesh, that die of disease or old age, which is always eaten without bread. They have in the neighborhood of the French settlements small plantations of Indian corn, with which they make a kind of porridge called Sagamité.

The Indians have no fixed habitations, but wander in tribes from place to place, according as necessity or fancy guides them. They lodge in huts or tents of leaves of bark, stitched together. Nothing more cruel or more ferocious in war than these barbarians, their revenge is not even satisfied by death: they scalp, burn, suck the blood, open the bodies, drag out the entrails, and eat the heart of their victims; nor are they then satisfied, every torment

that imagination can suggest is exhausted. Nor is the daughter of the forest less cruel than the sterner sex; indeed, it is said that they even surpass them in refined cruelty. The age of loveliness itself is schooled to barbarity, for while the savage parent is thus gratifying his brutal feelings, the children dance around and insult the unfortunate sufferer, calling him by the appellation of *Woman*, if he utters a complaint or gives a sign of sensibility in the midst of their atrocities. This cruelty, barbarous as it may appear, is not to be compared to the obstinate courage evinced by the vanquished Indian. He is seen enduring the dreadful punishment of fire and sword quietly singing, and reproaching the executioners that they want ingenuity, and thus stimulate their tormentors to new cruelties.

With the exception of a few converted by the missionaries, the savages are generally idolaters. The principal object of their fearful adoration is a malevolent spirit called *Manitou*, to

whom they offer sacrifice of propitiation. Their manner of sacrificing is to throw tobacco into the river or sea, this they never omit before a voyage is undertaken.

The French have built three principal towns in Canada, Quebec, Three Rivers and Ville Marie. Quebec, the capital, is the residence of a Bishop, a Governor, who is at the same time Governor of New France and of the Executive Council. The Rev. Gentlemen of St. Sulpice are *Seigneurs* of the entire island of Montreal; they have propagated Catholicity by multiplying the number of laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. Indeed the revenue of their whole *Seigneurie* is totally absorbed in the cause of the Gospel.

Sister Bourgeois having landed at Quebec did not sojourn there. The city that bore the name of Mary, her protectress, was the point of attraction. She accordingly proceeded to Montreal with Mr. de Maisonneuve. This island was then nothing more than a desolate and dreary forest,

so much so that it could not afford even a cottage to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. A tent became the temple of the living God, and a tree of the proud forest the steeple.

Now has dawned the solemn day on which Sister Bourgeois' wishes are to be realized. The offspring of the barbarian, and the child of the civilized French, are seated to receive gratuitously that instruction which tends to form the untutored savage and the docile French heart; yet, both shall receive the science of sciences, on which all human knowledge is based—the science of salvation! Who could describe the activity of Sister Bourgeois' zeal in this arduous task? With what delight she flies from tent to tent, to enlighten the young, when circumstances prevent the half-clad children of nature from thronging around her, nor does she limit her untiring attentions and charity here. She watches and serves the sick with maternal care, even the dead receive from her benevolent hands the last sad services; she also washes

and repairs the apparel of the poor soldier, in a word, she is an eye and a hand to all—neither the want of the necessaries of life nor the insupportable rigor of the Canadian winter, nor the almost intolerable heat of summer, nor the fear of the savages, nor the wild disposition of the indocile Indian children, nothing, in fact, seemed capable to damp for a moment her fervent zeal and charity.

Behold an abridgment of the first five years she spent in Montreal! What a misfortune, that we have not been gratified with more ample details of her actions, and that they occurred when the use of a pen was very limited?

This faithful servant of God, having acquired a thorough knowledge of the country which she had inhabited for the space of five years, judiciously concluded that she alone was inadequate to accomplish all that the wants of the people required. The idea of forming a new Community, on the plan of that formerly attempted by Mr. Jandret at Troyes, engrossed all

her attention. To find persons for that purpose in Canada was as yet quite impossible; she, therefore, decides to undertake to cross the perilous deep, in search of young and devoted hearts to share with her the Apostolical functions.

She sought not in vain. On her return to Canada, she brought four young ladies, Misses Crolo, Raisin, Hyoux and Châtel, whose well-known merit and virtues rendered them worthy of becoming the auxiliaries of this celebrated heroine.

This voyage she made in a year, and as she had promised before her departure, she arrived at Ville Marie the very day of the month and hour of the day at which she had set out the preceding year.

The fidelity of Mr. de Maisonneuve in the service of his sovereign did not prevent him from paying every attention to the progress of Christianity. He was anxious to procure a house for the sisters: buildings were then so uncommon

that he was compelled to offer them a stable. This new community, known under the title of Congregation de Notre Dame, immediately began the exercises for which it was destined; and the young novices, faithfully following in the footsteps of their guide, in a short space of time gained many souls to God. The spirit of evangelical poverty, which reigned throughout this small community, caused the inmates to find many charms in their humble abode.

However this limited locality cramped their operations, and, indeed, prevented them from fulfilling the end of their vocation. They, therefore, endeavored to build a more commodious dwelling; the house being almost completed, Sister Bourgeois again braves the tempestuous ocean, and with a soul filled with confidence in the divine Power lands a second time on the land of her fathers; and that for the two-fold purpose of obtaining letters patent from Louis XIV. for the permanent establishment of her Institution, and in order to

bring over ladies to assist her. This voyage, which was prolonged for two years, proved successful. The letters which she so justly demanded were signed and put into her hands without almost any solicitation on her part; she had also the happiness of receiving into her community Misses Elizabeth, Genevieve, Constantine, Durand, Mary Ann and Margaret, whose reception is solemnized at Paris in the seminary of foreign missionaries, by his Lordship Laval, the first Bishop of Quebec. These fortunate results were justly attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whose protection the Sister Bourgeois endeavored to ensure by erecting a chapel in her honor at Montreal: the particulars of its erection are thus written by the foundress herself:"

"It must be acknowledged," said she, "that God in His mercy has watched over our little Community in a most admirable manner. On my arrival in this desolate country, I was not in possession of a *doublon*, and notwithstanding

“ I undertook to raise a chapel to the honor of
“ the ever Blessed Virgin mother of God. To
“ succeed I stimulated the inhabitants to collect
“ the stone necessary for the undertaking; their
“ labor I endeavoured to repay by my needle.
“ Mr. de Maisonneuve had the timber prepared,
“ and others supplied the lime, sand and boards.
“ In fine I found sufficient materials to complete
“ the building. Just as the foundations were
“ laid, the Abbé de..... arrived at Quebec
“ from France; having learned my proceeding,
“ he immediately stopped its execution. In the
“ meantime I returned to France, and on
“ arriving in Canada I had the misfortune to
“ find that the materials which I had so much
“ trouble in collecting were completely dis-
“ persed. What was still more embarrassing, I
“ was compelled, in consequence of the number
“ of nuns I brought out from France, to erect a
“ house a hundred feet in length. This of course
“ deferred the erection of the chapel. Before I
“ completed the interior of our house, I saw

“myself obliged again to visit the old Continent
“a second time. (This is the voyage of which
“we have already spoken.) On my return the
“whole Community felt solicitous for the com-
“pletion of the chapel, which merely consisted
“of the timber work, which had been put up,
“before my last voyage. This long wished for
“building was finally constructed in the year
“1677, and a statue of the Blessed Virgin, by
“the means of which a miracle had been
“operated in favor of Mr. DeFancomp, was
“solemnly placed therein.”

Her intention in erecting this house of prayer was to impress on the Canadian mind the laudable and heaven-consoling devotion to the Mother of God. The incessant blessings which were showered upon the infant establishment were owing to the particular protection of Mary.

The Bishop of the Diocese gave full liberty to the Sisters to extend their schools throughout the Province. They, therefore, labored with

that unremitting zeal which is ever rewarded by a ten-fold success. So large was the number who begged admittance into the community of the Congregation, that in the space of ten years the foundress had the happiness of receiving forty-seven members, to whom she promised neither wealth nor earthly comfort, the only allurements was the simplicity and poverty of the Gospel.

Since we have now come to that period at which this establishment has attained its formation, we shall dwell with pleasure on the divine and admirable inspirations by which the Holy Spirit suggested and directed Sister Bourgeois. The two principal ends she proposed to her children were, first, their *own sanctification*, then *that of their neighbor* both these ends she fully accomplished in prescribing three vows: that, of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience; recommending at the same time frequent prayer, holy meditation, serious examination, spiritual retirement.

For the spiritual benefit of her neighbor, she regulated what follows: The Sister Bourgeois proposing the Blessed Virgin as the example of her sisterhood, particularly wished that the nuns should be *totally* devoted to female instruction, and consequently gave them the title of "Sœurs Séculières de la Congrégation de N. D.," because not making the solemn vows they are not cloistered nuns. Nevertheless they adopt the title of "La Congrégation de N. D." as this community considers the Queen of Apostles as its head, its model and its special patron. Instruction, in which the Sisters excelled, was not merely confined to the city, but extended to the more distant Indian child, even at the very risk of life; virtue, they particularly inculcated, insinuating at the same time the practice of it, to which is added the training of the youthful mind to the love and pursuit of those arts and sciences, the knowledge of which may be turned to a useful account at a later period. These self-sacrificing women re-

ceive spiritual direction from the Rev. gentlemen of the Seminary of St. Sulpice. Divine service is not performed in their community. The nuns attend the Parish Church, this plainly indicates that they are not a cloistered Order.

The habit of the Sisters is extremely plain, consisting of a black habit, partly open in front, the folds are formed by a belt; the neck-kerchief and head dress of linen, to which is added a veil and a small silver cross worn on the bosom.

To finish the description of this excellent institution, I shall say one word more on the qualities required in order to be numbered among the happy children of the truly heroic foundress. These qualities may be gathered from the following address of Sister Bourgeois to the Blessed Virgin: "My good and tender "mother," says she, "I request neither wealth, "nor honors, nor the pleasures afforded by "worldly friends, for this community. I beseech "thee to obtain for me, that God may be faith- "fully served therein. Permit not that females

“who are of a proud, imperious or presumptuous
“disposition may ever find admittance, nor those
“whose hearts are engaged in worldly plea-
“sures, whose language is either slanderous or
“sarcastic, and who do not endeavor to study
“and reduce to practice that humility which
“your adorable Son has taught, which He has
“sealed with His precious blood; and which you,
“O Mother of my God, have practiced so faith-
“fully!” She again adds: “Let all who seek to
“be admitted into the Congregation be firmly
“resolved to abandon worldly principles, bad
“habits, and evil inclinations; to separate
“themselves from parents, friends, in a word,
“all that might uselessly engage their attention,
“and when admitted they should feel appre-
“hensive, lest they might prove unfaithful to
“God, to whom they have consecrated them-
“selves. Perfect submission, poverty and in-
“terior recollection should be the characteristics
“of every member of this institution.” It was
thus she sought, above all things, in her

novices that religious perfection of which she was herself a living example. Talents and intellect, though of a secondary consideration, were also required to fulfill the duty of a Sister of the Congregation. Neither wealth nor fortune ever entered into her calculations. What she seemed most to fear was, that any endowed with the necessary acquirements should be refused admittance on account of pecuniary circumstances. She used to say, with a disinterested enthusiasm: "I would willingly embrace and admit a novice with a true vocation, even if her pecuniary circumstances were at the very lowest ebb." It was from this principle that she entreated the Bishop of Quebec not to incorporate her Institution with any other religious or cloistered community, adducing as reason, that a fortune being necessary in those asylums, it would be an impediment to persons not in easy circumstances to consecrate themselves to God.

This institution, as yet, had no fixed rule;

the members observed what the Sister Bourgeois prescribed by way of trial. She conversed on the necessity of a rule with his Lordship the Bishop of Quebec. To supply this deficiency she came to the determination of crossing for the third time to France, there to seek and bring back the essence of that admirable rule given to the Sisters at a later period by his Lordship of St. Valier, Bishop of Quebec. Shortly after her arrival in Montreal, the devouring element consumed in the dead of the night her entire convent; so sudden and so dreadful was this conflagration that two of the nuns were enveloped in the flames. The death of these two inestimable members made a most melancholy impression on the sensitive heart of the Foundress and Superior. The loss of the building, indeed, compared to this bereavement, seemed of no consideration. Without losing any time, she laid the foundation of another Convent, much larger and more convenient than the former, and that, too, with no more assistance

than the scanty means furnished by the strict economy of the Sisterhood. God, who delights in increasing the merits of His beloved children, permits that trials and sufferings should put their patience sometimes to the test. The hour has now struck, which has been marked by the Divine Will, in which her susceptible heart must also be tried and found worthy. Interior conflicts of the most distressing nature caused her to feel as if her God had rejected her. The slightest fault was magnified, reproaching herself, that selfish egotism was the motive of her every action. These frightful illusions cast her soul into an abyss of affliction; not so much from the apprehension of Hell, and all its dire consequences, as the separation from a God she so tenderly and sovereignly loved. Prayer, self-denial, perfect submission, self-contempt, all were ineffectually employed for relief. The chalice was yet fraught with bitterness, and it must be exhausted to a drop. This thorny path she trod for the space of four years, at

the expiration of which God showed forth His justice and love by restoring peace to her troubled soul, which she had hitherto sought so long in vain. These painful temptations having completely disappeared, Sister Bourgeois resigned the superiority, and even declined taking part in the government or administration of the house for the last seven years of her life, which were exclusively devoted to the practice of interior virtues, known only to God, who alone can appreciate and reward them.

In the night which sealed the year 1699, Sister Saint Ange fell dangerously ill. A sudden alarm was spread through the monastery, consternation was general. But holy Sisterhood! despair not of the life of your beloved companion! *The mother*, for the *child* shall, become the *victim*; she whose life was a continued act of charity will shortly end it, by a supreme act of that sublime virtue. The foundress was no no sooner informed of the alarming state of Sister St. Ange, than she exclaimed, with all the

ardor of a pious soul. "Ah my God! why will you not accept the sacrifice of my life, rather than deprive the Community of that excellent and dear child?" No sooner was the desire expressed than it was accepted; the dangerous symptoms of the sick sister instantly disappeared, and Sister Bourgeois from the morrow was seized with a mortal disease, which she bore for the space of twelve days with that spirit of self-denial, resignation and holy joy which ever characterized her in her sufferings; her holy aspiration were almost uninterrupted. Consoled by the Sacraments of the Church, she calmly departed this life with the bright hope of those, who, having instructed many unto justice, will shine for ever as the stars of Heaven. On the 12th January, 1700, at the advanced age of seventy-nine years and nine months, her pure spirit passed to its Maker.

Death, that destroyer of all that is earthly, seemed to respect the remains of this holy woman, on whose features were depicted the

tender piety and loveliness of her soul. O pious sisters ! let us not weep over her whose epitaph is familiar to every mother and child in Canada, and whose soul is now inebriated with the sweets of its God !

A holy contestation arose, between the Reverend gentlemen of the Seminary of St. Sulpice and the Sisters of the Congregation, respecting the remains of this distinguished woman. The former insisted that she should be interred at the parochial church. It was finally decided that the body should be interred in the church ; but that her heart should abide in the midst of those she had formed and loved, and by whom she was so tenderly cherished. Her *heart* was therefore enshrined, sealed and deposited in a *niche*, in the wall of the Oratory, where the religious exercises of the Sisters are performed.

The concourse of people, as may be supposed, was truly extraordinary for the space of a month ; it is impossible to enumerate the ro-

saries, medals, and objects of devotion that were applied to the heart of our venerated mother.

From the correspondence of a most respectable clergyman, we learn that the Church of Montreal never before presented such an imposing sight as at the funeral of Mother Bourgeois: the Governor-General and staff being present, as well as the local governor of Montreal, etc. "Indeed," adds the correspondent, "if saints were now canonized, as formerly, mass might be said to-morrow, in honor of Margaret Bourgeois." Devotion towards the saintly mother was not in vain, as several miraculous events have proved.

A gentleman, Mr. Leber, junior, who understood painting, having been requested by the sisters to oblige them by taking the portrait of their beloved mother, he repaired for that purpose to the Convent. Being on the point of commencing, he was seized by so violent a headache, he was obliged to desist. It occurred to him to apply a little of Sister Bourgeois' hair to

his head, which produced a most salutary effect; the pain immediately ceasing. Two days after, through the intercession of the Sister, Mr. Leber was miraculously preserved from injury, though he should have paid the forfeit of his life. The porter of the Seminary having also had recourse to her intercession, obtained an instantaneous cure of a disease in the face, by the application of a medal that had touched the body of the venerable Sister.

A lady afflicted by a total privation of sleep was also miraculously cured, by applying a small piece of linen imbibed in the blood of Sister Bourgeois.

Another lady of the city of Montreal assures us of having been cured of a disease of the throat by invoking Sister Bourgeois. If the authenticity of these cures be called in question, we may rest assured that the gift of miracles does not constitute sanctity. St. John the Baptist, whose panegyric was pronounced by our Lord Himself, never operated a miracle, nor is this

gift the only proof of holiness ; virtuous actions are certainly a sign full as persuasive and as certain. Therefore, it matters little whether the gift of miracles be attributed to Sister Bourgeois or not, her glory is sufficiently attested by her life ; I shall therefore continue to give a succinct account of the principal virtues of this venerable and holy woman.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

This virtue was the source of her most ordinary actions and conversations, nothing is more frequently repeated throughout her writings than the first and greatest commandment. "It is true," says she, in a letter written a year before her death, "It is true that all I ever desired, or "that I yet desire, is, that the precept of *Love* "may be faithfully accomplished. Why cannot I impress it," continued she, "in every "heart?"

THE LOVE OF HER NEIGHBOR.

Her tender charity for her fellow creatures was in perfect harmony with her love for her

Creator, as the following instance will show: Having purchased a lot of ground at Quebec, for the purpose of opening a school in that city, certain interested individuals contested the acquisition; and she, rather than contend, resigned her legal rights, stating she did not only love her neighbor, but she wished to preserve her neighbor in the love which "*he owed her.*" She was amply repaid for her disinterestedness. As she left the church, in which she had confided and offered to the Lord the sacrifice of her intentions, and disappointments, an unknown person approached, and remitted her a sum equivalent to that required of her by these exacting and unjust men.

Another trait of her disinterested charity was the disposal of the bed given by Mr. De la Bessonière. The first winter she passed in Canada was perhaps the most rigorous. A poor soldier came during that frigid season to complain to the common mother of all the distressed then in Montreal, that he was perishing

with the cold, and that he was even deprived of a mattress to repose his wearied limbs. This was enough for Sister Bourgeois, her benevolent and tender feelings were keenly affected, but what relief can she afford? Her kind heart creates resources. The very bed, the only one she has, she immediately resigns to the poor soldier, without consulting her own comfort, for which she was at all times unconcerned. Shortly after, a companion of the unfortunate soldier having learned the success of his fellow-in-arms, came to reclaim the charity of the sister, to whom she gave the *blankets*. No application, it appears, was made for the pillow. It was thus she reduced herself to the extremity of passing the almost entire winter on the bare ground—her sufferings must have been beyond description.

The love of God united to that of our neighbor produces that virtue of zeal so heroic in its effects. Zeal consists in an ardent desire of glorifying God and sanctifying our neighbor.

This virtue in females is generally limited to fervent prayers, by which they obtain of God grace, strength and courage for those evangelical laborers who toil in the vineyard of our Heavenly Father. They judiciously conclude, that this is what God principally requires of their sex. But Sister Bourgeois had, if we be allowed to make use of the expression, an *undaunted manly zeal*, complete in its effects. Her first attempt was to establish a community in Troyes in Champagne; the courage with which she afterwards executed this design in the far distant city of Montreal, the utility of her institution which extends to all and every one of her sex, forms a zeal that would be admired, even in an apostle. As we have had in the course of the little narrative a cursory view of the principal virtues of Sister Bourgeois, I shall now confine myself to a few particulars yet unmentioned.

She considered it of the utmost importance to promote piety among her sex. Consequently she instituted for married and unmarried females

assemblies, to which sermons and exhortations were addressed, according to their respective stations; from the slight advantages which these meetings for some time produced, it was thought advisable they should be suppressed. But the sister would not *hear of it*, and decidedly said, "That even no greater good should be derived from them, than that one sin should be thereby prevented, she would deem herself amply rewarded for the trouble they gave." She therefore enjoined before her death on her sisterhood never to consent that those assemblies should be abolished; her intentions were punctually fulfilled. They are to this day the object of the sisters' zeal. She also entreated her sisterhood to give spiritual retreats for the poor schools, and imposed, as an essential obligation, *that the members of her community* should be sent to form in the different parts of the Province schools for the instruction of country children; she particularly exhorted her sisters, by the most animating discourses, to the accomplish-

ment of this important duty. On one occasion she thus addressed her sisters : “ How happy “ a sister will feel, when sent out on a mission, “ if she reflects that she is going by the express “ order of God Himself, and in His holy com- “ pany. If she only thought that in fulfilling “ the employment which has been assigned her, “ she should and ought to testify her gratitude “ to *Him* from whom she has received *all*, “ with what pleasure she would overcome all “ difficulties, surmount all obstacles ! She would, “ rather than repine in privation, rejoice in “ want, poverty, humiliation and even death “ itself.”

One of the young nuns, feeling excessively grieved on being sent on one of the missions, and consequently separated from her benevolent and dear *Mother Superior* and the Community, the charitable and kind *Mother Bourgeois* consoled and determined this youthful mind by these words : “ Consider, my dearest child, that “ by going on a Mission to instruct the ignorant,

“you are going to collect the precious drops of the blood of your beloved Saviour that would otherwise be eternally lost.” Her kind and encouraging counsels, though excellent, were trifling compared to her example.

In 1686, having learned that the Bishop of Quebec wished to confer with her on the subject of a house he intended opening in his Episcopal city for the instruction of poor children, she immediately set out for Quebec, at the distance of sixty leagues, *on foot*, in the midst of *snow* and *ice*. Her painful voyage performed, her fatigue is nothing more than commenced. She passed four days of *holy week* in the laborious undertaking of preparing and furnishing *this house*, spending the nights prostrate before the Holy Sacrament; nor did she even examine whether her strength was adequate to the arduous task so often imposed. With her whole heart she offers every sacrifice, provided she can gain souls to God. She was often heard requesting, urging the Superior to send

her on the Missions, that she might finish her life in laboring for the salvation of others.

HER HUMILITY.

This noble soul thirsted not more for the sanctification of others, and the glory of God, than she did for humiliation and abjection. She was not satisfied with self-contempt, she felt desirous to be forgotten and despised. How often did she say, and she felt as she said, that she had not the *least intellect*; indeed, the nearer virtue approached her to her Divine model, the humbler she grew. A natural reluctance to *humiliation*, she called *pride*, though this was at all times made subservient. "I request," says she, "humiliations and when the Almighty permits that I am so favored, I keenly feel them. I fear I may yet fall into some serious faults." She used to say, in giving the habit to her novices: "My dear sister, be always *humble* and little in your *own eyes*."

HER LOVE OF POVERTY.

She was particularly careful that the Sisters should be formed and trained to the practice of this virtue. Nothing is more sweetly inculcated than that noble spirit of Poverty. "The Blessed Virgin," says she, in her writings, "whose children we are, embraced the most rigorous poverty. Our Lord chose a *stable* for His palace, a manger for a cradle, a little straw for a *bed of state*. In after years He had not whereon to repose His adorable *head*, and in the painful agony of death, a cross was *His dying pillow*. Blessed are the poor in spirit, says our Lord, in one of His first instructions. It will avail nought to be exteriorly poor, the heart must be detached from the little possessed, and even from the desire of acquiring, and be satisfied with what the Community affords, even in sickness, unless necessity requires the contrary. In the missions," continues this admirable woman, "the sisters should live in the same state of poverty, seeking not their own

“comfort, but the good and the happiness of
“their neighbor.”

HER CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

How great soever was the poverty she so wisely prescribed to her *Sisters*, the apprehension of their suffering from want never gave her the least concern, being persuaded that “*He* who provides for the birds of the air” will provide for them! Her unlimited confidence in Divine Providence was frequently rewarded by extraordinary succor in the moment of need. During a famine, the Sister charged with the bakery seeing her portion of flour reduced to such a point, that she deemed it useless to bake for the Community. Sister Bourgeois nevertheless told her not to defer. The obedient sister immediately complied, and found the flour multiplying in her hands, and that to such a degree, that she had as many loaves as five times the quantity of flour could have produced.

On another occasion the Community was so reduced, that not a mouthful of *bread* could be

afforded for supper. The humble Sister Bourgeois, *who never wished to appear*, sent for the same nun, who had charge of the bakery, and told her to go to the chapel, and beg the Blessed Virgin to supply the deficiency. No sooner was the prayer offered, than the bread desired was sent to the Convent. This humble and holy Mother used to go where the wheat was deposited, and there recite the Lord's prayer, and He who is ever attentive to the supplications of His beloved children caused the quantity of the little store visibly to increase. Some of the Sisters were so struck with this extraordinary increase, began to measure the wheat, but Sister Bourgeois, being informed of this, put a stop to this laudable curiosity, adding, "that it would be the cause of a privation, a cessation, of the benefits of our Heavenly Father."

Pecuniary circumstances not permitting the Sister Treasurer, in 1690, to purchase even a *bushel* of wheat, so great was the expense compared to the means of the community, not-

withstanding, sufficient flour was found for the whole community for the space of four months. This the Treasurer very judiciously attributed to the prayers of her holy mother; who never failed visiting the little wheat that remained, from time to time, and offering up her fervent prayers for its increase.

A person highly creditable who lived in the Convent, relates that wine had become so scarce that it could not be had in Montreal. The Congregation supplied the sick of the city as well as the quantity necessary for the Masses said at the Parish Church. What is here particularly remarkable is, when the vessels arrived from France with wine, the barrel which had so freely supplied the liquor refused to flow.

The same person assures us that the Sisters were once on the point of entering the dining room for dinner, when Sister Bourgeois was told it was useless to assemble the sisters for the frugal repast; nevertheless she had the bell

rung for the examination of conscience, and proceeded as customary to the refectory ; when behold ! a person enters with all that is required for dinner. It is thus our Father who is in Heaven realizes the word of His Divine Son : " Seek ye, therefore, first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all things shall be added unto you. Be not solicitous for to-morrow, to-morrow will be solicitous for itself."

SELF-DENIAL AND AUSTERITY.

Far from presuming on the extraordinary assistance of Providence, she rarely requested to be miraculously favored. Such was the austerity of her life, that little, very little, was required for her subsistence ; indeed, that little was even seasoned with mixtures ingeniously introduced to render it unpalatable. One meal, with a little soup in the evening, was her daily diet, and on Fridays the soup was deemed superfluous. Her positions, either sitting or standing, she rendered painful, through a spirit of mortification.

So completely had she destroyed the sense of taste, by an uninterrupted application to render food disagreeable, that she could partake of the best and the worst, without either pleasure or disgust; her *couch* was of *straw* and her pillows of *wood*. In her frequent voyages the *cables*, or *ropes*, were the bed on which she reposed, and this painful repose was short and regularly interrupted two hours every night to offer her pure and holy meditations to God. He could not but hearken to the whisper of the victim of His love. The severity of the most rigorous season she never alleviated by approaching a fire. To all this may be added different kinds of austerities not easily described. One of her usual acts of mortification can scarcely be dwelt on, so shocking it appears to our sensual minds. A cap stuck with pins she wore night and day. This dreadful instrument of penance having been luckily perceived, she was begged to remove it, but she answered, in a most cheerful mood, that it produced no more pain than a *downy pillow*.

The Sisters united their solicitations and entreaties to prevail on her to moderate the severity of these penitential acts, and to preserve her days, *so precious* to the Community. To these observations she attended in silence for a few moments, then addressing her dear children with that energy so peculiar to herself, she so urged on the absolute necessity of leading an austere life, that she inflamed her sisters with admiration for her virtue, and with an extreme desire of imitating so noble an example.

In the meantime her health visibly declined, she was, therefore, according to the commands of her superiors, obliged to conform to the expressed wish of her Sisterhood; still we must admit that it was merely an exterior relief, her interior mortification lasted to her death; her attention to the Divine presence was ever the same.

HER CHASTITY.

Her constant mortification greatly contributed to maintain her in that angelic purity, which was

conspicuous in her through the long period of nearly eighty years. We have every reason to believe that she was robed with her Baptismal innocence at the tribunal of her Father and Judge. This abridged relation can merely be considered as a very imperfect account of the life and actions of this illustrious woman. It can merely be considered, I repeat, as a slight sketch of what she so magnanimously accomplished ; still, imperfect as it is, it suffices to awaken the esteem and authorize the veneration of the pious mind for the *Beloved one of God's own choice*. The opinion of the day respecting her exalted virtues may be gathered from a few of the letters addressed to the Lady Superioress of the Congregation de Notre Dame, on the death of her saintly Mother.

His Lordship of St. Valier, Bishop of Quebec, writes thus: "The grief into which the intelligence of the death of your Foundress has plunged me is relieved, but by the consoling consciousness, that she is now in the home of

Him she so faithfully served, there surrounded by that glory which is the recompense of His Elect."

The Lord Bishop Laval, former Bishop of Quebec, in one of his letters states:

"The venerable Sister Bourgeois was most acceptable to her God. She is now in that heavenly abode where she will forever dwell. Her simplicity and humility are now repaid by an overflowing torrent of delight; therefore, my dear children, grieve not, but rather rejoice, that you have such a powerful advocate in Heaven, who will watch over and guide your Community."

Mr. Dollier, Vicar-General of Quebec, and Superior of the Seminary of Montreal, spoke in the highest terms of the merits of Sister Bourgeois, in the funeral oration, or rather in the panegyric, he pronounced on the merits of this faithful and wise virgin. The following communication was likewise addressed to the Lady Superior, by Mr. Demezeret, Superior of the

Seminary of Quebec: "We have shared in the general consternation which the death of our lamented sister occasioned. I have always known her to be a person filled with the spirit of God. She excelled in all virtues, but especially in that of Humility, of Mildness, of Obedience to her superiors, perfect resignation and confidence in Divine Providence, which endowed her with a courage capable of undertaking and executing the greatest enterprises for the glory of God. Not the least doubt remains on my mind, but that you are the *heiresses* of her spirit. We have all offered our prayers in her behalf, and I have begged her to intercede for me."

The very Rev. Father Bouvart, Director of the establishment of the *Jesuits*, forwarded the following letter to the Superior of the Congregation :

"We have been informed, by your favor, of the melancholy tidings of the departure of the venerable Sister Bourgeois. In compliance with

your request, I have recommended her soul to God. Though I feel persuaded that she does not stand in need of our assistance, still the judgment of God is far different from that of man; I have therefore recommended her to the prayers of my religious brethren, who voluntarily acquiesced. In devotion, I shall endeavor to surpass them, as I hold her in singular esteem and veneration. As a favor, I beg some part of her relics. I can assert with confidence that I have never known a person possessed of greater virtue. I have often been struck with that greatness of soul, that lively faith, that entire confidence in God, that sweet devotion, undaunted zeal, profound humility, and heroic mortification which ever shone forth in this rare example of the 17th Century."

I here conclude willingly, leaving my readers to dwell on the testimony of individuals so eminently *enlightened* and distinguished.

FINIS.

NOTE — While engaged in translating this abridged memoir, I was struck by the immense good done in this country by the zealous and self-sacrificing Margaret Bourgeois. I was struck, too, not to find in the city of Margaret's choice, after a period of over 200 years, a small statue or a modest monument erected to the memory of this noble *woman*, by the daughters of Canada, and the numerous privileged pupils of the neighboring States and Provinces, who have been equally benefited. I am happy to see, nevertheless, that a List has lately been opened by my former Sister Graduates, for that purpose, at the Establishment of Villa Maria. May it meet a generous patronage! is the wish of the Translator.